

ADHD: Talking to your child's or teen's teachers

If you have a child or teen with attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), talking with school teachers and counselors and keeping them informed about your child's ADHD treatment can help with your child's overall success in school.

How can the school help evaluate my child for ADHD?

Your child's school counselor, school psychologist, or teacher(s) can give important information about your child's symptoms. ADHD symptoms often show up at school because it's a setting that requires self-control and focus.

Your doctor may give you a school evaluation packet to gather information about symptoms that your child may be having at school. Take or mail it to the school. Include a signed statement that gives your permission for your child's teacher or school counselor to complete it. Let them know when you'll need the packet returned so your doctor has it for your child's next appointment.

How can the school team help my child with ADHD succeed?

If your child is diagnosed with ADHD, let the school know. They should put together a team to help your child succeed. You can participate on this team — your ideas and insights about your child can be very helpful. The school will probably invite you to meetings with the school counselor, teachers, and perhaps other school professionals to discuss the best approach for your child. Be sure to attend these meetings.

As a team, you will work together to set goals for your child's learning, decide on consistent school and home plans, and share your child's progress.



Students with ADHD may be eligible for aid

Students with ADHD may be eligible for extra help in the regular education classroom or special-education services based on 2 federal laws:

- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 protects qualified students from discrimination based on their disabilities. Students with ADHD may qualify for extra help in regular classrooms based on this law. The key is whether their symptoms substantially limit their ability to learn. If a student qualifies for aid, it will be unique to their needs. Examples include seating arrangements, peer tutoring, technology, study skills training, extra time to complete tasks, reduced homework, open-book exams, and extra time for exams or untimed exams.
- The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) guarantees the right to free and appropriate education to students with disabilities. Students with ADHD may be covered by this law. The key is whether their symptoms affect their performance at school. The school can set up an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) for your child, based on IDEA qualification. An IEP sets up learning goals unique to your child's needs, and a plan to meet those goals.

How can I help my child succeed?

Even if your child has superb teachers, their success in school also depends on your teamwork with those teachers. Here are some ways to work with your child's school to help them learn at their full potential:

- **Learn and listen.** Learn as much about ADHD as you can. Then listen to the opinions and insights of your child's teachers. Your child will have a better chance of success if you approach teachers with a sense of teamwork rather than a list of demands.
- **Work with your child and your child's teachers to set goals.** If you set a behavioral or academic goal together, your child can focus on that goal at both school and home.
- **Make homework positive.** Set aside specific times for homework in a quiet place. Check your child's work, provide frequent guidance, and praise them. A reward system can also be helpful.
- **Communicate regularly.** Follow these tips:
 - **Share your insights about your child.** No one knows your child better than you. You know what distracts or frustrates them. You know what rewards are meaningful to them. Share this information to help your child's teachers choose good strategies.
 - **Tell your child's teachers when there are changes in your child's medication or other treatments.** Teachers can watch for side effects or other symptoms during the school day. The teacher's input is helpful when your child's doctor is evaluating medications for your child.
 - **Ask one of your child's teachers to set up a brief, weekly communication with you** (such as a phone call, email, or note in the child's backpack).
- **Stay involved.** Along with attending parent-teacher meetings, join the PTA or volunteer in the classroom if you can. Getting to know your child's teachers and friends can help you understand your child's needs and potential at school.



Where can I learn more?

Information about ADHD:

- Intermountain's handout, ADHD: Talking with your child.

Organizations and groups that can help:

- Children and Adults with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (CHADD): chadd.org, chaddofutah.com
- NAMI of Utah: namiut.org
- Utah Parent Center: utahparentcenter.org
- Utah State Office of Education: (801) 538-7587

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