

## START NOW TO AVOID THE SEPTEMBER BLUES

It's mad dash time; the lazy days of summer are coming to an end. No matter how much you know it's coming, the beginning of a new school year can be stressful, expensive and exhausting. Here are a few tips to help ease the transition:

- **Readjust sleep schedules to school time before the first day of classes.** Children who are used to staying up later will have a harder time waking up early. "Practice" getting them in bed early at least a week before school starts. Build in quiet time before bedtime and give your child a chance to wind down and relax.
- **Establish new routines now.** Figure out where and when your child will do his homework, keep his backpack, get the bus and other daily tasks for school. Explain the routine and help your child start now to do as many things in the new routine as possible- for example, have him go to the table or desk and read a book, do a puzzle or other "homework" now, in preparation for school work coming.
- **Set up a vision screening.** Many children have problems seeing that can harm their ability to learn in school. Signs that your child might have a vision problem include squinting, sitting too close to the TV, or rubbing his eyes. The earlier the problem is treated, the better your child will do in school.
- **Make sure immunizations are up to date.** Check with your school nurse to see what shots your child needs and double check that their records are accurate. Don't wait until the school contacts you! Routine exams before school starts are a good time to make sure everything is up to date.
- **Arrange emergency plans for your child.** What if your child gets sick at school? Who should the nurse call if they can't reach you? Who can (and can't) pick up your child at school? Think this through and talk to a friend, neighbor or family member about being your emergency contact.
- **Know when to keep your child home from school.** High fever, diarrhea, and vomiting are three sure signs that a child should stay home. Contagious things like chicken pox, pinkeye and bad colds should also keep your child at home.
- **Talk to your child about the new school year.** Many kids are anxious about the new school year. They may be afraid to meet a new teacher, or have kids in the class who are unknown or even frightening. Ask them how they are feeling and reassure them that you are there to help them.
- **Review safety skills with children.** Talk to them about bus safety, bicycle riding rules, home alone issues and other safety concerns.
- **Help your child get organized.** Show him how to put his school supplies in one place, where to find what he needs, how to write in an assignment book and how to stay focused on school tasks.