School Accomodation Recommendations

Here are some recommendations that can be useful for planning for school accommodations to support a child with chronic pain. The goal is to find a variety of ways to increase the student's comfort and reduce stress in the school setting in order to increase and ensure attendance. It is in the student's best interest to participate in school, both academically and socially. As with most youth, stress, particularly related to school, can cause temporary increases in pain. A supportive plan between school staff, parents, and the youth can significantly help attendance and academic functioning. **Most youth with chronic pain meet requirements for a 504 Education Plan.**

Sample School Accomodation Recommendations

- **The student should be expected to attend school daily, even when in pain. However, academic stress has been found to exacerbate pain symptoms. It is anticipated that [the student] may miss school due to doctor's appointment or therapy appointments. It may be helpful to modify the following academic curricula to promote a successful environment:**
    - Implement flexible homework and make-up work policies (homework and tests are a major cause of additional stress) particularly if [the student] had to miss school for a doctor's appointment or a therapy session.
    - [the student] should be provided with a homework/note partner for work missed during absent days or days they need to leave early due to appointments.
    - Make-up work should be assigned to determine mastery. [the student] should be expected to complete assignments based on mastery of content, which may involve reducing the amount of work required to complete.
    - It may be helpful for [the student] to have two sets of books, one to keep at home and one to keep at school, in order to allow [the student] to work on assignments from all classes even on days that [the student] may miss or leave early.

- **As increased pain can impact concentration, it is important to permit [the student] to take short breaks to enable [the student] to perform to his/her potential.**
    - Please permit [the student] to have a "fast pass" to leave class for short periods or go to the school provider's office (e.g., school nurse or mental health specialist) in order to manage the pain. [the student] should be encouraged to return to class following a maximum 30-minute rest break to distract from pain. [the student] should be limited to a maximum of three "fast passes" a day.
    - [the student] is determined to stay in school despite pain and we know that school can be full of rich distractions and can divert attention away from pain. All efforts should be made to allow breaks and help [the student] learn how to independently manage pain within the school setting rather than sending them home from school.
    - Dehydration and hunger can trigger pain. Please allow [the student] to carry a water bottle and eat snacks within class.

- Please allow [the student] to have access to an elevator at school. It may also be helpful to allow him/her to leave class 5 minutes early to arrive to the next class on time.
- Teachers should be made aware that [the student] may be attending school in moderate to severe pain. Visible signs of pain cannot be used to determine pain severity. For many youth with chronic pain conditions, visible signs of pain are often not present. Students with chronic pain are often sensitive to peers knowing their condition or embarrassed to demonstrate pain which can also lead to decreased school attendance.

Communicate the information to all members of [the student]'s educational team so they are aware of [the student] medical concerns and these special accommodations. It adds additional stress for students when they have to explain their coping requests or medical situations to school staff, especially when they are in class or in front of other students. This communication will help staff be sensitive to [the student]'s needs and provide accommodations without the need for further explanation by [the student].