



## Back-to-School Wellness Checklist

Supporting students emotionally, socially, and practically as they return to school — from kindergarten to college.

### Elementary School (Grades K–5)

- **Start bedtime early:** Children ages 5–10 need 9–12 hours of sleep. Begin adjusting sleep schedules the week before school.
- **Practice routines:** Walk or drive the route to school. Do a backpack check and lunchbox dry run together.
- **Emotional check-ins:** Ask, “What do you hope your teacher is like?” or “What’s one thing that might make you nervous?”
- **Comfort kits:** Include a small family photo or encouraging note inside their backpack.
- **Local tip:** *Ocala Police Department* hosts “Back to School with a Cop” events—check for neighborhood meetups for a friendly introduction to school resource officers.

### Middle School (Grades 6–8)

- **Acknowledge transitions:** Middle schoolers face body changes, social pressure, and shifting expectations. Open the door for conversations without pressure.
- **Build self-advocacy:** Role-play asking for help, handling peer conflict, or talking to a new teacher.
- **Screen-time balance:** Create a tech-free wind-down routine 30 minutes before bed to improve sleep.
- **Local connection:** *Marion County Public Schools’ Student Services* offers on-campus mental health liaisons. Ask your school about available counselors or CARES partner referrals.

## High School (Grades 9–12)

- **Prepare for new responsibilities:** Talk through schedule changes, part-time jobs, or transportation.
  - **Encourage mental health awareness:** Teens often mask stress. Ask “How’s your energy been lately?” or “Anything weighing on you?”
  - **College & career prep:** Guide students toward free SAT/ACT prep, vocational tracks, or college planning via *College of Central Florida* and *CareerSource Citrus Levy Marion*.
  - **Local support:** *Marion County Youth Resource Center* provides safe spaces and support for teens navigating family changes, grief, or peer conflict.
- 

## College Students (College of Central Florida, Rasmussen, remote learners)

- **Normalize homesickness + burnout:** Whether they’re local or away, students benefit from knowing it’s okay to feel overwhelmed.
- **Check emotional energy, not just grades:** Encourage journaling, calling home, or connecting with campus wellness services.
- **Planning independence:** Support students in setting up doctor appointments, budgeting, and healthy meals.
- **Local resource:** *CF Counseling Services* offers free therapy for enrolled students. Community college students can also attend community grief workshops offered by Roberts & Hospice of Marion County.