

Supporting Families During the Summer Transition

Summer is often a time of great excitement for children – marking the end of the school year and the promise of warmer weather. This is also a time that can pose challenges for parents, caregivers, and children as routines and structures are often disrupted. This is especially true for children, youth and families who have experienced trauma and forced displacement as the predictability and consistency of their school routine is often supportive of their emotional and mental health and wellbeing. The loss of this routine can result in stress, anxiety, challenges with mood regulation, and a reduced sense of security and control.

As a provider, you can support families navigating this transitional time by providing guidance and resources for successfully navigating the summer season so that summer can be an opportunity for educational support, connection with community, and re-establishment of healthy and supportive routinesⁱ ⁱⁱ. Take time to talk to families about how routine and structure not only support healthy habits but also give children, especially younger children, a sense of safety and security:

Strengths-based structure. Encourage parents and caregivers to involve their children in developing summer routines and structures that are based on their children's unique strengths, interests, and needs. This might include setting realistic goals, such as reading a certain number of books or learning a new sport. This can also include the incorporation of family and community values and priorities, such as community service or connection, academic preparation, or outdoor activities.

Daily routines. Daily routines help provide security and predictability, which can reduce stress and anxiety. Parents and caregivers can help their children incorporate regular daily tasks like daily hygiene tasks and regularly scheduled meals, along with planning educational, recreational and relaxation activities for their children. The plan can help build anticipation and excitement and can encourage learning, enjoyment and connection with friends, family and community.

- Offer support identifying organized activities. Some helpful resources include programming at [public libraries](#), the [National Summer Learning Association](#), and the U.S. Government site [childcare.gov](#), which has information about school-aged child care and camp programs.
- Remind families that while it is important to create healthy habits and limits around screen time, social media and news intake, screen time can be a beneficial part of daily routines, especially for connecting with loved ones who don't live nearby.

Physical activity. Regular physical activity is essential for both physical and mental health. Encourage parents to work with their children to identify opportunities for safe and regular physical activity.



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Sleep hygiene. Keeping a consistent sleep schedule is a difficult but important part of children's emotional and physical health. Encourage parents and caregivers to help their children stick to a relatively stable sleep and wake time, meaning bedtime and rising times that don't change by more than an hour from one day to the next. This promotes adequate rest and can help prevent sleep issues that can contribute to mental health challenges.

ⁱ <https://www.brownhealth.org/be-well/summer-schedules-and-why-children-need-them>

ⁱⁱ <https://tccnc.org/the-importance-of-setting-a-summer-routine-balancing-productivity-and-leisure/>