

Solutions is a parent newsletter published by ESS during the school year. Each issue highlights an important topic related to children's mental health and provides practical applications for parents in the home environment.

SUMMER SAFETY PLANNING

Most of our children are anxiously awaiting summer break. Although the thought of a long vacation is exciting, the lack of structure, predictability, and a daily routine can sometimes heighten stress levels. As parents, your stress level is probably escalating too, because of the added pressure of ensuring that your child maintains physical and emotional stability and safety during their increased hours of "freedom." Scientific research supports your concerns, as studies have shown that the areas of the brain responsible for managing your child's impulse control, planning, and decision making will not be fully developed until they reach their mid-twenties.

Effective School Solutions offers the following strategies to help you and your child achieve and maintain a healthy, happy summer:

General Guidelines

- Establish a summer structure, rules, and consequences.
- Establish a reasonable curfew.
- Assign everyone to specific daily chores.
- Check in with kids at least once a day.
- Schedule at least one family activity a week.
- Encourage a healthy sleep routine.
- Schedule at least one nutritious family meal every day.
- Negotiate internet access usage.
- Continue monitoring your child's medication compliance.
- Keep alcohol, medication and potentially dangerous chemicals and objects under lock and key to minimize the danger to potentially impulsive and high-risk children.

Emotional Safety

- Discuss a Safety Plan with your child to ensure that everyone is prepared to manage episodes of acute depression, anxiety, or self-harm thoughts and behaviors. Be mindful of your child's signs and symptoms of distress, of who their support system is, what activities are helpful to decrease their distress, and how to reach out for professional help when necessary.
- Encourage them to tell you if they experience an increase in anxiety or depression to avoid a crisis.

- Post an emergency phone list:
 - National Suicide Prevention (1-800-273-TALK)
 - Lifeline (1-800-273-8255)
 - National Hopeline Network (1-800-SUICIDE)
 - Perform Care/Children's Mobile Response (1-877-652-7624)

Physical Safety

- Review safety rules with your kids, despite their protests to "stop nagging."
- Make it clear that you'll respect your children's independence and will make allowances as they steadily improve.
- Always wear a seatbelt in the car.
- Never talk on the phone or text while driving.
- Observe heat precautions, especially when using mental health medications.
- Enforce the zero-tolerance rule for substance use.
- Always have your child inform you (or a responsible adult) who they are with and where they are going.

RESOURCES:

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Collishaw, S., Gardner, F., Maughan, B., Scott, J., & Pickles, A. (2011). Do Historical Changes in Parent-Child Relationships Explain Increases in Youth Conduct Problems? Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology DOI

PARENTS MATTER:

In every interaction with your child, you have the power to calm or escalate the situation.