



FIRST DAY BACK TO SCHOOL

HEALTH CHECKLISTS BY DISABILITY CATEGORY

SCHOOL YEAR
2025-2026

READY, SET, LEARN!



Advocates for Justice and Education, Inc.

The Parent Training and Information Center for the District of Columbia

TRANSITIONS ARE HARD **BACK-TO-SCHOOL PLANNING FOR DC FAMILIES IN EVERY CLIMATE**

Transitions are hard, and this year, DC families face even greater anxieties as the new school year begins under the shadow of federal intervention. With the National Guard deployed to the city and heightened immigration enforcement near schools, many families carry not just the usual back-to-school stress, but deep fears about safety and stability.

Advocates for Justice and Education (AJE) has walked beside families through these challenges since 1996, helping them navigate the complex transitions of each school year. As tried and tested partners, we know that the return to school is about more than academics—it is about protecting children’s rights, ensuring their well-being, and lifting up the voices of families most impacted. Our Health Justice Project was founded to meet the healthcare needs of families of school-aged children with IEPs and 504 plans, recognizing that educational success and health equity are inseparable.

This Parent Handbook serves as a comprehensive guide to help you understand our school policies, daily routines, and expectations. We encourage you to read through this handbook carefully, as it will provide valuable information on how we can work together to ensure a positive and enriching experience for your child.










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BACK-TO-SCHOOL HEALTH CHECKLISTS BY DISABILITY CATEGORY



Here are Back-to-School Health Checklists relevant for all families returning to school and organized by disability category via the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) for families of all children, especially children and youth with disabilities and special health care needs (CYSHCN).

General Considerations for All Students (IEP, 504, or general education)

-  Must have documents to keep in-person and electronically: most recent IEP/504, evaluation summary, care plans (asthma/seizure/allergy), the school health form (i.e., immunization record), medication authorization, and emergency contacts.
-  Primary care & specialists: confirm medical home, fall appointments booked, Rx refills synced to school schedule.
-  Insurance & benefits: check DC Medicaid/Alliance renewal status; update transportation & meal benefits.
-  School coordination: share IEP/504 highlights + “My Child’s Health Team” sheet; sign releases for two-way communication (school ↔ providers).
-  Mental health & wellness: request Tier 1/SEL supports; know the school’s behavioral health referral pathway and crisis protocol; identify a trusted adult.
-  Begin early family advocacy skills (record-keeping folder, “questions to ask providers” sheet).
-  Daily supports: transportation plan, attendance plan, pick-up list, nutrition needs, seizure/allergy action plans, toileting plan if needed.
-  Tech & access: assistive tech, passwords/portals set; request accessible materials; confirm interpreter/translation needs (e.g., Spanish, ASL, Amharic).
-  Advocacy tools (from packet): “Questions to Ask the Doctor,” Medical Home planner, storytelling worksheet, community resources QR.

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Autism (AU)

- Sensory plan: preferred tools (headphones, fidgets), calm space, sensory breaks schedule.
- Communication: AAC set up and charged; communication book/home-school log.
- Routines-based Interventions: visual schedule; transition warnings; social narratives for new routines.
- Behavior supports: PBIS-aligned Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP); crisis de-escalation steps; who to call.

Deaf-Blindness (DB)

- Access: tactile/visual alerts; interpreters/interveners secured; orientation & mobility plan.
- Health: vision/hearing reports; device care/charging; emergency tactile cues documented.

Deafness / Hearing Impairment (D/HH)

- Tech: hearing aids/cochlear processors working; FM/DM systems tested; batteries on hand.
- Access: interpreter/CART schedule; seating & acoustic considerations.

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Developmental Delay (DD, typically ages 3–9)

- Early intervention handoff: IFSP-to-IEP transition notes; goals aligned with SEL and readiness skills.
- Care coordination: speech/OT/PT schedules; home practice plan.

Emotional Disturbance (ED)

- Mental-health plan: school-based clinician contact; safety/crisis plan; consent to coordinate with community provider.
- Regulation supports: daily check-in, break card, calm-down routine; re-entry plan after crises.

Intellectual Disability (ID)

- Health & safety: supervision levels, elopement plan, adaptive PE/transport needs.
- Communication & independence: AAC or plain-language materials; life skills/health education goals.

Multiple Disabilities (MD)

- Complex care: nursing plan, feeding/GT plan, seizure protocol; equipment list (wheelchair, suction, etc.).
- Lifts/transfer: staff trained; evacuation plan practiced.

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Orthopedic Impairment (OI)

- Mobility: accessible routes/classrooms; PT plan; evacuation chair/plan.
- Health: skin integrity/positioning schedule; medication timing around therapies.

Other Health Impairment (OHI) (e.g., ADHD, asthma, diabetes, SCD)

- Action plans: asthma/inhaler, seizure, diabetes (CGM/insulin), SCD pain plan.
- Medication: in-school dosing forms; field-trip procedures; snack/hydration plan.

Specific Learning Disability (SLD)

- Access: audio/large-print/reader; AT (text-to-speech, organizers).
- Progress: frequent data checks; small-group instruction schedule.

Speech or Language Impairment (SLI)

- Services: speech schedule; home carryover strategies; AAC calibration if used.
- Access: visuals/gestures; wait time embedded in classroom plan.

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Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)

- Medical: recent neuro notes; fatigue/cognition accommodations; rest breaks.
- Safety: seizure/behavior change watch list; gradual workload plan.

Visual Impairment (VI), incl. Blindness

- Access: Braille/large print/audio; screen reader set-up; tactile maps.
- Mobility: O&M schedule; lighting/glare plan; seating.

Considerations for Accessing School-Based Behavioral Health Services

- Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS): Who provides Tier 1 SEL, Tier 2 small groups, Tier 3 intensive services?
- Create or Access Referral Pathways: how families/teachers request school-based behavioral health; expected timelines.
- Crisis protocol: contacts, de-escalation steps, re-entry meetings.
- Climate & PBIS: positive behavior expectations; data review schedule with family participation.
- Family partnership: monthly check-ins; data-sharing agreements; language access plan.

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Quick “First Week” To-Do

- Email your “IEP/504 Snapshot” + care plans to teacher, nurse, counselor, and admin.
- Pack a mini health kit (inhaler/epi-pen/diabetes supplies/seizure meds) per school policy.
- Add key school numbers; test communication apps/portals.
- Set one measurable goal with the team for the first 30 days (attendance, regulation, or access).
- Create a person-centered one-pager.