Secondary Family Tip Sheet
Back to School for Students with Disabilities After COVID-19 Closure

Make Time to Talk About School

Make going back to school a part of your daily conversations. Be sure to ask open-ended questions that go beyond "yes" or "no" answers.

Discuss what your child is looking forward to when school resumes.

Discuss their questions or concerns for going back to school.

Offer a variety of opportunities for your child to express how they feel about going back to school through discussions, journaling, and art.

Be aware of changing behavior. This can be a sign of anxiety or depression.

If your child is expressing fear/anxiety or sadness/depression, encourage them to talk about their feelings and consider seeking support from a counselor or healthcare provider.

Review Progress Toward Graduation

Review transcripts from prior high school years.

Review progress toward the credits needed for graduation.

Request credit recovery for courses missed or not passed.

Contact school counselor with any questions, concerns, or to discuss potential barriers to graduation.

Determine which (if any) end-of-course exams will be administered in the fall.

Foster Connections from a Distance

Create positive social interactions to ensure connections are occurring:

- Create social time with family where communication can occur (e.g., sit down to dinner, play a game).
- Plan ways for your child to communicate with friends via phone calls, text, email, virtual games, and/or video platforms.
- Expectations for supporting siblings, or helping around the house need to be balanced with time for peer interaction.

Maintain/Build Routines

Adapt night and morning routines so that your child is getting 8+ hours of sleep each night to be alert and ready to learn.

Obtain your child’s school schedule and bus route. It may be helpful to start implementing a similar schedule at home before school starts.

Adapt eating routines. A nutritious breakfast helps boost your child’s attention span, concentration, and memory.

Reduce time on personal electronics to promote more engagement in physical and social activities and necessary studying.

Have conversations and help adapt your child’s work schedule, if they have taken extra hours at their job due to the pandemic.

Communicate with the School

Inform teacher(s) about how your child has been doing during the school closure to assist with their transition (e.g., responsibilities and expectations to support the family while home, successful learning opportunities, fears or sources of stress).

Ask special educators to help with your child's return to school.

Communicate important updates to the school (e.g., medication, medical needs, new diagnosis, change in behavior, life events).

Plan to meet with the IEP team in order to review your child’s current performance levels, identify gaps in learning that resulted from school closings, and determine what additional services, if any, will be provided.

Connect with club sponsors and coaches upon return.

Visit the school campus, once it is safe to do so, especially if it is your child’s first year at the school.