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This toolkit contains helpful tips for managing work and family as we prepare for back-to-school and new routines.
Introduction

As school districts begin to announce their plans for the fall, and their approach to either online, in-school, or a hybrid model of learning, working parents begin to ponder what their routine will look like as well.

No matter what your school district decides, we know that back-to-school will look a lot different this year. This toolkit will provide you with some guidance to help your family navigate through these changes. You will also find best practices for supporting learning and how to prepare schedules and routines that will set you and your child up for success.

This year, our back to school decisions look a lot different:
➢ Do I send my child to school? Is that option even available in my area?
➢ What do I do if there is a hybrid solution on the days my child is home?
➢ Should I keep my child at home full-time?
➢ How do I tackle distance learning for my child while working full-time?

“You can’t control the wind, but you can adjust the sails.”
Preparing for Back-to-School

Understanding my options:

**Full-Time in school, full-time online, or hybrid?**
This may evolve as the year progresses and your school district may still be developing options, so be on the look-out for information from your child’s school district or private school.

**What health and safety precautions will be in place?**
Make sure you know what safety precautions will be in place at your child’s school and understand how to prepare your child for these.

**Can you change your decision during the year?**
Find out if you can change your decision during the school-year and put your child into a different model for their education.

**Will before- and after-school care be available?**
Inquire with your child’s school or the district if there will be emergency care provided for parents whose children are enrolled in the school/district.

**Can you find help for at-home days?**
If you’re unable to hire someone for help, maybe there is someone in your personal network who can provide help for your child’s at-home days.

**Can you flex your workday?**
If you are struggling with balancing work and family life, please contact your core leader. Arrangements can be made for alternate shifts; different work schedules or other solutions can be identified to better suit each caregiver’s unique needs. We want to work with you to ensure you have the peace-of-mind that your family is well cared for, while you help care for our patients.
Focus on what you can control.

1. You can’t control everything: Focus your energy on what you can control.

2. Decide how you want to "show up". Your attitude and actions have a great effect on those around you (especially your children). It’s important to remember that no matter how you “show up” you are role modeling how to handle stress for your child.

3. Priority #1: Take care of yourself.
   **Strategy #1:** Reduce how much energy you invest – are there any responsibilities or activities that you can eliminate or share with others?
   **Strategy #2:** Increase how much energy you build up – sleep is a great example of an activity that gives you more than it takes, exercise replenishes you and provides you with a fresh outlook (even a walk around the block) and nourishing foods help fuel your body.

4. Managing Work and Family
   - Figure out your optimal schedule, working hours, availability, and how much you think you can realistically get done in a day.
   - Meet with your spouse, partner or other adult who lives with you. Compare weekly schedules, figure out which meetings & projects simply cannot be moved, and which can be. Perhaps work in shifts. Accept new routines, schedules and expectations.
   - Recognize there is no blueprint for success. Ditch the perfectionism. You will be less productive. Try to be “exceedingly and radically realistic” with yourself. Maybe set a maximum of 5 goals for the day: things you need to accomplish at work; things you want your kids to accomplish, and one or two valued and fun family activities.
   - Create new rules or “personal policies” to help you manage work-life balance. According to growing research, these personal policies can help us streamline our thinking so that we don’t waste valuable mental energy making the same decisions over and over again. (i.e., Arguing with your spouse about the messy kitchen? Make a policy that you don’t comment on housework during work hours no matter how messy it gets.)
   - Create daily rituals. Research finds that everyday rituals, such as 45 minutes of family physical activity after dinner can reduce stress and increase productivity.
Tips for Keeping Children Safe As We Transition From Optum EAP

As guidelines are loosening and public spaces are reopening, it can be challenging to know how to guide children through the transition. But it’s as important as ever to continue keeping kids and teens physically safe and to watch for mental health issues like stress.

1. **Continue to teach and model basic hygiene behaviors**: During this transition, it is essential to keep up with behaviors that prevent COVID-19. Inside the home, continue to wash your hands frequently. Avoid touching your face. And wipe down high-touch surfaces. Encourage children to do the same. Outside, maintain social distance. Keep hand sanitizer and masks with you in case you must spend time in an area where it is difficult to practice social distancing. For younger children, consider ways to make these behaviors fun. Create a 20-second song about handwashing. Or make a game in which whoever touches their face the least wins a reward.

2. **Clearly communicate your expectations**: Keep your children updated by clearly telling them what you expect them to do both inside and outside the home. This is especially critical for teens who may start going to school or social events without you. Stress the need to continue practicing smart preventive behaviors such as coughing or sneezing into a tissue or elbow, staying away from those who are sick and avoiding large group gatherings.

3. **Help your child stay socially connected — with limits**: While you may begin to see others in person, make sure to limit your child’s time with other children. Also limit time with high-risk individuals, including those who are 65+ and those who have chronic conditions. Help your child stay connected with people they can’t see in person through text messages, phone calls, the internet or even letters.

4. **Help your child stay active and healthy**: Encourage children to exercise, eat healthy and get plenty of sleep. This will help boost their immune system and minimize stress. If it is OK in your region, encourage your children to spend time outside. Modeling this behavior is a good way to help your children build these habits.
5. **Create a flexible but consistent daily routine**: Many children will continue to have a lack of structure into the summer, which can result in increased stress. Having a routine helps kids feel more secure and be better behaved. Work with your kids or teens to help plan the routine for the day, as this will make them more likely to follow it. Make sure you allow time for structured activities as well as free time. Include exercise as a part of each day. As guidelines are loosening and public spaces are reopening, it can be challenging to know how to guide children through the transition. But it’s as important as ever to continue keeping kids and teens physically safe and to watch for mental health issues like stress.

6. **Monitor your child for signs of stress**: It’s important to recognize the stress that your child may be experiencing. Contact a mental health professional if your child shows any of the following symptoms for more than two weeks:
   - Preschoolers: Thumb sucking, bed-wetting, clinging to parents, sleep disturbances, loss of appetite, fear of the dark, regression in behavior and withdrawal.
   - Elementary school children: Irritability, aggressiveness, clinginess, nightmares, school avoidance, poor concentration and withdrawal from activities and friends.
   - Adolescents: Sleeping and eating disturbances, agitation, increase in conflicts, physical complaints, delinquent behavior and poor concentration.

7. **Take time to talk**: Many children are worried about COVID-19, so be willing to talk about it. Keep these tips in mind:
   - Be open and listen, asking children open questions to find out what they already know.
   - Be honest. Think about how old your child is and how much they can understand.
   - Be supportive, as your child may be scared or confused. Give them the space to share their feelings and help them feel secure.

If you are concerned about how stress may be affecting your child, speak with your child’s doctor for guidance.
New Routines

During these past few months your family may have adopted some new routines that may not work well for getting everyone ready on-time for school and work.

1. Approximately 3-5 days before the first day of school starting your child should start waking up and getting used to their new routine.

   **Practice:** Make sure your child is waking up on time to be able to handle their virtual or in-person learning model and remember to incorporate time for everything that needs to get done. Having breakfast, packing their lunch, gathering their belongings, catching the bus. Talk with children pre-school age and older about the schedule changes coming in a positive way and help express that the change can be fun and exciting, so it is not a surprise on the first morning.

2. Routines eliminate the need to keep making decisions repeatedly. They make it easier for us to manage through things that happen on a regular basis.

   **Practice:** For young children who aren’t yet able to read, a visual routine such as pictures of what they should do, gives them a real sense of independence and accomplishment. As children get older, visual routines, can be replaced with a checklist.

   **Practice:** Develop routines you and your child can agree upon.
   - When is bedtime? What does that process look like?
   - When to do school-work if your child is doing online classes. The older your child is the more they can help make those decisions.
   - When to do homework if they are attending classes in-person?
   - When to have dinner? Setting a routine around dinner is a good strategy, what time do we start fixing dinner, who is going to fix dinner, who sets the table, what time do we show up, who is going to help clean up after dinner?
   - When to walk the dog and whose responsibility is this?

The list of helpful routines you can create are endless. Routines that you create will help minimize the tedious, and sometimes stressful daily decision making on your part.
Organize Their Space

Create a space to learn at home:

• Pre-school age and older can help create the space, they will have opinions about what they want in their space and what will work for them.

• Think about what is going to work best for your family. Where should learning and working spaces be? How separate do these spaces need to be?

• Talk with your child about what will make this space feel comfortable and functional for them.

• Think about what school supplies will be needed to set them up for success, part of the fun of a new school year is new school supplies.
Teachable Moments

Learning doesn’t just happen at school:

• **There is lots of learning that can happen naturally at home.** This may be the time in your children's' lives that you can help them get ahead in skills necessary for them to be successful in life and at school (i.e. problem solving, creative thinking, self-regulation, and emotional intelligence)

• **Our current life situation has given us a gift,** this opportunity to model and teach everything. Independence for example, giving your child appropriate space, tasks and responsibility. Think about self-help skills and what they can learn to do for themselves.

• **It’s a great time to be teaching relationship skills,** decision-making skills, these are real skills that your child can learn with guidance and with modeling.

• **Educators use a strategy called scaffolding which is something you can do with your child.** You give them some information and some instruction and let them digest that and practice that. And then as they accomplish that, you give them more information and instruction. You’ve probably already done scaffolding if you’ve ever taught someone how to ride a bike.

• **Follow what your child is interested in** – ask them what they would like to learn about or what they would like to do.

• **Everyday activities are a fabulous way to learn!** If they help with the cooking, they will learn how to mix solids, liquids, properties of liquids and solids, safety and equipment, balance, gravity and measurement, and even project management skills.
COVID-19 has changed everything — and fast. The new “normal” for parents, children, and care providers feels anything but. If you’re feeling at sea, you’re not alone. Click on the link at the bottom of the page for tips for children, parents, and care providers, which are designed to help you stay healthy, strike the right balance with work, school, and caregiving, and keep your child engaged in learning at home.

Expert tips and ideas on the following topics:

**Support for Parents and Care providers**
Stress-management, mindfulness, and more - for you and your children.

**Health and Safety for Elders**
Tips and ideas for staying connected and engaged with older family members.

**Health & Safety for Children**
Kid-friendly activities for good hygiene today, and healthy habits for life.

**Learning at Home Activities**
Kid-friendly, educational activities great for both inside and outside learning

**Educational Apps and Websites**
Educator-approved technology for every child in your family.

Find Support Today
Bringing the World Home: Educator-designed activities bring the Bright Horizons curriculum from the classroom to your living room.

Bright Horizons is happy to stay connected and support your child’s learning while you are safely at home, with guided learning opportunities that follow a typical classroom daily schedule. Children thrive with routine, especially when there is big change around them. We invite you to click on the link below and explore the library of enriching activities from Bright Horizons educators to enhance your child’s learning and engagement.

This site has activities and resources for children and families of all ages:

- For Infants
- For Toddlers
- For Preschool/Pre-K
- For School-Age

Find Support Today
Visit https://worldathome.brighthorizons.com
Back-up Care for Children and Adult Dependents

Low cost back-up child and elder care support options are available. Bright Horizons Back-Up Care provides access to back-up care for your children, adult, and elder family members during a lapse or breakdown in normal care arrangements. Starting July 1, 2020 Back-up Care resumed the original benefit of 10 uses per eligible caregiver for the remainder of 2020.

Benefits-eligible caregivers* (scheduled work hours are a minimum of 20 hours per week) who are part of the aligned time away policy have access to the Bright Horizons program providing subsidized and low-cost back-up care for your children and adult/elder family members. Back-up care can be used whenever regular care arrangements fall through and you are scheduled to work. Here are some FAQs with more information.

Subsidized cost of care:
- Center-based care is $20 per child per day (maximum $35 per family)
- In-home care for dependent adults, elders or max three children is $32 for up to four hours and $8 for each additional hour
- Out of network support might be available where regular care options are unavailable

*Please note, this benefit is available to most benefits-eligible caregivers who are on the aligned time-off policy. Caregivers covered under a collective bargaining agreement receive benefits in accordance with the terms of their contract.

For the latest guidelines on back-up care use related to COVID-19, visit www.brighthorizons.com/covid19. If you are unable to secure appropriate back-up care, please contact 877-242-2737 to discuss alternative care options.

Register for Back-up Care Now So You’re Prepared When You Need It

Register and Reserve Care Now
Visit backup.brighthorizons.com
Employer Username: choosewell  Password Benefits4You
Bright Horizons Additional Family Supports

Benefits-eligible caregivers* (scheduled work hours are a minimum of 20 hours per week) who are part of the aligned time away policy have access to the Bright Horizons Additional Family Supports program.

When you have to work, you need support for your family, especially right now. Whether school’s closed, a regular caregiver is unavailable, or you need a care provider for your mom, dad, or elder relative, rely on Bright Horizons Additional Family Supports to help you find:

• Sitters, virtual sitting, housekeepers, and pet care through a premium account on Sittercity, which includes a waived membership fee ($150 value) and free basic background checks
• Local, high-touch placement service of trained, screened nannies for full-time childcare. Get personalized help with recruiting, vetting, and selecting a nanny that will match your family’s specific needs. Take advantage of $300 savings on the placement fee and a 10% discount on the hourly rates for a nanny you select.
  • Carefully vetted with background checks at the state and federal levels
  • Formally trained in childcare, first aid, and CPR
  • A positive role model, committed to safety and security
• Senior care solutions, including care companions, an online needs assessment, senior housing search and evaluation tools, and more

In addition to the above, Bright Horizons Additional Family Supports also offers ongoing support for:
• Full-time childcare in a Bright Horizons® center, where you can jump ahead on the waitlist
• Tuition discounts for full-time childcare with one of our high-quality partner centers
• Discounted online tutoring and test prep

*Please note, this benefit is available to most benefits-eligible caregivers who are on the aligned time-off policy. Caregivers covered under a collective bargaining agreement receive benefits in accordance with the terms of their contract.

Find Support Today
Visit https://clients.brighthorizons.com/choosewell
Resources
Resources

Choose Well COVID-19 Resources Page:
To assist with your childcare planning, we encourage you to visit our Choose Well COVID-19 Resources page which has up-to-date information about regional partners and organizations that can support your childcare needs.
Click here to learn more

Caregiver Assistance Program:
Sometimes, keeping our lives in balance is difficult and we need support to restore our equilibrium. In these times, our Caregiver Assistance Program is there for you at no cost. Check out the free services offered.
Click here to learn more
- Optum: 844-875-5716
- Lyra (Alaska Only): 844-311-6223

Live and Work Well
Find safe, quality childcare. Explore articles and resources to learn about childcare options, search for childcare and summer camps in your area, and get tips on evaluating childcare providers.
Click here to learn more
Access code: choosewell

CDC Back to School Planning: Checklists to Guide Parents, Guardians, and Caregivers:
Click here to learn more

COVID-19 Planning Considerations: Guidance for School Re-entry:
Click here to learn more

USDA Food and Nutrition: Find Meals for Kids When Schools are Closed:
Click here to learn more

Mental Health Resources:
Rate your stress. Connect with resources.
Click here to learn more