

# TALKING WITH YOUR CHILD'S SCHOOL

## A Back-to-School Guide for Families with Young Caregivers



As the school year begins, your family may choose to let your child's teachers and school staff know how caregiving may impact their academic experience. Sharing this information—on your terms—can help build a support system that allows your child to thrive both academically and emotionally.

Students who help care for someone may:

- Arrive late or miss school due to responsibilities at home, appointment, bad days, etc.
- Feel tired, anxious, or distracted during the day
- Avoid extracurriculars or social time due to limited availability
- Have a hard time making friends with peers who don't have the same experience

While not every caregiving experience causes challenges at school, if it does, teachers and staff may be better able to respond with understanding and flexibility when they know what's going on and how to support your child.

Alternatively, school may be your child's safe space, a break from care tasks and home stressors. This may come across as the youth not wanting to talk about care, but in reality, they need a respite and school is often that respite.

### Choosing What to Share

You are not required to share your family's caregiving situation, and it's okay to protect your child's privacy. If you decide to open up, even a brief conversation or email can open the door to support. You might say something like:

*"We have a person living with [a medical, mental health, etc condition] at home. While my child is managing well, it can sometimes impact their time, energy, or ability to focus. We'd like to stay in touch about how things are going and work together to support them if anything comes up."*

What you choose to share is entirely up to you. Some families find it helpful to mention:

- A general sense of what caregiving looks like without going into private medical details
- Any known factors that might affect attendance, assignment completion, or emotional regulation such as doctor appointments
- What behaviors your child exhibits when they are stressed
- Tools or strategies that help their child feel calm, supported, or focused during the school day

## Questions to Consider Asking

- Is there a staff member our child can check in with if they're having a tough day?
- What's the best way to communicate with you if something caregiving-related affects my child or their participation at school?
- Are there any mental health supports or flexibility options available to students in unique family situations?

## Building a Supportive Connection

If you choose to share, framing the conversation as a partnership can help. You might start with:

*"We're hoping to work together to make sure our child is supported as both a student and a young person managing responsibilities at home."*

## Other tips:

- Reach out early, before challenges arise
- Include a counselor or social worker if you are comfortable with them and feel it is appropriate
- Revisit the conversation if your family's situation changes

## Know Your Rights

Every family has the right to advocate for their child's education, safety, and well-being. However, laws and services vary by state. In the US the [National Research Center for Parents with Disabilities](#) has great resources to help you determine what your rights are and where to find support in your area.

## Help empower teachers

Share the guide 'At School: A Guide to Supporting Students Who Have Been Affected by ALS.'

While the guide focuses on ALS, the insights and strategies apply to all young people who are caregiving for a loved one.



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