

## Suggestions of Ways to Talk with Your Child

- **Be fair, firm, and consistent.**
- Notice and validate your child's efforts. Don't let your only interactions with your child be negative. Catch them doing something good, even if it's a very small thing. Small things lead to greater things. Change does not happen overnight; it has taken time for them to get to this point.
- Avoid threatening. Follow through on what you say you will do - both positive and negative consequences; otherwise, you are not believable and trustworthy to your child.
- Ask your child, instead of assuming how he/she feels, *"What is it like for you?"*  
*"How does this impact you/make you feel?"*
- Ask open-ended, instead of yes/no, questions, such as:
  - *"How different do you feel from the last time you were home?"*
  - *"What were some of the hardest restrictions?"*
  - *"Were you able to communicate with your peers at Houston Behavioral Healthcare Hospital? What is different about your communication at HBHH, at school, and at home?"*
  - *"I'd love to see your handouts/worksheets/recovery packet. Why don't you tell me what they're about?"*



If your child's behavioral or emotional health deteriorates, please call us at **(832) 834-7710**.

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This brochure is meant to be a starting point for parents and guardians who are concerned for their child and looking for resources, information, and support on their return home.

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## When Your Child Comes Home After An Inpatient Stay

It is normal for you, as a parent, to feel overwhelmed and uncertain about what it will be like for you and your child when they come home after an inpatient stay.

The last time they were home with you, you may have been in crisis mode and may have been helping them pack for Houston Behavioral Healthcare Hospital. Here are some tips, insights, and suggestions for you as you bring your child home.



## Safety Planning:

- Search your child's room for sharp objects (if your child is a self-harmer), drugs, alcohol, and anything you feel is inappropriate to have in their space.
- Lock up **all** medication (prescription **and** over-the-counter) in a lockbox and administer your child's medication to them. They should not be handling their own medication. Occasionally, check their mouths to make sure they have swallowed their pill, as well as their clothing pockets.
- Lock up or remove completely from the home all firearms, and any hunting and fishing equipment.
- Lock up all sharp objects in the house, such as (kitchen) knives, scissors, and razors. Ask your child to use *Nair* or check out a razor from you, which he/she must give back after use. Your child will not like this and may tell you so, but you are doing this for their safety and because you care and love them. *Remind them of this as frequently as you can!*
- Install parental controls on all your personal computers and phones and limit the amount of time your child spends playing video games (no video games during weekdays and up to 4 hours on the weekends and no violent games).

## Plan For Your Child's Return Home:

- Celebrate your child's return home. Plan to stop for a special treat or prepare their favorite meal. Plan for a relaxed evening at home.
- Parents/Guardians, take care of yourselves and remember that you do not have to walk on eggshells around your child or be intimidated by them. The more confident and settled you feel with yourself, the easier it will be to handle your child and his/her needs. If there is more than one parent in the home, talk about ways to be a united front and work as a team.
- Be ready to implement your new behavior contract. If you have not established one, see the attached template.
- Educate yourself on your child's issues/recovery. Be actively involved in their treatment and recovery. A child's family can be their greatest asset and support to regaining emotional health!
- If your child can drive and has access to a car, discuss the plan allowing your child to earn back his/her driving privileges so that there are no surprises. Your child must demonstrate appropriate behavior both at home and at Houston Behavioral Healthcare Hospital before being allowed full driving privileges.
- If your child is referred to PHP/IOP, it is vital that your child attends the program on the day scheduled. Studies show that recovery rates are higher for people who attend their aftercare plan on their first day out of treatment. Parents, be ready to help create a schedule that works for **both you and your child** to attend each week. Work out family obligations and transportation ahead of time. Let your child make the schedule, but you oversee it. Parents, attend your own support meeting at least once per week.



## On The Way Home:

- Your child has been in inpatient care where many restrictions have been imposed on them, such as not being able to go to the bathroom without a staff unlocking the door for them, not being allowed to go outside for long periods of time, being disconnected from their network of friends, etc. When they are discharged, they will feel "free" and may want to do everything they feel they have not been able to do.
- On the car ride home, keep the conversation light, talk about dinner plans, the family pet, catch them up on a favorite TV show, family events.
- Ask your child if they feel like talking – they may not. Their silence is not necessarily indicative of anger. Do not rush your child to discuss topics that could be triggering for them before they are ready.

## At Home:

- What to expect from your child: some moodiness, anxiety about returning to their old environment (home and school), fear, crying spells, desire to reconnect with friends, wanting to get on the internet, fatigue, and dislike of changes you are implementing. Their behavior may get worse before it gets better.
- Increase supervision; check on your child every 20-40 minutes. Every hour, inquire about where they are emotionally - this doesn't have to be a big conversation, but your child needs to use a feeling word for how they are doing. Over time, you can allow for decreased supervision, but during the first week home, assess for emotional relapse.
- For the first night home, your child may not feel ready to face others outside their immediate family. Even if they say they feel ready, give them the night off to relax, settle back into their room and home, and reestablish connections with parents and siblings.
- Beyond the first night of the first week home, allow only "safe" friends to visit the house under some supervision (i.e., hanging out a few rooms away from parents). Safe friends are defined as "peers that child and parents agree are safe, supportive, and encouraging of treatment."
- **Parents, please remember that it is both hospital and HIPAA policy that your child is not allowed to exchange personal information and/or communicate with other patients or staff while either of them is in treatment or after discharge.**
- When filling out your child's home sheet if in the PHP or IOP, please be specific and include any information that will help us help your child. We read these and take them seriously.
- Have a safety plan in place: If your child is still in Houston Behavioral Healthcare Hospital's continuum of care (PHP or IOP), and he/she begins to have self-harming/suicidal/homicidal thoughts, call 832-834-7710. You may need to bring your child back. If your child is being discharged home, call their therapist/psychiatrist. If you are afraid for your child's safety or your own, call 911, and take them to the nearest emergency room.
- If you feel like your child's behavior or emotional health is deteriorating, do not panic. Call Houston Behavioral Healthcare Hospital or call the police. We and/or the police may ask to speak with your child, or you may be told to bring them back to the hospital.