



Statewide Parent
Advocacy Network

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Empowered Parents: Educated, Engaged, Effective!

Preparing for a Hospital Stay Fact Sheet

Preparing for a Hospital Stay

Some families have children who started their lives in NICU (neonatal intensive care unit), others have dealt with surgery, while still others have had ongoing hospital visits. Whether it's an emergency or scheduled procedure, there are things that families can do to prepare. These tips are based on the National Family Caregivers Spring 2011 newsletter article, "Be Prepared for a Hospital Stay," and their flyer, "When Your Loved One is Hospitalized."

Paperwork-what you really need (make copies if possible)

- Insurance cards (private, Medicaid/Medicare, prescription)
- Guardianship/advance directives
- List of medications
- Most recent testing results if blood work, etc., is being monitored
- List of important phone numbers (e.g., doctors) and address book (family/friends and anything you'll need to cancel like school, bus, therapies, etc.) and calendar/schedule
- Family Leave (some states have family leave insurance, all are covered by Family Medical Leave Act).

Be like a scout-be prepared

- Draft work/personal emails so you can just hit send
- Do NOT post on Facebook or on your email message that you'll be away from home
- Give a family/friend a housekey and arrange for pet sitting or plant watering
- Stop mail, newspapers, packages unless someone will pick up daily

What to Pack

Make a list for each person's suitcase which includes clothes, personal care, medications, and maybe some paperbacks. Pack ahead of time if possible. Your child may need security items like a blanket or stuffed animal, but check if this is allowed. Don't forget if your child is bringing an iPod or handheld videogame to bring the charger; ditto for your cellphone. Also make sure you have doubles of everything like toothbrushes or enough clothes so you're not constantly unpacking and repacking. Think about what's really needed (soap) vs. nice to have (lotion) and bring only what is essential. Keep each person's list in their suitcase so it's also a checklist so you don't forget anything when you're returning home.

Helpful Hints

It's helpful to ask the hospital social worker what you should or shouldn't bring. Check if the hospital has a Child Life Department which explains procedures to children before the actual hospital stay. Go on the hospital website which will have a map of departments and where to get food, gift store, etc. Find out where you can stay like nearby hotels, Ronald McDonald Houses, and there's also Chai Lifeline which is an organization that helps with lodging, food delivery for both patient and family, and other support. (Priority is given to families of Jewish faith since food is kosher but all are welcome). Getting ready ahead of time will reduce stress for your family.

Resources:

National Family Caregivers Association

"When your loved one is hospitalized" www.nfcares.org/pdfs/WhenHospitalized.pdf

Take Care newsletter www.thefamilycaregiver.org/caregiving_resources/takecare_newsletter.cfm

National Transition of Care Coalition-Guidelines for a Hospital Stay www.ntocc.org/portals/0/hospital_guide.pdf

Support for Families of children with life-threatening illness www.chailifeline.org

Ronald McDonald Houses <http://rmhc.org/what-we-do/ronald-mcdonald-house>

National Family Medical Leave Act www.dol.gov/dol/topic/benefits-leave/fmla.htm