



Back to School: Survival Tips for Caregivers

If you are the caregiver for a school-aged child, you know the last couple of weeks of summer come with a soundtrack. It's the sound of alarm clocks being tested, backpacks being pulled out of storage (and checked for the smell of last year's science fair projects gone wrong), and every parent whispering the same wish: "Please let the school supply list not require a specific brand of glue stick that isn't sold out everywhere."

Back-to-school is one of the most QUIETLY stressful stretches of the year. No, it's not a big crisis, but it's a hundred small ones, stacked on top of your actual job. New schedules, teachers, and new anxieties all while expecting to show up at the 9 a.m. meeting looking like a functional adult. The good news is that a little planning goes a long way.

Sleep schedule reset. Most children's bedtime creeps later and later throughout the summer weeks. Start shifting bedtime and wake time by 20-30 minutes every few days. This makes it easier for you AND your child to adjust.

Morning system vs. morning rush. Make morning decisions in advance and not at 7:05 a.m.

- **Lay out clothing the night before.**
Option: allow child to pick from two options
- **Pack lunches and school bag the night before.** Your future self will thank you.
- **Keep a launch pad.** Avoid morning scavenger hunts by picking a spot by the door for shoes, keys, backpacks and permission slips.
- **Talk with your supervisor early.**
Managers don't like surprises. Check in with your department about scheduling, leave options, and flexible areas.

Watch for signs of anxiety. New classrooms, new teachers, and new social dynamics are just some examples where stress may arise.

- **Develop a consistent "have a good day!" routine and check in when they come back home.** Having some structure at home helps kids feel secure. Use these moments to assess for distress and ask open-ended questions about their day.

A bit of time for you. Even ten minutes of something that's just yours (a walk after drop-off, coffee in silence) helps regulate stress. Give yourself some grace. You've got this. And if you don't feel like you've got it some days, well, that's normal too.

Employee Assistance Program



City of Milwaukee EAP

IN THIS ISSUE:

- **Back to School Tips for Caregivers**
- **Back-to-School Routines**
- **Parent-Teacher Communication**

EAP Contact

Cris Zamora

200 E. Wells St. #706

Ph. 414-286-3145

Email:

czamora@milwaukee.gov



Creating a Back to School Routine

Start before the first school bell.

Begin shifting bed and wake times 1-2 weeks in advance, in 15-minute increments, so the adjustment feels gradual and less overwhelming

Use a visual schedule. A simple chart on the fridge showing morning steps, afterschool activities, and bedtime routines.

Prep the night before. Laying out clothing, packing lunches, and organizing backpacks the evening before minimizes morning chaos.

Set “screen times.” Set a consistent “screens off” time 30-60 minutes before bed for both kids and adults. This supports better sleep quality, which is foundational to mood, focus, and patience.

Schedule family check-ins. A short daily check-in, even five minutes at dinner, gives kids a chance to talk about their day and gives parents a low-pressure way to catch early signs of stress or difficulty adjusting.

Create a homework anchor point. Designate a consistent time and place for homework. Consistency reduces nightly negotiations.

Build in flexibility. New routines rarely work out perfectly right away. Expect some trial & error over the first few weeks, and adjust based on what you learn rather than abandoning the plan altogether.

Here’s to a smooth and exciting start to the school year!

Parent-Teacher Communication

Kids do best when home and school are on the same team. Positive communication is at the heart of any successful team.

Start early, not in crisis.

Introduce yourself in the first few weeks. A short note or an email is enough to get started. Teachers remember which parents reached out before there was a problem, which makes future conversations easier.

Approach with curiosity, not accusations. Instead of “why is my child not getting help?” try “can you help me understand what you’re seeing in class?”

Be specific. “My son says he’s struggling” is harder to act on than “he’s been coming home overwhelmed and saying math homework takes two hours.” Specifics help teachers problem-solve with you.

Ask what the teacher is noticing.

Teachers see your child in social and academic settings you don’t have access to. Ask, “What does this look like during the school day?”

Respect the teacher’s time.

Teachers often have 25+ students and limited planning periods. A statement like “Do you have 10 minutes this week to talk about x?” acknowledges time constraints.

Assume good faith but advocate.

Most teachers want your child to succeed. You can be warm and appreciative while also pushing for what your child needs.

Use of support staff. If communication with the teacher stalls, a counselor or social worker may be able to help mediate.

The goal isn’t a perfect parent-teacher relationship; it’s a working one built on trust and working through tough conversations

EAP Mission Statement

The mission of the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is to assist employees who develop behavioral/emotional problems that may directly affect their work performance, and to provide Key Personnel with policy and procedural guidelines for managing these problems.

Wellness Resources

- For information about current Wellness programs and services, visit: www.milwaukee.gov/WYCM
- The City’s Workplace Clinic provides free, convenient, on-site and virtual health care services for employees and spouses regardless of enrollment in the City’s health insurance and dependents (18 months and older) on the City’s health insurance. Call 414-777-3413 to schedule an in-person or virtual visit.
- The City of Milwaukee Employee Assistance Program web page houses topical information and resources on a wide range of work-life issues. Visit: <https://city.milwaukee.gov/DER/EAP>
- The City of Milwaukee offers a free **Care.com membership** to employees through Care@Work. A Care.com membership provides access to a platform employees can use to find and manage care for children, seniors, pets and their home. Visit www.milwaukee.gov/careatwork to learn more.