



A publication from Families Together, Inc., the Parent Training and Information and Family-to-Family Health Information Center for the State of Kansas



Welcome to our Spring 2023 Newsletter

Families Together provides assistance and guidance to help families and youth become partners in decision-making. We hope to hear from you, or meet you at one of our upcoming events!

Transition to Middle and High School

By Lisa Howell, Family and Youth Education Coordinator

Transitions of any kind can be difficult for students with disabilities. The transition to middle and high school comes with both excitement and anxiety. While the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) does not specifically speak to these transitions, there are certain things an IEP team can do to help make transitions as smooth as possible. Here are some tips on how to maximize successful transitions.

- Hold a transition IEP or 504 meeting. As a parent, you can request an IEP or 504 meeting at any time. Ask for a transition meeting with the staff at the new school who will be working with your child.
- Schedule an IEP or 504 team meeting about four weeks into the school year to discuss how your child is adjusting, and if any changes to their accommodations or modifications need to be made.
- Schedule visits at the new school and a transition meeting. This can be done during the school day, before school starts, or both.
- Allow your child the opportunity to see where they will enter the school, where the lunchroom is, where most of their classes will be held, and where their safe space will be.
- If your child is assigned a locker, ask to take home the lock to practice the combination over the summer. If the locks are integrated into the locker, ask for the combination, get a lock at the store, change the combination to the same numbers, and use that to practice.
- Ask your child's new IEP or 504 manager, counselor, or special education teacher to participate in a few virtual visits. Building a relationship with their main school contact will allow your child to already have a trusted individual at the new school.
- If your child has an accommodation that allows them to leave the class, ask that it specifically states how your child will signal to the teacher that they need to do so.

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Communication is key! Log in to your child's parent portal and if a drop in grades or turned in assignments is occurring, reach out to the teacher.

- Discuss with the IEP or 504 team if any additional wording needs to be added to your child's accommodations. For example, headphones are allowed during silent reading and instances where they need text to speech, on days when assessments are occurring your student is allowed to go to the separate, quiet environment first, instead of to the classroom and then leave.
- When your child's schedule is released, send an email to their teachers introducing yourself, your child, and a brief synopsis of their accommodations and modifications.
- Communication is key! Log in to your child's parent portal and if a drop in grades or turned in assignments is occurring, reach out to the teacher.

Working together, the IEP or 504 team can help your child make the most of their transition to a new school. Monitor your child's progress, communicate when you notice changes in behavior at home or dropping grades, and make sure you are receiving your child's progress reports regularly. You are your child's best advocate. With teamwork, your child can have a successful transition and thrive in their new environment!

Transición a la Escuela Intermedia y Secundaria

Las transiciones de cualquier tipo pueden ser difíciles para los estudiantes con discapacidades. La transición a la escuela intermedia y secundaria viene con entusiasmo y ansiedad. Si bien la Ley de Educación para Individuos con Discapacidades (IDEA) no habla específicamente de estas transiciones, hay ciertas cosas que un equipo de IEP puede hacer para ayudar a que las transiciones sean lo más suaves posible. Aquí hay algunos consejos sobre cómo maximizar las transiciones exitosas.

- Organizar una reunión de transición IEP o 504. Como padre, usted puede solicitar una reunión IEP o 504 en cualquier momento. Solicite una reunión de transición con el personal de la nueva escuela que trabajará con su hijo.
- Programar visitas a la nueva escuela. Esto se puede hacer durante el día escolar, antes de que comiencen las clases, o ambos. Permita que su hijo tenga la oportunidad de ver por dónde entrará a la escuela, dónde está el comedor, dónde se llevarán a cabo la mayoría de sus clases y dónde estará su espacio seguro.
- Si a su hijo se le asigna un casillero, pida llevarse el candado a casa para practicar la combinación durante el verano. Si las cerraduras están integradas en el casillero; pide la combinación, consigue un candado en la tienda, cambia la combinación a los números de los casilleros y úsalo para practicar.
- Pídale al nuevo administrador, consejero o maestro de educación especial del IEP o 504 de su hijo que participe en algunas visitas virtuales. Construir una relación con su contacto escolar principal permitirá que su hijo ya tenga una persona de confianza en la nueva escuela.
- Programe una reunión del equipo IEP o 504 aproximadamente cuatro semanas después del año escolar comienza para analizar cómo se está adaptando su hijo y si es necesario realizar cambios en sus adaptaciones o modificaciones.
- Si su hijo tiene una adaptación que le permite salir de la clase, pídale que indique específicamente cómo su hijo le indicará al maestro que tiene que hacerlo.
- Hable con el equipo del IEP o 504 si es necesario agregar alguna redacción adicional a las adaptaciones de su hijo. Por ejemplo, los audifonos están permitidos durante la lectura en silencio y en los casos en que necesitan texto a voz, en los días en que se realizan las evaluaciones, su estudiante puede ir primero al ambiente separado y tranquilo en lugar de al salón de clases y luego irse.
- Cuando se publique el horario de su hijo, envíe un correo electrónico a sus maestros presentándose a usted, a su hijo y una breve sinopsis de sus adaptaciones y modificaciones.
- ¡La comunicación es clave! Inicie sesión en el portal para padres de su hijo y, si se produce una disminución en las calificaciones o entrega de tareas, comuníquese con el maestro.

Trabajando juntos, el equipo IEP o 504 puede ayudar a su hijo a aprovechar al máximo su transición a una nueva escuela. Supervise el progreso de su hijo, comuníquese cuando note cambios en el comportamiento en el hogar o notas bajas, y asegúrese de recibir los informes de progreso de su hijo con regularidad. Usted es el mejor defensor de su hijo. ¡Con el trabajo en equipo, su hijo puede tener una transición exitosa y prosperar en su nuevo ambiente!

CHASE: Your Dreams Podcast

We are thrilled to present our new *CHASE: Your Dreams Podcast*, a podcast series for youth on topics of mental wellness, self-advocacy, and much more. Stream now on Apple, Spotify, and Bandcamp (Digital Link Below). It is a personal, fun series of episodes each with engaging storytelling, important life lessons, and all clocking in under 10 minutes. Topics include Gratitude, Breathing Techniques, and Speaking Up for Myself. We suggest you listen with your child or better yet, encourage your child's teacher to play them for a group of students.



Brad Girard is your host for the CHASE Your Dreams Podcast. Our goal at Families Together is to make this podcast fun and insightful for youth, sharing ways to be healthier and happier in order to achieve our dream lives. Listen along as we cover topics in mental wellness, education, and much more!

[CHASE Your Dreams Podcast | Families Together, Inc.](https://www.familiestogetherinc.org)
 [\(familiestogetherinc.org\)](https://www.familiestogetherinc.org)

Cultural Corner

Confronting Color-Blindness

All of us have probably heard someone say that they "don't see color," or that "it would be great if we could all just stop noticing race." While these statements may be well-intentioned, colorblind ideology undermines diversity, inclusion, and equity. Here's an online module that can help us understand the concepts of color-blindness, color evasion, and power evasion and how they may show up in our interactions with families, staff and colleagues.

Equity Module: <https://ready.web.unc.edu/>



Want to stay up-to-date?

Consider subscribing to our newsletter electronically! Not only will you receive the newsletter, you will also receive our biweekly Monday Memo which is full of relevant articles and resources. You'll also help us save trees and reduce printing costs! Let us know you're interested by emailing topeka@familiestogetherinc.org.

For more resources, visit
www.familiestogetherinc.org

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Kansas Medicaid Renewal: Things you need to know

Since March of 2020, the Kansas Medicaid Program has followed special rules related to the federal COVID-19 Public Health Emergency (PHE).

These rules have allowed most KanCare members to keep their health coverage, even if they no longer qualify – for example, if your income is too high.

There are new Medicaid rules coming soon. Kansas Medicaid will begin its eligibility determinations process April 1, 2023. We could see the first wave of disenrollment's in Medicaid starting May 1, 2023.

This means: 1) all members enrolled in the KanCare program will be reviewed to see if they still qualify for coverage; 2) many members will receive mail from Kansas Medicaid as a part of this review; 3) members will have to confirm or provide additional information so Kansas Medicaid can decide whether they still qualify for health care coverage; and, 4) members who do not respond to Kansas Medicaid mail may lose their coverage. Make sure Kansas Medicaid has your correct mailing address.

If you are over 18 and no longer qualify for KanCare, you may be able to get coverage you can afford from the Federal Health Insurance Marketplace. Visit: <http://www.healthcare.gov> or <http://GetCoveredKansas.org>

Children: Most kids can still be covered through the Children's Health Insurance Program/KanCare. For details check your Medicaid notice or call 1-800-792-4884 for more information.



Upcoming Events

Our workshops and conferences are offered to parents, foster and adoptive parents, family members, education advocates, special educators, paraprofessionals, administrators, service providers, and other individuals who care for, and about children/youth who have disabilities.



Education Advocate
April 11 Donna Bramlage Public Library
230 W 7th St, Junction City, KS 66441

Education Advocates “step into the role” of the parent in special education matters and advocate for the child/student. Advocates should be willing to assert their rights as the legal educational decision maker and effectively advocate for the student while working to build a strong school team around the student.

Find us on Facebook!
www.facebook.com/FamiliesTogetherInc

For more information, visit
famiestogetherinc.org/events/

FEAT: Family Employment Awareness Training
April 29 Independent Living Resource Center
3033 West 2nd Street, Wichita, KS 67203

- Part 1: Building the Dream of Employment
- Outside the Box job possibilities
 - Using transition services in the IEP to support employment
 - Meet individuals with disabilities who are successfully employed (afternoon panel)

FEAT: Family Employment Awareness Training
May 5 Independent Living Resource Center
3033 West 2nd Street, Wichita, KS 67203

- Part 2: Identifying and Accessing Employment Resources
- Services, programs, and information to support gaining and maintaining employment
 - Antidiscrimination laws
 - Visit with state and local adult service agencies who support individuals with disabilities (afternoon panel)

Education Advocate Update: Do I have to get retrained?

If you are wondering if you have to refresh your training each year, the short answer is yes. Let's not stop there though. It's the "how" that needs more discussion. Check out the different ways you can accomplish this new requirement. This summer, we'll have a series of short videos available for you to do at your leisure and complete at your own pace. If that sounds easy, you are right—it is. Each year, we will also hold a couple *Lunch and Learn* trainings through Zoom which will meet your retraining requirement. (Check out the bottom of this article for one of those options!) We will have two 5.5 hour virtual education advocate trainings each year that you are always welcome to join. You don't have to leave the house and you can wear your pajamas or sweats with these options. Easy enough?

Are in-person trainings more your style? You are always welcome to attend one of our six in-person trainings offered throughout the state. Lastly, you could attend any workshop provided by Families Together. Our Family Employment Awareness Training (FEAT) and SHIFT Transition to Adulthood workshops are excellent options for education advocates who serve teens. Free training and materials, free lunch, and the opportunity to network come with these options. If you attend a FEAT, a SHIFT, or another workshop offered by Families Together, please communicate with one of us so we can be sure to credit you for your retraining. Whichever you choose, we want to make this as easy as possible for you to fulfill the new requirement.

As always, Families Together is here to help. If you have questions, please don't hesitate to reach out. We appreciate your time and commitment to Kansas kids!

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Save the Date for a Virtual Refresher Training

Thursday June 15, 2023 12:00pm—2:00pm

Registration link coming soon!

Staff Spotlight: Becky Reid

How long have you been with Families Together?

I have been with Families Together for 2 ½ years.

What programs do you work on?

I work in administration in our Topeka office. I assign incoming calls and emails to the best person for that particular parent's needs and concerns. For the education advocate program, I type, encrypt, and distribute all student letters, related to transfers to and from school district placements. In addition, I assist our co-director with special projects, and other assigned duties.

What do you like most about working at Families Together?

I enjoy being part of the team, as well as witnessing the difference Families Together makes in the lives of Kansas families every day.

When you're not serving families, what do you like to do?

In my spare time, I work with various animal rescues. I am also a co-administrator of a lost and found animal Facebook group, through which we have had great success reuniting hundreds of pets with their people. For fun, I work on Saturdays at an emergency animal hospital. I also love to read & simply sit and enjoy nature.

Would you like to tell us about your family?

I am a proud mother of two grown children. My son is a fourth grade teacher and sings in a choir that he loves. My daughter works in retail and is busy deciding what she wants to pursue in school, or trade school, this fall. Both of my children, and myself, have ADHD. We navigated their school journeys together, and developed some creative accommodations to help along the way. We also have two rescue dogs: Squiggy & Sassy, and a rescue cat: Luna, which completes our family.

