Cardiac Neurodevelopmental Outcome (CANDO) Program

How to Best Communicate with Hospital Staff and Your Child’s School

Communicating with Children’s National Staff Members about School Support
Our team wants to help your child do well in school. Here’s how the different staff at Children’s National can help with school needs.

- **Social Worker** – Talk with your social worker about any concerns you have about your child’s education. They can answer common questions about school and can refer you to the education specialist or an advocacy group, if needed.
- **Physician or Nurse Practitioner** – Check with your physician or nurse practitioner to find out the number of appointments and hospital stays your child may have. This will help determine if you need to set your child up with home and hospital instruction.
- **Education Specialist** – Contact Wanda Rankin, the CANDO education specialist, if you have trouble getting instruction or supports in place. Her number is 202-476-5870.
- **Child Life Specialist** – Ask the child life specialist to add schoolwork to your child’s daily schedule, if they have one. This will encourage a normal routine and will help to make sure that your child stays up-to-speed with school.
- **Neuropsychologist** – The American Heart Association (AHA) and American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) have recommended that children with CHD have regular neurodevelopmental follow up. If you have not yet seen our neurodevelopmental professionals, or if you feel updated testing is needed, contact our neuropsychologist, developmental psychologist or educational specialist for more information.
Communicating with Your Child’s School

The better the communication you have with your child’s school, the easier it will be to get the appropriate services for your child. Communication should start at the time of diagnosis and should continue throughout your child’s treatment and beyond. Here are tips that can help you keep communication open:

• **Find a school contact and build a partnership** – Ask if there is one person at the school who can be your point person to avoid the confusion of talking with multiple school staff members.

• **Communicate early and often** – Do not wait until a problem has become difficult to address it.

• **Provide information** – This might include information about your child’s medical and emotional status, thoughts on your child’s adjustment to school, ideas about what the school can do to help your child and your expectations of the school.

• **Ask for information** – Ask for results of evaluations completed at the school, the teacher or other school staff’s thoughts of your child’s adjustment to school, and what you as a family member can do to help your child.

• **Be proactive** – State concerns in a positive way, be open to other solutions, and revisit issues when supports are not working.

Letters to Your Child’s School

During and after treatment, you will need to talk with your child’s school on a regular basis and the school may ask for different letters. Letters can be from the social worker, the education specialist, or other health care providers.

• **Absences** – Let your child’s school know when your child will be absent, regardless of the length of time. If you need a letter or form to give to the school, please check with your provider when you are here for your child’s appointment or hospital stay. It’s also important to talk with the school about your child’s plan for return.

• **504 Plan** – If you have completed the steps for helping your child receive a 504 Plan and the school is not providing appropriate supports, contact the education specialist.

• **Individualized Education Program (IEP)** – If you have asked for a meeting to have your child evaluated for services through an IEP and the school is not willing to test your child, contact the education specialist.

• **Returning to school** – When returning to school in between or after treatment, your child may need to take extra care to stay healthy. If needed, the education specialist can work with the nurse practitioner or physician to draft a letter that will inform the school of supports that should be in place when your child returns.
School Assignments
Check with your child’s teacher to get any schoolwork when your child is absent from school. It is important for your child to stay up-to-date with schoolwork, even if he or she is only missing a few days.

Back to School
We encourage students to return to school as soon as possible during or following treatment. Discuss plans for school attendance with your child’s physician or nurse practitioner on a regular basis. When the physician provides medical clearance for your child, we strongly encourage him or her to attend school.

Some children are excited to return to school, while others have fears about going back to school. Children and parents might be worried about infection, being behind in schoolwork, or a change in looks. This change can be difficult. Going to school will help to create a routine in your child’s life and will help to keep him or her from falling behind.

Our team is here to support you and your child with this transition – please ask to speak to a psychologist or the education specialist, if your child is worried about going back to school.