

The New Back-to-School Checklist Starts with Mental Health

WellPower recommends preparing emotionally—not just academically—to help children and parents start the school year with greater confidence

DENVER, CO, UNITED STATES, July 30, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- As students prepare to head back to the classroom, many families are busy shopping for school supplies, updating schedules and checking off back-to-school to-do lists. But mental health professionals at [WellPower](#), Colorado's largest community mental health center, say one of the most important preparations often gets overlooked: helping children—and parents—adjust emotionally to the transition.



Preparing for school before the first day can help you and your child feel more ready.

Research shows that more than 50% of parents with children under 18 identify the back-to-school season as the most stressful time of year. While some nervousness is expected,

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Casey Wolf, M.D., medical director at WellPower

WellPower experts say a few intentional steps before school begins can ease anxiety, strengthen family communication and help children feel more confident heading into a new year.

"Parents often focus on backpacks, school supplies and schedules, but emotional preparation is equally as important," said Casey Wolf, M.D., with WellPower. "The goal isn't to eliminate every worry. It's to help children know they have routines, support and trusted adults they can rely on."

The New Back-to-School Mental Health Checklist

Reset sleep before the first day - Don't wait until the night before school starts. Begin shifting

bedtimes and wake-up times one to two weeks before classes begin. Consistent sleep improves mood, attention, learning and emotional regulation for children and teens.

Practice the school routine - Run through mornings before school starts—wake up, get dressed, eat breakfast and even drive to school if possible. Familiar routines reduce uncertainty and anxiety.

Create healthy technology boundaries - Technology can be a valuable learning tool, but unlimited access to phones and social media can also contribute to anxiety, comparison, and disrupted sleep. Consider establishing device-free bedrooms at night and setting clear expectations before school begins.

Make time for connection - Whether it's a family walk, dinner conversation or shooting hoops together, small moments of connection often create the safest opportunities for children to talk about what's on their minds.

Help children identify their support team - Encourage children and teens to know who they can turn to at school—from teachers and counselors to coaches and trusted staff members. Feeling connected to supportive adults builds resilience.

Listen more than you solve - Parents naturally want to fix problems. Often, children benefit most from feeling heard before jumping to solutions. Creating a judgment-free space helps kids become more comfortable discussing bigger challenges later.

Know when it's time for extra support - Some anxiety is normal. However, if sadness, fear, withdrawal or significant changes in sleep, eating or behavior persist for several weeks or interfere with daily life and school attendance, it may be time to seek professional support.

"The beginning of a school year is really an opportunity to reset," Wolf said. "Small changes to routines, communication and technology habits can make a meaningful difference for children in preparation and throughout the year."

Families seeking additional support can contact WellPower at (303) 504-7900 or visit [WellPower.org](https://www.wellpower.org) to learn more about behavioral health services for children, teens and families.

About WellPower

WellPower is Colorado's largest community mental health center and is recognized locally and nationally as a model for innovative and effective behavioral health care. Serving more than 22,000 individuals each year across the lifespan, WellPower provides a range of services at more than 30 sites and nearly 200 locations throughout the community — including schools, hospitals, shelters and assisted living facilities.

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