

# EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

## RETURN TO SCHOOL DURING THE PANDEMIC

Parents and children can expect further changes in the coming school year. State and local authorities continue to navigate the options in consideration of public health, state, and local guidelines. We find ourselves in uncharted territory with the realities of an ever-changing pandemic. It is important to focus on helping your family adjust to new routines.

School systems across the country prepare for the new school year. Some students will return to full-time classroom learning. Others will participate in a hybrid model with in-class and virtual learning and some will continue with full-time virtual learning.

### Help children to adapt

Everyone is affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Children are no exception. Although the prospect of returning to school is exciting, children could also experience a wide range of emotions. This could include anxiety and fear of the coronavirus or stress about changes in their normal routine such as social distancing or wearing masks at school.

- Reassure your child that their feelings are normal, they are not alone, and many people are working to protect them.
- Help your child look for the positive in the situation. They will be able to see their friends and teachers again when they return to the classroom or at least interact with them.
- Encourage your child to continue to practice regular hand-washing and find new, socially distant ways to greet their friends.
- Ask them how they are doing. Their emotions can change quickly and you can show them this is fine.

Children often take emotional cues from important adults in their lives, so it is important that you control your own emotions, stay calm, and talk to them in a friendly way.

### Take care of your own mental health

It is just as important for parents to rest and exercise sufficiently, eat a healthy diet, and have a consistent daily routine as it is for their children. Here are a few tips to help you with this:

- Recognize what you can and cannot control and how you spend your time.
- Avoid overeating or using alcohol or other stress-relieving drugs. Try meditation, yoga, or other relaxation techniques, go for a walk outside, or call a friend for support.
- Practice gratitude and confidence for the future. Helping others can also improve your prospects.

Remember that kindness to yourself and others is a positive example for your children.

*Source: Supporting your child's mental health as they return to school during COVID-19. (2020, June 16). Retrieved August 02, 2020, from <https://www.unicef.org/coronavirus/supporting-your-childs-mental-health-during-covid-19-school-return>*



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