

RE-ENTRY PROCEDURE

FOR STUDENTS RETURNING TO SCHOOL FROM A MENTAL HEALTH HOSPITALIZATION

INTRODUCTION

Our re-entry procedure for students returning to school after an absence due to a mental health crisis begins when the school is notified of the student's hospitalization. Establishing good communication with the family and with the mental health treatment providers (to the extent that the family wishes us to be involved) is key to the student's transition back to school. It is important for the school to have as much time as possible between notification of the hospitalization and the return-date. This will help ensure time to plan a smooth transition back to school. The more a student experiences a successful, supportive, and smooth transition back to school after a mental health crisis, the more they will be able to self-regulate, manage their school stress, implement their coping strategies and re-engage in their learning.

PURPOSE

Working with a student and their family to re-enter school after a mental health crisis can be an intensive and complex process with many things to consider and coordinate. Having a district-wide procedure will help staff know what to do quickly and effectively. A coordinated effort among staff will help to ensure that the student's needs are understood and the appropriate plan and resources are put in place for the student to continue managing their mental health needs and re-engage in their learning.

PROCEDURE STEPS

1 School receives notification of student's hospitalization.

- There are many ways a school may find out about a student's hospitalization/admission to a mental health program. (verbal notification from parent to teacher, counselor, social worker, teacher consultant, principal, secretary, or a voicemail message on attendance line, or from a third party, etc.)
- All potential points of contact of such information need to be informed of how to respond and who to contact when that information is received.

Staff response to an electronic notification of student's hospitalization

- Send communication to student's counselor and notify building administration.

Staff response to parent's verbal notification of student's hospitalization

- Thank and reassure the parent
 - Let the parent know you appreciate them letting the school know and that you are so glad the student is getting the help they need to feel better.
 - Reassure parents that their first priority is to focus on making sure the student gets better and that the school will work with them to figure things out and help the student transition back to school when he/she/they are ready.
 - Tell parents someone will be contacting them to follow up (if not you).
 - Obtain information on the best times and way to contact parent(s).
 - Refer information to student's counselor and notify building administration.

Determine who will be the point person (ie., counselor, building administrator, social worker, teacher consultant).

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Communication with home upon notification of hospitalization.

- Gather any details that the parent is comfortable sharing, as school needs some information to help support the student's absence and prepare for the student's return to school.
 - Where is the student being admitted?
 - What is the anticipated length of absence?
 - Is there a release of information that outlines what information can be shared between school and the treatment program?
 - Any information the school shares would be specifically related to the social, emotional, and behavioral functioning of the student at school.
 - Helpful information about the treatment program, including information/strategies that will:
 - Help us provide more supportive interactions with the student,
 - Help the student manage their school stress,
 - Help the student self-regulate at school.
 - What information/reason about the absence is the student comfortable with teachers knowing? (They may need time to talk with student about info the student wants shared)
 - What is the student's capability or desire to complete work during the absence? We encourage school work to take a back seat to treatment during hospitalization, especially if there is not a school component to the treatment program.
 - For programs with a school component, schools will follow treatment facility recommendations for school work.
 - Teachers will work with students upon their return to determine what missing work will be forgiven, what works needs to be made up for learning, and what work needs to be completed for a grade.
 - Statement of admission from hospital will excuse absences.
 - Any other information the parent wants to share.
 - Agree to be in contact when discharge date is known or when any changes impact school.
 - Check in with student and family weekly to find out how the student is doing, answer any questions, and address any worries about school.

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3 Communication & coordination among school staff during student's hospitalization.

- Inform the student's teachers of the situation and provide any additional information available.
- If appropriate, encourage teacher(s) to reach out to the student to let the student know they are thinking of them, hope they feel better soon, reassure them that they will work together when they come back to figure out how to catch up, etc.
- Communicate with teachers what the school work plan is during student absence.
 - Excuse as much as possible during a hospitalization for students who are unable to complete any work during their absence.
 - Even if a student is able to complete work, consider a reduction in assignment length or number of assignments given. Or ask that only a couple subjects give assignments.
- If possible, have teachers designate in grading platforms which assignments and assessments will be forgiven, and indicate extended due dates for assignments and assessments that need to be made up.
- Provide any needed guidance and support to teachers excusing/forgiving work.
- Stop any attendance letters from going home.
- Discuss any potential changes or accommodations that may help the student upon their return (reduced day, schedule changes, etc).
- Keep teachers updated as information becomes available about student's progress, discharge, and return to school.

4 Schedule a Student Re-Entry Plan Meeting when discharge date is known.

- Inform teachers and other staff (with an educational interest in the student) of student's return date.
- If it is requested to arrange a Re-Entry Plan Meeting with hospital/program staff in attendance, the meeting would need to be scheduled before the student is discharged.
- In general, schedule a Re-Entry Plan Meeting anytime prior to the student returning to class.
- Invite those most helpful to the student & situation: student, parent(s), counselor, teacher, TC, graduation coach, social worker, parapro, administrator, coach, etc.

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Schedule a Student Re-Entry Plan Meeting when discharge date is known.

- We will want to be careful not to overwhelm the student with too many people. So, the meeting could be any combination of people, or could also just be a meeting with the student and their school counselor.
- Inform parent of the re-entry meeting date and who will be attending the meeting.

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Make contact with the treatment team before discharge (if the parent signed release) to find out any recommendations they have for the student's return to school.

- What strategies does the hospital/program suggest to help the student manage their school stress?
- Did the hospital/program identify any triggers to a student's distress or any physical/behavioral warning signs that we may see here at school?
- Any specific ways of talking with the student or other ways school staff can interact with the student that you found helps the student to de-escalate, self-regulate, or re-direct behavior?
- If suicide risk or suicidal ideation is an issue, what prevention steps and/or response actions by staff and agreements with home should be included in a school "safety plan"?

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Hold Student Re-Entry Plan Meeting.

- [Student Re-Entry Plan Meeting template](#)
- Complete [Support & Safety Plan](#) if needed.
- After the meeting, inform student's teachers and any other staff supporting the student of any responsibilities they have within the Student Re-entry Plan and let them know of any Self-Regulation/ Mental Health Support/ Safety plans the student will be using.

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Review Student Re-entry Plan with student and parents regularly.

- Problem-solve any issues the student may have and/or adjust the Student Re-entry Plan as needed.

