

School Readiness: Books, Backpacks and Booster Shots?

Books and backpacks are supplies that help prepare children for school, but what if they arrive at school and can't hear the teacher or the ABCs are blurry? What if they can't concentrate because their teeth hurt? First 5 Siskiyou Children and Families Commission would like to remind parents that preparing children for school involves more than just books and backpacks - it's going to the doctor for dental, vision and hearing checkups, receiving all required immunizations and booster shots, eating nutritional meals, getting enough sleep and engaging in physical activity to ensure children enter school happy, healthy and ready to learning.

First 5 Siskiyou Children and Families Commission would like to offer parents and caregivers the following tips to help their children succeed in school and in life:

- **Enroll in health insurance.** Rising health insurance costs can put health care out of reach for many families. Healthy Families and Healthy Kids – low-cost health, dental and vision insurance is available for those without health insurance. To learn more about Healthy Families or to sign up please call your local Family Resource Center. Other resources include community and county health clinics, which serve most people, including those who lack insurance. In addition, the Child Health and Disability Prevention Program provides free well-child checkups for those who qualify.
- **Immunize your child.** Parents can help protect children from vaccine-preventable diseases that cause school absences and limit a child's ability to achieve in school by making sure they're immunized. Check with your child's doctor to obtain an immunization schedule and make sure their shots are up-to-date. Free immunization clinics sponsored by Department of Public Health are available throughout Siskiyou County.
- **Model and teach your child healthy eating habits and encourage physical activity to help them stay mentally alert.** Make sure your child receives proper nutrition at home and away from home by packing a healthy snack and lunch. Healthy eating habits help children's development. Your child's (and your) mental fitness is highly dependent on how well your child eats. You can boost your child's academic success by simply providing healthy foods and plenty of water. Most schools offer free or low-cost breakfast and lunch programs for children whose families qualify. In addition to eating right, children love to explore their physical abilities on a daily basis. Spend quality time with your children and help them stay fit by participating in activities such as walking, skipping, dancing, hiking and swimming. If your child is watching TV, make the commercial a moving time by doing jumping jacks, sit-ups and other movement activities. Remember from a child's point of view, daily physical activity is a fun way to learn and grow.

The above tips are all great ways to enhance a child's readiness for school and most of all a way to show your child you care, which lays the foundation for healthy self-esteem. Studies confirm a direct connection between positive self-esteem and success in school. For more information on how to prepare your child for school or on local school readiness programs, please contact First 5 Siskiyou Children and Families Commission or your local Family/Community Resource Center.