# Transitioning Students Back to In-Person Learning: Tips for Supporting Students with Challenging Behaviors

**COVID-19 has caused disruption and impacted many aspects of our everyday lives. The transition to virtual instruction may have been challenging for many students to navigate in the beginning stages. Students with challenging behaviors may have experienced disruptions to normal routines and to the behavioral interventions and supports they have been accustomed to receiving in a traditional school setting. As a result, additional considerations may be needed to ensure a successful transition back to in-person learning. This document is intended to provide practical tips to ensure schools have an action plan for students and families as schools prepare to return to in-person learning.**

**Connect** with families and students throughout the school year. Designate a point of contact to communicate with the students and families and to serve as a point person in the school building.

- Contact parents and students to setup a virtual meeting. Provide resources such as a schedule, pictures of school staff (e.g., teachers, principals) and areas of the school (e.g., classrooms, cafeteria, gyms).

- Ask questions to gauge how students and parents are feeling about returning to school.

- Find out if any life events have occurred that may impact the student's academic and/or behavioral success at school.

- Establish regular one-on-one check-ins to assist with decisions on how to support students and families as they prepare to return to school and throughout the school year to ensure the student is still on track to be successful.

- Create a weekly virtual peer group for students to discuss what they are excited about as well as concerns with returning to school. This will allow students to connect with other students and share their feelings. If signs of anxiety or fear arise, coping and calming strategies can be discussed.

- Set up a virtual tour of the school building and the classroom.

- Recognize the individual challenges of transitioning to a new school, either due to moving or aging up to a new school (e.g., new middle-schoolers, high school freshman).

- Consider when a gradual return (e.g., virtual to in-person, modified schedule) to the school building through an educational homebound placement may be needed. IEP teams should meet to discuss the appropriateness for individual students.

**Identify** the student's areas of academic and/or behavioral strengths and needs by using assessment data and parent/guardian reported information. Some students may continue to be on target to meet goals, whereas others may have been greatly impacted by disruptions to in-person learning.

- Conduct a variety of formal and informal assessments (e.g., observations, screening tools, progress monitoring, family input) to determine students' instructional levels.

- Consider academic and behavioral components.

- Compare current student data with data acquired prior to disruptions to in-person learning.

- Revise IEPs as needed and plan instruction as well as needed interventions.

**Support** students by providing a learning environment that promotes the students' academic and positive social emotional growth. Additional layers of support may be required such as a functional behavior assessment (FBA) to guide the development of a behavior intervention plan (BIP).  Review existing BIPs for any needed revisions.

- Define and teach behavioral expectations to students.

- Allow students opportunities to practice and receive feedback.

- Acknowledge students when they are behaving appropriately through verbal or tangible reinforcement.

- Ensure BIPs are being implemented with fidelity across the school day.

**Monitor** the student's academic and behavior needs to identify whether the supports being provided are sufficient. As the year progresses, students may require less or modified support.

- Track student progress.

- Monitor fidelity of the BIP to ensure the plan is implemented consistently and as planned.

- Monitor discipline issues (e.g., office referrals, in-school suspensions, out of school suspensions).

- Develop criteria for determining non-responsiveness to intervention and devise a plan for adjustments.