

Back to School Planning: CDC Checklists to Guide Parents, Guardians, and Caregivers

For many families, back to school planning will look different this year than it has in previous years. Your school will have new policies in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19. You may also be starting the school year with virtual learning components. Whatever the situation, these checklists are intended to help parents, guardians, and caregivers, plan and prepare for the upcoming school year.

Some of the changes in schools' classroom attendance or structure may include:

- **Cohorts:** Dividing students and teachers into distinct groups that stay together throughout an entire school day during in-person classroom instruction. Schools may allow minimal or no interaction between cohorts (also sometimes referred to as pods).
- **Hybrid:** A mix of virtual learning and in-class learning. Hybrid options can apply a cohort approach to the in-class education provided.
- **Virtual/at-home only:** Students and teachers engage in virtual-only classes, activities, and events.

Planning for In-Person Classes

Going back to school this fall will require schools and families to work together even more than before. Schools will be making changes to their policies and operations with several goals: supporting learning; providing important services, such as school meals, extended daycare, extracurricular activities, and social services; and limiting the transmission of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. Teachers and staff can teach and encourage preventive behaviors at school. Likewise, it will be important for families to emphasize and model healthy behaviors at home and to talk to your children about changes to expect this school year. Even if your child will attend school in-person, it is important to prepare for the possibility of virtual learning if school closes or if your child becomes exposed to COVID-19 and needs to stay home. CDC has created a checklist to help with back to school planning for school year (SY) 2020-2021. If your school uses a hybrid model, you may want to review both the in-person and virtual/at-home learning checklists.

[Planning for In-Person Classes Checklist](#)

Planning for Virtual or At-home Learning

Virtual learning may be a choice or part of a child's Individualized Education Program (IEP) or Section 504 Plan for some children and families, and it may be necessary if your child has certain underlying health conditions or is immunocompromised. In a hybrid model, learning may occur virtually during part of the week and occur in-person for the rest. Or, the school year may start with virtual learning but switch to in-person learning for the remainder or certain times of

the school year. Going back to school virtually may pose additional challenges with staying connected to peers, since students may have less frequent or no in-person interactions to each other. You may want to talk to school staff to learn more about what they are doing to support connection among students, interactive learning with feedback, building resilience, and social-emotional wellbeing for students who will not be onsite.

In addition, if your child receives speech, occupational, or physical therapy or other related services from the school, ask your school how these services will continue during virtual at-home learning. Likewise, if your child receives mental health or behavioral services (e.g., social skills training, counseling), ask your school how these services will continue during virtual at-home learning.

Here are some things to look for when reviewing your school's plan for virtual or at-home learning. Some of these action items and points to consider might warrant additional conversations with your school administrators or healthcare provider.

[Planning for Virtual or At-Home Learning Checklist](#)

Mental Health & Social-Emotional Wellbeing Considerations:

Since the school experience will be very different from before with desks far apart from each other, teachers maintaining physical distance, and the possibility of staying in the classroom for lunch, it is unlike anything your child is used to. Before school is in session, you may want to talk to your child and explain that all these steps are being taken to keep everyone safe and healthy. CDC's [Stress and Coping During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#) provides additional resources for you and your family.

Workplace Solutions, your employee assistance program, is available 24/7 at 800-327-5071 to provide confidential support and guidance. The EAP web portal, www.wseap.com (access code: *Publicis*), contains additional resources on COVID-19 and will continue to be updated as this situation develops.

CDC. (2020, July 23). *Back to School Planning: Checklists to Guide Parents, Guardians, and Caregivers*. Retrieved from URL: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/parent-checklist.html>