

## Family Tips for Easing “Back to School”

As the final days of summer play out, families should lay the groundwork for “back to school” by re-establishing healthy routines and patterns. New schedules can pose challenges for adults and kids alike. Preparing a few weeks in advance can help to ease the transition and minimize any potential stress. Work with your kids to map out plans, times and rules for homework, chores, hobbies and free time. Here are some tips to consider when planning:

**Wrap up loose ends.** Finish any lingering summer assignments and plan post-school extracurricular activities for the coming year.

**Set regular times for turning in at night and getting up in the morning.** Time consistency helps to set the body's natural clock and to ensure good sleep.

**Plan the night before.** Cut down on morning pressure by prepping outfits, backpacks, schedules and lunches before you go to bed.

**Establish a breakfast time and routine.** Offer healthy easy-prep choices such as hot or cold cereals, nut butters on English muffins, fresh fruit, yogurt and hard-boiled eggs.

**Plan safe routes to and from school.** Check them out in advance. If it's a new route or bus-stop, accompany young kids the first few times.

**Review pedestrian, bike and bus safety rules.** Go over safety tips for whichever mode of transportation your kids will be using. It's particularly important to teach kids that there is about a 10 foot blind spot around buses.



**Make sure backpack loads are appropriate for kids.** Experts say to avoid sprains, strains and fractures, a Backpack should weigh no more than 10% of a child's body weight.

**Drivers should be on high alert when school resumes.** Use particular caution in hours when kids are going back and forth to school. Be alert for school buses, young pedestrians and kids on bikes.

**Establish "device free" family times.** Engage at meal times by keeping TVs, phones and games off. Plan non-electronic and outdoor family activities.

**Have a family emergency plan and drill.** Include a communication plan and set meeting points both at home and in central places should you not be able to return home. Train all kids in making 9-1-1 calls.

**Watch for signs of stress.** Each fresh school year can bring fresh challenges. Watch for signs of stress and adjustment as kids adapt to new teachers, academic challenges and peer interactions.

If you or a family member faces a challenging or stressful situation on or off the job, you can call your EAP 24-7 for help, support and tools! Be sure to check out resources for families and parents.