

# TALKING WITH YOUR CHILD'S SCHOOL



## A School Guide for Families with Young Caregivers



During the school year, your family may choose to let your child's teachers and school staff know how caregiving may impact their academic experience. Sharing this information—on your terms—can help build a support system that allows your child to thrive both academically and emotionally.

Students who help care for someone may:

- Arrive late or miss school due to responsibilities at home, appointment, bad days, etc.
- Feel tired, anxious, or distracted during the day
- Avoid extracurriculars or social time due to limited availability
- Have a hard time making friends with peers who don't have the same experience

While not every caregiving experience causes challenges at school, if it does, teachers and staff may be better able to respond with understanding and flexibility when they know what's going on and how to support your child.

Alternatively, school may be your child's safe space, a break from care tasks and home stressors. This may come across as the youth not wanting to talk about care, but in reality, they need a respite and school is often that respite.

### Choosing What to Share

You are not required to share your family's caregiving situation, and it's okay to protect your child's privacy. If you decide to open up, even a brief conversation or email can open the door to support. You might say something like:

***"We have a person living with ALS at home. While my child is managing well, it can sometimes impact their time, energy, or ability to focus. We'd like to stay in touch about how things are going and work together to support them if anything comes up."***

What you choose to share is entirely up to you. Some families find it helpful to mention:

- A general sense of what caregiving looks like without going into private medical details
- Any known factors that might affect attendance, assignment completion, or emotional regulation such as doctor appointments
- What behaviors your child exhibits when they are stressed
- Tools or strategies that help their child feel calm, supported, or focused during the school day



## Questions to Consider Asking

- Is there a staff member our child can check in with if they're having a tough day?
- What's the best way to communicate with you if something caregiving-related affects my child or their participation at school?
- Are there any mental health supports or flexibility options available to students in unique family situations?

## Building a Supportive Connection

If you choose to share, framing the conversation as a partnership can help. You might start with:

*“We’re hoping to work together to make sure our child is supported as both a student and a young person managing responsibilities at home.”*

### Other tips:

- Reach out early, before challenges arise
- Include a counselor or social worker if you are comfortable with them and feel it is appropriate
- Revisit the conversation if your family's situation changes

## Know Your Rights

Every family has the right to advocate for their child's education, safety, and well-being. However, laws and services vary by state. In the US the [National Research Center for Parents with Disabilities](#) has great resources to help you determine what your rights are and where to find support in your area.

### Know Your Rights – Colorado

**In Colorado**, parental rights are protected under **C.R.S. § 19-1-102 and § 19-3-604**, which emphasize preserving the parent-child relationship whenever safely possible. Colorado law also includes protections against discrimination based on disability in parenting decisions under **C.R.S. § 24-34-802 (Protection of Individuals with Disabilities in the Family Context)**. However, in child welfare proceedings, courts may still consider a parent's ability to meet a child's needs when determining custody or services. This means that while disability alone should not be the basis for removal, it may be evaluated alongside other factors related to a child's safety and well-being. Education rights are further supported under federal laws such as **IDEA and Section 504, which ensure accommodations for students impacted by caregiving responsibilities.**

## Know Your Rights – Utah

In Utah, parental rights are defined under **Utah Code § 78A-6-507 and § 80-4-301**, which outline the grounds for termination of parental rights and child welfare considerations. Utah law allows courts to evaluate a parent’s ability to safely care for a child, and this may include consideration of a disability if it impacts caregiving capacity. While disability alone should not automatically result in loss of parental rights, it may be used as a factor in determining appropriate services or custody arrangements. Families are also protected under federal laws such as the **ADA and IDEA**, which support equal access to services and educational accommodations for children impacted by caregiving situations.

## Know Your Rights – Wyoming

In Wyoming, parental rights are governed under **W.S. § 14-2-309 and § 14-3-402**, which address termination of parental rights and child protection proceedings. Wyoming does not have a specific statute explicitly prohibiting discrimination based on parental disability in custody determinations. As a result, courts may consider a parent’s physical or cognitive ability to provide care when evaluating the best interests of the child. This means that, in some cases, a parent’s disability may be factored into decisions regarding custody or services. Families should be aware that protections may rely more heavily on federal disability rights laws such as the **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act**, as well as advocacy support.

## Important Note

***Laws and policies may change over time, and how they are applied can vary based on individual circumstances. Families are encouraged to consult with a qualified attorney or local advocacy organization for guidance specific to their situation.***

## Looking for more resources?



Our Mission: To unite and empower the ALS community through a collaborative approach of providing comprehensive care and support to individuals and families affected by ALS, advancing national and state advocacy, and fostering bold research initiatives.



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