

Preparing for return to on-site schooling for teenagers with neurodevelopmental disabilities

Information for families

Prior planning can support positive transitions back to school for teens with neurodevelopmental disabilities, such as autism, ADHD or anxiety. AllPlay Learn have created home schedules, school stories, emotions cards and many other resources to support the return of students to school. To view these resources and other helpful information, visit allplaylearn.org.au/covid-support

Teens with neurodevelopmental disabilities and challenges will need time and support to transition back to school.

- **Communicate clearly with your child about what to expect.** Your child may feel more confident about returning to school if they know what to expect. Looking at photos of familiar faces and places around the school, alongside information about any new routines may also help with the transition.
- **Consider how you can support your child's psychological well-being.** Create opportunities for your child to talk about their thoughts and feelings about the return to on-site schooling. Various types of anxiety may be heightened in some teens. Speak to the school to develop a plan for drop-off if you think your child may experience school refusal.
- **Access or create resources.** Access or create visual schedules and social stories about the return and any new rules or routines that your child will learn. Use positive language while acknowledging that the transition can be challenging.
- **Practice if possible.** If there are new skills your child may need (e.g. new handwashing rules), practicing at home might help reduce anxiety when they return.

During times of increased anxiety & change, some teens with disabilities may experience greater challenges in their learning, behaviours or emotion regulation.

- **Check-in with teachers.** Let your child's teacher know of any changes you've noticed in your child. Talk about what strategies you have found has helped recently. Let your teacher know if there are any specific changes that might unsettle your child.
- **Involve your child's specialist in planning for the return.** Your child's individual education plan may need adjusting for a time, and new strategies and supports may be needed. A collaborative approach with school, family and specialists will best support your child's transition back.