



Returning to Education
and Continued Healing

School Changes

A Guide for Parents, Guardians, and Caretakers*



*NOTE: The word "Parent" will be used throughout this module, but includes all of the above



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School Changes



- Helping a child to be successful in school requires effort, communication, and planning
- All children need extra attention and coaching when they enter school and during times of change
- You may find it helpful to review the "Returning to School" module



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School Changes



- Examples of a school change include:
 - Moving to a new school in a different city or district
 - Changing grades
 - Getting a new teacher
 - Starting day care, pre-school, kindergarten, elementary school, middle school, or high school
 - Changing from a small school to a larger school



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School Changes



- Some school changes are easy. Others are complex and require more preparation.
- This module will assist you to successfully handle school changes



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What You Can Do

1. Take steps to plan and prepare
2. Work together with the school
3. Encourage information sharing
4. Assist siblings
5. Ongoing considerations





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#1 Take Steps to Plan and Prepare

- When a school change occurs, both your child and school staff may benefit from similar steps taken during the initial re-entry process
- Discuss with your child what thoughts, feelings, and wishes they have about how to handle the change
- Identify what information and support current school personnel will provide to the new school staff



#1 Take Steps to Plan and Prepare

- Discuss the planned change with current and new school personnel and consider:
 - Any concerns that your child expresses
 - Any concerns that you have as a parent
- If your child would benefit from a pre-visit to meet educators and classmates
- Any special things your child wants their educators or other children to know
- Potential impact of this change on siblings

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#2 Work Together With the School

- Families and schools can help a child successfully adapt to school changes by working together to address:
 - Any barriers in the new environment
 - Special academic needs
 - Physical and/or medical needs (e.g. assistive devices, activity restrictions, ongoing physical therapy, hearing loss, etc.)
 - Social development and/or coping skills issues
 - Student and peer behavior, including teasing and bullying
 - Any psychological issues that may arise
 - Coping with a new environment, teacher, or classmates

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#2 Work Together With the School

- Share the REACH website as a possible resource for the new school and educators
- If you believe your child’s new educators, school or class would benefit from a school re-entry educational intervention, discuss this with your child and their teacher

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#3 Encourage Information Sharing

- Maintain a record of contacts and things you did to assist your child with school changes
- Keep a copy in your child’s care binder
- Refer to it during future periods of change
- See the Resources section for a handout with tips, details, and examples

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#4 Assist Siblings

- Changes at school can have an impact on siblings
 - Siblings might receive questions or comments about their brother or sister
 - Siblings can become the victim of teasing and bullying behavior
 - If new behavior problems arise, it can be a sign a sibling is struggling with school changes
- Include siblings in discussions on how anticipated school changes may impact them

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#4 Assist Siblings

- Help prepare siblings to develop responses for questions and comments that they may receive
- If you believe that your child’s sibling or classmates would benefit from a re-entry educational intervention, discuss this with their educator
- It may help to learn what other families have done to help siblings cope

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#5 Ongoing Considerations

- The first few days and weeks after changes in school is a period of adjustment
- Parents, educators, child, and siblings need to assess the success of adjustment to school changes
- It is important to share this assessment with each other to focus on what is working and to identify any issues that still need to be addressed

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#5 Ongoing Considerations

- Have frequent communication with educators to find out how your children are handling the school change
- Address questions and concerns as they arise
- Request parent-teacher conferences as necessary
- Seek counseling help when needed

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Age Considerations: Children 2-6 Years Old

- Young children can experience separation anxiety that causes them to have a difficult time adjusting to changes in educators and caregivers
- They may need additional time getting to know new staff and making the school (or day care) change transition
- Inform staff if your child has special words they use to describe their injury and appearance

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Age Considerations: Children 7-11 Years Old

- Children of this age need to have an active part in planning how the school change will be managed
- They may wish to see and explore the new school to decide what will help them with the change
- Allow time for your child to say goodbye to friends and teachers
- Review the “Meeting New People” module for ideas on helping your child make new friends

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Age Considerations: Children 12-17 Years Old

- As children grow older, they may develop strong feelings about privacy and may wish to limit what is shared with others about their injury and treatment
- It is important to include your child in discussions about what information will be shared (and with whom it will be shared)
- For example, your child may not desire a school re-entry educational intervention or visit

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Age Considerations: Young Adults 18+

- Examples of changes that your young adult may encounter:
 - Moving from high school to a college setting
 - Entering the workforce
 - Changing jobs
- Provide support to your young adult as they grow more independent in managing school and workplace changes

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Age Considerations: Young Adults 18+

- You can encourage independence by:
 - Helping them to anticipate changes in their school or work environment
 - Facilitating ongoing discussion
 - Being positive and supportive
 - Providing advice when your young adult asks
 - Helping them to connect with other survivors and resources

