

HOW TO MONITOR YOUR CHILD'S PERFORMANCE IN SCHOOL

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If you are the parent of a child who was diagnosed with cancer and received central nervous system treatment (CNS) including cranial radiation, intrathecal methotrexate, or bone marrow transplant, we recommend that you devote time and energy in educating your child's teacher about your child's diagnosis, treatment and educational issues surrounding this treatment. Research has shown that CNS treatment can compromise cognitive and/or sensory functions resulting in learning difficulties. Many times these "late effects" do not become apparent for 2-5 years after treatment has ended.

Chances are you will be aware of problems your child is having in school within the first 3 years of treatment, if problems occur at all. However, our experience here at the HELP program has led us to believe in the importance of continual monitoring throughout the school years. Many times children are able to compensate for learning difficulties in the early grades, but as the demands of school increase, subtle learning difficulties become more evident. Schools are alerted to the need for regular monitoring of educational progress when first diagnosed, but may not continue monitoring after treatment has ended. Expectations at different schools and in different grades change and could impact your child's success. The HELP program is available to assist parents in detecting subtle learning problems by requesting baseline testing through your school district as well as updates while on treatment and after treatment has ended.

Here is a checklist of things for parents to do to monitor their child's performance and advocate for necessary services. Please keep this with you and refer to it throughout your child's school career.

WHEN TO CONFERENCE WITH SCHOOL PERSONNEL:

- √ Prior to beginning any new school
- √ Changing from elementary to middle school
- √ Changing from middle school to high school
- √ Prior to graduation
- √ Prior to beginning college

WHAT TO SAY AT CONFERENCES WITH SCHOOL PERSONNEL:

- √ Review your child's medical history
- √ Discuss the risk of learning problems
- √ Review current services and accommodations given to your child, i.e., special transportation, testing modifications, reduced homework, modified PE., preferential seating, etc.

- √ Discuss possible changes in services and accommodations and changes in expectations due to new location (especially when going from grade school to middle school)
- √ Bring along information about “late effects”
- √ Ask to have the educational liaison attend if you would like support
- √ Identify a case manager at the school who will monitor your child’s accommodations, services and progress

WHEN TO ASK FOR TESTING:

- √ Baseline testing is recommended for all CNS treated school aged children within 1 year of treatment
- √ When you note any change in your child’s report cards (i.e., A’s to B’s, B’s to C’s, etc.)
- √ When there are changes on standardized testing through NCLB (i.e. going from 3’s to 2’s or 2’s to 1’s)
- √ When your child exhibits frustration or struggles with schoolwork
- √ When concerns are raised by school personnel or HELP coordinator during Late Effects Clinic consultation

If your child is classified by the CSE, there are regularly scheduled meetings and testing done for your child. If your child is not classified, but receives special services under Section 504 or informally through the classroom teacher, there may not always be a regular schedule of testing or review of special needs. In these cases you must be proactive and request a school conference to discuss your child’s program.