

Voices 4 Youth in Pain



Parent Handout: Checking In About School Accommodations



Why This Conversation Matters

As a parent, it's important to regularly check in with your child to see if their school accommodations are working as they should. This helps you understand if your child is getting the support they need and empowers them to advocate for themselves.



Step 1: Start by Creating a Comfortable Space

Make sure the conversation is relaxed and stress-free. Set aside time to check in when both you and your child are calm and focused.

Try saying:

- “Hey, I wanted to check in with you about school. How’s everything going with your accommodations?”
 - “I’m curious about how things are going in class. Do you think your needs are being met?”
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Step 2: Ask Specific Questions

Keep the conversation focused on whether specific accommodations are being followed. These can include things like extra time on tests, a quiet space to work, or assistive technology.

Here are some questions you can ask:

1. **“Are you getting the extra time on tests or assignments that you need?”**
 - Follow-up: “Do you feel like you have enough time? Is there ever a time when it’s not enough?”
2. **“Do you get to take breaks when you feel you need to with your chronic pain?”**
 - Follow-up: “Do you know when it’s okay to take a break? How does it feel when you do?”

3. **“Are you able to use the tools or technology that help you with reading/writing? (e.g., text-to-speech, audio books)”**
 - Follow-up: “Have there been any times you needed it and couldn’t use it?”
 4. **“Is there a quiet space for you to work if you need it?”**
 - Follow-up: “Do you get distracted in class? Do you feel like you have a place to focus?”
 5. **“Do you feel comfortable talking to your teacher about your needs?”**
 - Follow-up: “Have you been able to ask for help or let them know if something isn’t working for you?”
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Step 3: Understand How They Feel

This isn’t just about whether accommodations are being used—it's also about how your child feels when they are used.

Ask questions like:

- “How do you feel when you’re able to use your accommodations? Does it help?”
 - “When you’re not getting the support you need, how does it affect you?”
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Step 4: Be Ready to Take Action Together

If your child feels like their accommodations aren’t being followed or aren’t helping, it’s time to work together to find a solution.

Try saying:

- “Thanks for telling me how you feel. Let’s figure out what we can do together.”
 - “If something isn’t working, I’ll talk to the school and see what we can do.”
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Step 5: Plan for Follow-Up

Let your child know you'll keep checking in and encourage them to let you know if something changes.

Try saying:

- “We’ll keep talking about how school is going and what’s working for you.”
 - “If anything changes, tell me right away so we can make sure you’re getting the help you need.”
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Quick Checklist for Parents:

- Ask your child if they feel their accommodations are being used consistently.
 - Check how they feel about the effectiveness of the accommodations.
 - Address any areas where they feel unsupported.
 - Follow up with school staff if necessary.
 - Keep communication open with your child, encouraging self-advocacy.
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Remember:

Your child’s experience matters. By regularly checking in and supporting them in advocating for their needs, you ensure that they have the best chance to succeed in school.

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How to Follow Up with Teachers or School Staff

If your child expresses that their accommodations aren't being followed, or if you just want to make sure everything is on track, here are some steps you can take to advocate effectively:

Step 1: Reach Out to the Teacher or Support Staff

Contacting the teacher or staff member directly is often the best place to start. Be clear and respectful when outlining your concerns.

You can say:

- “Hi [Teacher’s Name], I wanted to check in about the accommodations my child, [Child’s Name], has in place. Could you let me know how things are going with those? Are there any issues with implementing them in the classroom?”
- “I’ve noticed some things that might not be working as well at home, and I just wanted to check in to make sure we’re all on the same page about what should be happening at school.”

Tip: Keep the tone collaborative, not confrontational. The goal is to work together to ensure your child’s success.

Step 2: Be Specific About the Concerns

If there are specific accommodations that aren’t being followed, be prepared to share those details.

Example:

- “I’ve heard from [Child’s Name] that they’re not getting the extra time on tests that’s part of their accommodation. Can we discuss how this can be better implemented moving forward?”
 - “My child mentioned that they’re not being allowed breaks during stressful periods, even though it’s part of their plan. Could we figure out a way to make this work more consistently?”
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Step 3: Set Up a Meeting or Conference

If the teacher is not responsive through email or there are ongoing concerns, a face-to-face meeting (or a virtual meeting) may be necessary. This ensures that everyone is on the same page and can discuss any challenges directly.

Request a meeting with this type of phrasing:

- “I’d appreciate the opportunity to meet and discuss how we can ensure that [Child’s Name]’s accommodations are being fully implemented. Would it be possible to set up a time to talk?”
 - “It seems like there may be some confusion about [Child’s Name]’s accommodations. Can we arrange a meeting to review the plan together?”
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Step 4: Review the Accommodation Plan Together

During the meeting, make sure everyone involved—teachers, special education staff, and any other relevant personnel—are familiar with your child’s accommodation plan (IEP or 504 Plan). Ask if there’s anything that needs clarification or updating.

Ask questions like:

- “Can we go over the details of [Child’s Name]’s plan to ensure we’re all clear on the accommodations in place?”
 - “Are there any barriers to implementing these accommodations that we might not be aware of?”
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Step 5: Follow Up on the Discussion

After the meeting or conversation, check in with both the teacher and your child to ensure the accommodations are being followed. If necessary, request updates on any changes that have been made.

You can say:

- “I just wanted to follow up after our meeting to make sure everything is going smoothly. Is [Child’s Name] getting the support they need?”

- “Please let me know if there are any further issues. I want to make sure [Child’s Name] is feeling supported.”

Tip: Keep a record of all communications and meetings for future reference, as this will help in case you need to advocate for additional changes down the line.

Step 6: Keep the Dialogue Open

Ongoing communication with the school is key. Even after you’ve addressed any initial issues, keep the door open for future conversations.

You can say:

- “I’m looking forward to hearing how things progress with [Child’s Name]’s accommodations. Please don’t hesitate to reach out if there are any other concerns.”
 - “If you ever need additional input or if we need to make any adjustments to the plan, let me know.”
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Quick Tips for Effective Follow-Up:

- **Be Clear:** Be specific about which accommodations you’re concerned about and how they’re not being met.
 - **Be Positive:** Approach the conversation with a mindset of collaboration, not confrontation.
 - **Be Persistent:** If issues continue, keep following up—sometimes adjustments take time, but it’s important to advocate for your child’s needs.
 - **Document Everything:** Keep records of all emails, meetings, and phone calls in case you need to escalate the matter.
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Remember:

You are your child’s best advocate, and your involvement helps ensure they receive the support they need to succeed in school. By working together with the school, you can help create an environment where your child can thrive.