



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

Information for teachers

Prior planning and a whole-school approach can support positive transitions back to school for students with neurodevelopmental disabilities, such as autism, ADHD or anxiety, AllPlay Learn have created class 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

Students with neurodevelopmental disabilities and challenges will transition best when there is a consistent whole-school approach.

- **Provide clear communication and support to staff** in order to create a consistent whole-school approach. This could cover communication about COVID-19, and consistency around new rules and routines for students.
- **Identify ways in which all staff can provide a positive transition** to specific students with disabilities. Diagnosis does not have to be disclosed to all staff. Instead, this can be as simple as noting if a specific student may take time to understand some of the new rules, or providing strategies to use with a specific student if they're distressed.

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

- **Provide families with tools for the transition.** Create visual schedules and social stories about the return to school and any new rules or routines that students will learn. Use positive language while acknowledging that this transition can be challenging.
- **Re-orient students to school; highlight what has stayed the same and what will be different.** Students may feel more confident about transitioning back to school when they know what to expect. Emails or letters prior to commencing transition which include photos of familiar faces and places around the school, alongside information about any new routines may also help with the transition.
- **Check-in with parents and the student.** Take time to speak to parents and the student about how they coped during this period and what areas they may need support in during the transition. Communicate with parents prior about the purpose of calling to give them time to prepare too.

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

- **Consider anxiety and school refusal in planning.** Some students may need additional support after having spent most of their day with their families over the past weeks. Consider how this can be provided when planning how drop-off time will be initiated in line with Victorian Government and AHPCC guidelines.
- **Additional supports may be needed.** Consider where additional supports may be needed, who can provide that support, and how this support can be implemented for most impact. Liaise with the school wellbeing team, allied health, teacher aides.
- **A whole-school approach to well-being is important during this time.** Consider how safe spaces for distressed or anxious students can be adapted or created, and ways wellbeing activities can be integrated into the school day. Positive wellbeing activities to support staff will also have positive flow-on effects for students. Self-care can help staff overcome some of the demands and challenges associated with supporting students with the transition back to school.