



The WHALE Study
Family Newsletter
February | 26th | 2021

Back-to-School Transition & Child Anxiety

Some children may not be enrolled in school (yet) while others may have been in-person for a long time now. This newsletter addresses concerns for families who recently learned their children's public school is suddenly offering in-person education for the first time since March 2020!

North Carolina [recently passed a bill](#) that requires the state's K-12 public school districts to offer in-person learning again. Some families have a choice on whether or not to send their children back to school and should [consider the effects on everyone involved](#). Many schools are encouraging families to keep their children home, if they are able, to make space for those who don't have a choice. This may be a tough decision with no "right" option, but **try to do what is best for your family**.

The [government recommended policies](#) for reopening schools and teachers in NC are now eligible to receive vaccines, but specifics on safety protocols will vary by setting. Check any incoming communications (e.g., emails, voicemails, virtual info sessions) for school-specific info, rely on reputable sources ([CDC](#)) for scientific information about risks, and consult local news sources for info specific to your area. If you have the resources to help, consider asking teachers and schools what they need.

Many kids will be excited to get out of the house, but some children may be (understandably!) nervous about these changes. Our data shows that children who have been staying home the majority of the time have become more anxious over time. **Try to talk with your children about expectations** at a neutral time, and often. **Stay calm, validate their experiences, and focus on what is in their control**. There are many things you can do to help keep your kids and family safe if they do return to school including encouraging mask wearing, safe social distancing, and handwashing. While one mask per day may be sufficient, consider packing extra for the occasional messy sneezes or typical accidents!

For children experiencing anxiety, [here](#) is a graphic to explain what may be happening in their bodies. Remember, keeping routine and structure at home will especially help during this transition period. If your child has *never* been to their school setting, consider driving past or showing them around outside the building before school starts, or practice time away from caregivers, if that's their biggest concern. You can even teach them some [breathing techniques](#) like [these](#) or [these](#) and practice them at home! Your children will look to you for cues of how to behave. Our data also shows that parents who haven't had any school or daycare arrangements have experienced more sadness, irritability, and anxiety. [Here](#) are some tips for adults, if you're also nervous about re-entering in-person settings, too. Together, we got this.

Check out the page below for [tips on re-entering society and community resources!](#)

Click [here](#) to tell us what topics you want covered in future newsletters!



Please reach out if you have any questions, comments, or concerns regarding The WHALE Study or the COVID-19 situation. Staff can be reached by call, text, or email: whalestudy@unc.edu | 919-914-0588
Find us on Twitter: [@circlelab_unc](#), Instagram: [circlelab_unc](#), and [Facebook!](#)
Newsletter written by Dr. Ilana S. Berman and formatted by Dominique N. Martinez

STUDY FINDINGS AND REMINDERS

Findings from what YOU reported in our weekly COVID surveys:

- Since the beginning of the pandemic, ratings of children's sadness have decreased, though a fair number of children are still experiencing anxiety
- Specifically, we found that parent's reports of their own anxiety and amount of time spent sheltering-in place/quarantining are related to higher anxiety in children.
- To learn more about why this matters and what to do, please refer to the last two paragraphs above and the "What I can do at home?" section of our previous [newsletter](#)

****Reminder:** Please refer your friends if they have a 4-6-year-old and you think they would be interested in participating in the WHALE study. For every eligible family that you refer to us, you will receive \$10!

RE-ENTERING SOCIETY + COMMUNITY RESOURCES (CLICK BLUE LINKS)

Resources related to re-entering society:

- Click [here](#) to read about school children and COVID-19 and [here](#) to read about back-to-school anxiety
- Click [here](#) and [here](#) to learn how to manage your child's fears around returning to school
- Click [here](#) to learn how to help your child cope with the transition back to school
- Click [here](#) for tips on managing anxiety related to re-entering society (for adults)

Local Centers for Child and Family Services:

- Click [here](#) to learn more about Hope Services 4 U (Raleigh)
- Click [here](#) to learn more about the Center for Child and Family Health (Durham)

HOUSING

- [Durham Continuum of Care \(CoC\)](#)
- Eviction Information
 - 216-965-5095
- [Durham Rescue Mission](#)
 - 919-688-9641
- [Orange County Partnership to End Homelessness](#)
- [Urban Ministries of Durham](#)
- [Durham County Social Services](#)
- [Orange County Social Services](#)
- [Wake County Social Services](#)

FOOD & GROCERIES

- [Wake County Public Schools Free Meals](#)
- [Durham County Public Schools Free Meals](#)
- [Orange County Food Resources](#)
- [Chapel Hill/Carrboro Schools](#)
- [TABLE](#)
- [Food Bank of Central & Eastern North Carolina](#)
- [Wake County Food Resources](#)
- [No Kid Hungry NC](#) - Text FOODNC or COMIDA to 877-877 to receive information about 3 drive-thru or pickup sites with meals for kids closest to you

HEALTH & SAFETY

- [Compass Center for Women and Families](#)
 - 919-929-7122
- [Durham Crisis Response Center](#)
 - 919-403-9425
- [InterAct Family Safety and Empowerment Center](#)
 - 919-828-7501
- [Orange County Rape Crisis Center](#)
 - 866-935-4783 (call) , 919-504-5211 (text)
- [Freedom House](#)
 - 919-967-8844 (Crisis Unit, Chapel Hill)
 - 1-877-967-8844 (Mobile Service)
- Suicide prevention lifeline: 1-800-272-TALK
- Hope4NC Helpline: 1-855-587-3463

CHILDCARE

- [NC Hotline for Critical Workers Seeking Child Care Options](#)
- [Covid Childcare Co-op Creator](#)
- [Covid Urgent Childcare](#)
- [Child Care Services Association](#)

LEARNING

- [Scholastics Learn at Home](#)
- [Khan Academy](#)
- [PBS Kids](#)
- [CDC Tips for Talking with Children about COVID-19](#)