

# Back to School Tips for Children with Disabilities and Special Health Needs



About a week before school begins, contact your child's school case manager or guidance counselor to make sure the basic accommodations in your child's IEP or 504 Plans are in place. If you expect any specific challenges, share them to help the school staff prepare for an easier transition back to school.



When shopping for school supplies, encourage your child to have some choices in the colors and styles of notebooks, binders, and other supplies. Get some stickers or markers for your child to decorate personal school supplies with favorite images or artwork.



If your child is taking a school bus or van to and from school, be sure you have all the information about your child's transportation and who to call if there is a problem. Contact the school or bus company to find out the name of the driver and aide as well as the route the bus will take to and from school. You can provide information about your child's disability, behavioral challenges, and communication needs as well as strategies that help your child get through situations which are difficult to handle. Let them know how to contact you if any problems arise.



Use your child's school calendar to create a personalized visual calendar for the new school year. Use pictures to help your child become familiar and excited about what is going to happen. You can also make daily or weekly picture schedules to help your child prepare and get organized for each day. These tools can help reduce anxiety and help your child ease through school day activities and transitions.



Daily school-day routines are really important to help provide structure in your child's day. Practice these routines with your child, especially getting ready for school and getting ready for bed. You can make picture schedules or checklists to help keep everyone on track. Giving your child a reminder list for afterschool activities may be helpful, too.



Take some time to role play different situations your child may encounter during the school day. Think of different scenarios which may be difficult and work on helpful things for your child to say and do to be prepared. Talk to your child about what to do and who to go to when upset or confused.



Once the school year begins, write a brief note to your child's teachers, aides, and therapists. Use this letter to introduce yourself and to share some of your child's strengths and challenges. Let them know you are interested and available to hear what is happening at school and to share concerns and suggestions throughout the school year. Be sure to tell them the easiest way to contact you. It's all about teamwork!



If your child is entering a new classroom or new school, make some time to visit before the first day of school to help familiarize your child with how to enter the school building and locate the classrooms, cafeteria, bathrooms, and other common places in the school.



Through a partnership with Kohl's Cares, Children's Specialized Hospital is improving access to care for children with special health care needs.

