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Web Exclusive: Developing a Strategy

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There are several organizations and institutions that have prepared school-related documents and checklists for parents of childhood cancer patients. Here are a few below:

Letter to the Parents

There are various forms to choose from—or you can create your own—that allow you to send a letter through the school informing other parents of your child’s cancer. This may help other parents to prepare for any questions their children may have about cancer, as well as explaining the importance of informing the school of any contagious illnesses their child may have, such as chickenpox, which may endanger your child with cancer. Examples of letters include:

- > [“Sample Letter Regarding Chicken Pox”](#) from Washington University’s Medical Center
- > [“The Chicken Pox Letter”](#) from the Pediatric Oncology Resource Center, a resource developed by the Association of Cancer Online Resources

Help for Teachers

Providing information for both the teacher and the students will help the school prepare for your child’s return. Information that may help your child’s teacher include:

- > [“Tips for Teachers”](#) from Washington University’s Medical Center
- > [“Checklist: Information You Need From Parents”](#) from [Cancervive](#), a nonprofit organization for cancer survivors, offers parents and teachers a quick list of topics to discuss before the child returns to school.
- > The [American Cancer Society](#) has a list of materials and programs for teachers that can be requested by calling 800-227-2345.

Know the Law

School administrators may have the best intentions in mind, but it’s helpful to know the law when it comes to providing your child with appropriate accommodations at school. An Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) can be

developed for any child with special education needs, such as children who are disabled or health impaired, including children with cancer. Resources that provide information on IEP include:

- > [“IEPs and Legal Rights”](#) from the Pediatric Oncology Resource Center
- > [“Educational Services for Children with Cancer”](#) by CureSearch provides checklists and instructions on how to obtain an IEP through the school

Be Prepared

Create a calendar that will show when the child will be out for treatment. It’s also important to tell school administrators that while you have agreed on a plan, it may change in the future due to treatment, side effects, or other issues that may arise. Being flexible is vital. Have letters from the medical team on the length of treatment, potential side effects, any accommodations the child may need, medications that will be taken at school, and other needed information.

- > [“Medical and School Data Sheet”](#) distributed by Cancervive and developed by Julia Challinor, RN, PhD, at the University of California at San Francisco, is a comprehensive sheet that provides the school with information from the child’s medical team.
- > Cancervive also provides other school-related resources, including two videos: "Emily's Story" for elementary school-aged children and "Making the Grade" for teenagers. Both can be ordered at www.cancervive.org.