

Aspiranet

~September 2021~ Monthly Regulation Topic

Back to School during COVID-19

This year the start of the school year has brought mixed feelings and reactions for many children and parents. While some may be excited to get back to “normal”, others may struggle with the transition and change. We have information and methods to help reduce the spread of COVID-19, but there are still other considerations for the transition back to school. The following tips offer ideas to assist with the transition:

- 1. Try to Stay Flexible.** Protocols that are in place currently may change as the school year goes on. It’s helpful for parents to model having a flexible attitude and approach to changes, as both children and parents can benefit and build resiliency by learning to adapt.
- 2. Prevent separation anxiety.** Children may feel nervous about going back to school and being apart from family members after extended time at home. Have conversations about school and develop tools for your child to feel connected to home, such as notes in their lunchbox, or a family photo they can bring to school.
- 3. Have a plan.** Family routines changed during the pandemic. Parents who worked from home may now need to go to the workplace. One of the best ways to help a child feel supported is to ensure they know where all family members are and how to reach them if needed. Consider placing a white board in the kitchen noting where each family member is each day.
- 4. Communicate with your child’s teacher.** Let your child’s teacher and guidance counselor know if something is going on that might affect the student, such as their concerns returning to school whether social, academic or fears about COVID, in addition to sharing other significant changes or concerns for your child. Teachers do best when they know what is going on in their students’ lives that could impact their ability to focus, socialize, and come to school ready to learn.
- 5. Make time to listen.** Your children may react to changes in their routine in various ways. Be ready for some behavior changes — such as acting out in younger children and quietness in teens. Before bed is a good time to listen to your child recount events and feelings from the day. This extra time provides a safe environment for children to express their emotions and you may be surprised how much you learn about them.
- 6. Watch for signs of stress.** Stay tuned to warning signs that your child might need mental health support. These signs include:
 - Sudden changes in activities or behaviors
 - Sudden weight loss or weight gain
 - Trouble in school or extracurricular activities, including missing homework or ending participation
 - Reckless behavior, such as withdrawing or acting rebellious, aggressive, or overly impulsive

- Signs of depression, such as excessive isolation
- Substance use or abuse
- Sleeping too much or too little
- Destructive behaviors such as self-injury
- Talking or writing about suicide and death.

If you are concerned about your child or teen, contact your Aspiranet Social Worker or the On Call Social Worker right away for support and direction. Call 911 if your child or teen is at immediate risk of being a danger to themselves or others.

7. Do not delay your child's health care. Many health issues can be easily managed when recognized early, but can lead to challenges if caught later. Your pediatrician will keep your child up-to-date on immunizations and routine screenings to aid their overall health.

8. Create a positive digital environment. Digital media use can have positive and negative impacts on mental health. Encourage your family to disconnect on a regular basis. Consider creating family-developed ground rules and values around social media use.

9. Last, but certainly not least, take care of yourself. We provide reminders about self care often, and for good reason - it is vital to take care of yourself, as well as your family. According to the Centers for Disease Control, poor mental health in parents can contribute to poor mental and physical health in children. Take some time for yourself and plan opportunities to do the things you love. Even short periods of self care on a regular basis can be helpful and rejuvenating.

We want resource parents to know we're here to support and assist you. Please maintain frequent communication with your Aspiranet Social Worker regarding how your children and you are doing with the school transition, as well as any concerns regarding physical or mental health. Please also notify Aspiranet of any possible COVID exposures so we can best support you and your family.

The above information was adapted from Emerson Hospital article:

<https://www.emersonhospital.org/articles/back-to-school-during-covid>

Please sign and return this page to your Aspiranet Social Worker for training credit.

My signature below indicates that I have completed the September 2021 "Back to School during COVID-19" training.

Signature Foster Parent #1

Date

Print Name Foster Parent #1

Signature Foster Parent #2

Date

Print Name Foster Parent #2

Aspiranet Authorized Signature

Date

Training credit: ____ minutes