


**Tips for Parents of Children with ADHD
Returning to School During Covid**

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Tips for Parents of Children with ADHD Returning to School During Covid

- ▷ New Challenges
- ▷ Questions to Ask and Things to Request
- ▷ School Exclusion
- ▷ How to Assist Your Child with Transitioning Back to School
- ▷ Preparing the School
- ▷ Resources

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New Challenges


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Going Back to School

- New Reality for all Students
- Those with neurodevelopmental disorders will be significantly more challenged
- Skills that are impaired will be the very skills required to navigate this new system:
 - ability to pay attention and not be distracted,
 - attention to detail,
 - being able to follow complex instructions and steps,
 - remembering new routines and daily schedules and
 - EF skills such as planning, organization and time management.
- Symptoms of hyperactivity, impulsivity, self and emotional regulation will all be further challenged


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Those in Higher Grades


Additional Challenges:

- Online learning – Access <https://caddac.ca/adhd/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Online-Learning-Benefits-Issues-Strategies-CADDAC.pdf>
- Varied schedules – alternate days?
- Less instruction and structure
- Reduced monitoring – easier to procrastinate
- Reduced assistance with time management and chunking of work
- Accommodations may be ignored

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Questions to Ask Things to Request


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Insufficient Information

- Many provinces have tasked boards and schools with deciding on and implementing procedures and policy
 - Lack of consistency
 - Lack of transparency
- Parents asked to make decisions without being adequately informed (Do I send my child back to school?)
- You have the right to be informed about the environment your child will be going back into prior to making any decisions
- You also have the right to expect your child's needs to be met
- Covid has not suspended your child's right to an equal education or your IEP rights

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Parental Concerns


Parents Overarching Concerns and Questions

- Will my child be safe?
- Will my child be given the accommodations (additional support) they require to navigate this new and confusing environment?
- If not, what will happen?

Contact Your School Immediately

- Your school principal is mandated with making sure that special needs students are given the support they require
- Contact your principal in **writing** (hardcopy or e-mail)


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Questions You Need Answered

Questions to Ask:


- How will my child's environment change from what they are used to?
- Will their schedule be altered from what they are used to, how? Will it remain consistent after being altered?
- What will my child's support level be when returning to school?
- Can we expect additional resources to help them with this altered environment?
- How will the school respond if my child finds it challenging to follow the expected rules due to their ADHD or other impairments? Additional support? Consequences? Excluded?


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Things You Need to Request

- To revisit your child's IEPs and/or behavioural plan and add additional accommodations to cover these unique circumstances
- A zoom meeting with the school to discuss the IEP changes and your suggested strategies and any additional required supports
- To discuss and decide how the school will routinely share feedback on your child's well being and any issues that arise
- Ask to be informed about
 - The school's exclusion policy (asking your child to stay home)
 - Your school board's policy on school exclusion


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Escalate Through School Hierarchy


If you are not receiving answers to your questions after contacting your school principal or you are concerned about the answers escalate up through the hierarchy.

1. Contact your board's special education superintendent (preferable) or your area superintendent and then your school board's Director.
2. If you are not contacted in a timely manner or do not receive appropriate answers contact your school trustee.
3. And then, your local provincial representative and your provincial Ministry of Education. (Simply write one brief letter and copy everyone, stating you are concerned about your child's return to school and require written answers to your questions)
4. Access these links to [Tips for Parents](#) and [Template Letter](#)
5. Call [ARCH Disability Law Centre](#) or [Justice for Children and Youth](#) or Human Rights Commission.

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School Exclusion

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What do You Need to Know About School Exclusion – Increase Anticipated

- AODA (Accessibility for Ontarians with Disability Act Alliance) [Report on School Exclusion](#) **Expected to Increase**
- The principal has the right to exclude a student if in their judgment the student is detrimental to the physical or mental well-being of the pupils (Education Act s. 265).
- Schools and boards are not required to keep track of how many students they exclude, for how long, for what reason, or report this information to anyone.
- They don't have to tell the student and their family the reason for their exclusion from school or to advise them of their right to appeal.
- In Ontario, only 33 of 72 schools have a policy on this and they vary widely.
- The ON Ministry of Education has no published policy on this.
- **Investigate your Province's policy!**

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How to Assist Your Child with Transitioning Back to School

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Things You Can Do to Assist Your Child with Their Transition Back to School

Once you have obtained the information about the environment and situation your child will be going back to, take steps to prepare them.

- Review how their environment will be different and discuss their worries and your concerns.
- Review any added rules they will be expected to follow. Do they anticipate difficulties, do you?
- Find ways to reiterate new rules frequently, practice and role play different scenarios that you and they anticipate will be difficult. (reminder cards)
- If your child has sensitivities or is anxious about wearing a mask, or seeing others in masks, have them practice wearing a mask and/or seeing family members in masks.
- Mask wearing will exacerbate CAPD impairments.


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Language Skills


Many of our kids have reduced expressive language skills

- If possible, teach your child the language needed to express when they are struggling.
- This is challenging for many children with ADHD, but try and teach them a few simple phrases
- Examples
 - "I'm having a hard time right now."
 - "I don't know what I need to do."
 - "I need to get up and move."
- This can alert school staff that immediate intervention is required so a melt down does not occur.

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Preparing the School


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Inform the School of Your Child's language Strategy

- The school needs to be informed about your child's language strategy prior to entering school (in writing).
- Stress that the staff will need to pick up on these messages consistently and act quickly for this strategy to work.
- Staff should encourage and practice the use of this strategy.
- Discuss and decide on acceptable interventions for staff to apply once these messages are relayed.
- This accommodation should be added to the IEP and/or behavioural plan.

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Help Prepare the School for Your Child's Transition Back to School

Assume the school wants any information that will make the transition smoother

Meet with the school to inform them on:


- any skill reduction or improvement, increased anxiety or behavioural setbacks during the past 5 months,
- any issues that you expect may arise,
- any strategies that you have developed with your child (the more concrete the better),
- triggers that increase your child's stress and any tells (visual cues) that your child's anxiety is escalating and
- accommodations that need to be added to your child's IEP.


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Follow-up

- The decisions made during any meeting should be followed up with a written summary.
- If this does not come from the school follow up with an e-mail to the principal.
- List the things that were agreed to in the meeting and when you expect them to be implemented.
- End the e-mail with a proposed date for a follow-up meeting to review how the strategies are working and if they need to be revised.

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Follow-up on IEPs

Unfortunately parents are the ones required to ensure IEPs are implementation and that strategies are working!

Meet with your child's teacher every couple of months to:

- obtain examples of how the IEP is being implemented and how they are working,
- ask for examples of how accommodations are not working,
- discuss optional accommodations that can be changed or added to your child's IEP.

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Resources

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IEP - Needs/Accommodation Resources

Access these resources for assistance with IEP

Elementary

- [Teaching Strategies for Typical ADHD and EF Impairments](#)
- [ADHD Symptoms, Impairments and Accommodations in the Elementary School Environment](#)

High School

- [ADHD Symptoms, Impairments and Accommodations in the High School Environment](#)

Post Secondary

- [Post Secondary Accommodations](#)

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Questions

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