



Summer Wellness Plan How-to Guide

Counselors/ Psychologists/ Therapist version

Who is this *Summer Wellness Plan* designed to support?

In short answer - your students! Or more clearly, any students you've been working with individually or in groups during the school year who may benefit from extra support when it comes to preparing for the transition to summer from a mental health and wellness standpoint.

Who should administer/ review a *Summer Wellness Plan* with the student?

This plan was designed as a tool for [school counselors](#) and [psychologists](#) to use. However, some school-based therapists may also find it a helpful resource in working with their patients.

If additional school staff would like to utilize this tool, we suggest that any team member reviewing the plan with a student first has some level of baseline experience and/ or training with Mental Health First Aid, QPR or something equivalent and is familiar with how to connect a student in crisis or need with the appropriate level of care support.

It's important to note that **the *Summer Wellness Plan for Students* is NOT clinically based and should never be used in substitution for a 'Safety Plan'** - a plan developed and administered by mental health professionals to support students at risk of harm to themselves or others. Your school-based therapist will have access to the specific Safety Plan their organization utilizes and should be the one to administer such a plan if and when needed.

Below are two Safety Plans examples for your reference. Whenever possible, we recommend that these be administered only by a licensed behavioral health professional unless your school counselor or school administrator has also been trained on how to administer a safety plan.

[Safety Plan from Child Mind Institute](#)

[Safety Plan from ZeroSuicide/Social Work Tech](#)

To learn more about the use of Safety Plans, please visit Child Mind Institute's resource [here](#).

How might my students benefit from using the *Summer Wellness Plan* tool?

Setting up a predictable summer schedule, along with identifying fun activities and other coping strategies can be an effective way to support students in proactively preparing for a successful transition to summer.

This tool was designed to support student conversations as you guide them in planning their summer daily activities and routines, and identifying go-to coping skills, strengths, and

resources if (or when) they begin feeling overwhelmed or unsafe outside the traditional school setting.

Do I need to obtain **parental/ caregiver** consent?

Great question! We strongly recommend you loop in parents about the use of a *Summer Wellness Plan*. Depending on the specific guidelines of your school district, this might look like a notice home with an opt-out option or it could mean obtaining permission in advance. Check with your school's district office for clarification here.

Regardless of your process, it's critical the completed form be shared with parents and caregivers, preferably with the student present, as appropriate.

Do you have suggestions on **how best to utilize this plan?**

For most students (who are not at high risk for harm to themselves or others), we recommend starting with the *Summer Wellness Plan for Students included below*. Each child's or teen's plan will look different depending on their level of need, their age and their situation. And, that's ok.

For younger students, use the questions simply as guides for your conversation with each child. Below are a few additional ideas:

- *Make some art!* Instead of writing out the plan, ask students to draw their answers on separate pieces of paper.
 - **ProTip:** Consider consolidating their visual answers into a simple flip book. This will allow them to reference it over summer and can offer a practical way for them to share their self-reflective insights with caregivers and parents in a more empowering way.
- *Become their scribe:* You could also document their verbal answers to share later with parents and caregivers.
- *Make it a team effort!* Another option is to lead this activity with a parent or caregiver present. This will allow them to hear from the child in real time. If you use this approach, consider prompting the parent to share some of their own answers with students as a way of modeling good self-care which is important at all ages.

That way, If a young student begins to struggle over the summer, the parent could simply ask, *"Do you want to go grab your Summer Wellness Plan book so we can remind ourselves of some things you can do to feel better?"*

For older students, we recommend either reviewing it with them in one sitting or sharing the questionnaire with them in advance and then scheduling time to review their answers together with you and possibly a parent or caregiver. Either way, we recommend you use the [My Summer Wellness Plan](#) targeted for older students so that they can fully collaborate with the planning process.

Additional tips:

- *Emphasize agency and skill building:* For teens, the more they can be in 'driver's seat,' the more likely they are to engage and follow-through with the plan. The goal here is not necessarily a perfect plan. Rather it's about helping them think and plan ahead and begin practicing how to build healthy skills and rhythms into their transition processes.

- *Prime the pump:* Consider sharing a link to [MindPeace's Beating the Summer Slump Tips](#) or other resources to help get their juices flowing for what might be helpful in supporting their wellness over the summer.

General Tips for all students - regardless of age:

- *Set the table:* Before asking the first question, offer some background on 'why' this discussion is important, and more importantly why you feel a summer plan could be helpful - not just for them but for all of us!
- *Resist the itch to fix* - Acknowledge any emotions or fears shared without trying to change them. This can be hard when working with students who may naturally see things through a negative lens. Check out [MindPeace's Navigating Change and Transitions Guidebook](#) for more ideas and support here.
- *Normalize setbacks and struggles:* Remind students that much of what they will inevitably be seeing this summer on social media will rarely be the full story. The idea of a 'perfect summer' is a myth. #IRL (or 'in real life'), we all have our share of both hard and good moments.
- *Emphasize the positive:* Whenever possible, remind them of the growth you've witnessed and affirm their 'wins' from this past school year.
- *Stay curious:* One of the greatest benefits of reviewing a summer plan with students is in the planning itself! Offering them the chance to share a little more about themselves and to have a trusted adult hold space for their feelings and plans activates the power of feeling seen and heard and can be a healing and confidence-building experience all in and of itself.
- *Don't push too hard:* If a student is really struggling with a specific question, offer to circle back on it later. This is meant to be a light-hearted conversation. If you suspect a question may have triggered a stronger emotional reaction than you expected, stay curious and consider whether higher level support or follow-up steps may be warranted.
- *Loop in the team:* If the student is connected in care with a therapist, be sure to coordinate discussions with them and the students' family as appropriate.

Is the *Summer Wellness Plan* an appropriate tool to use with students in crisis?

In short - **no**. See the message in the box at the top of this document which explains the critical difference between a *Summer Wellness Plan* and a *Safety Plan*.

If a student needs additional support around what to do in a crisis or if they feel unsafe, we recommend that you help connect them to local crisis support or to their therapist depending on the situation and level of urgency.

- Note: *Safety Plans* should always be shared with a parent/guardian, as they play a critical role in keeping their child safe during a crisis.

Additional questions or feedback?

Keep us posted on how you're using the *Summer Wellness Plan* - what you like, what you'd change, how your children/ students are responding to the process. We welcome your feedback always! Click [here](#) to share any suggestions for improvement or success stories.



Summer Wellness Plan for Students

Counselors/ Psychologists/ Therapists version - complete with your student

Name:

Date:

School Year Reflection

Before diving into summer, invite the student to take a few minutes to reflect on the past school year. In which ways have you grown? What lessons have you learned that you plan to take forward with you?

Ways I grew this year:	Lessons I learned this year:

Summer Planning & Expectations

What am I looking forward to this summer?

-
-
-

What am I nervous about for summer?

-
-
-

Support System

Here are the people I know I can call or go to in my family, friends, or community that will help support me when I am feeling high stress or when in crisis.
(Provide Name, Phone Number, and Address, if possible)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Therapy Plan and Supports

Does the student have any upcoming therapy appointments this Summer?
If so, when and where will the student be attending their next appointment?
Please also include other outside supports.

Next Appointment:

Additional Outside Support Available:

Daily Summer Routine

Create a daily schedule that includes mealtimes, chores, outdoor time, time with friends and family, and bedtime

Morning	Afternoon	Evening

Stressors

Help the student identify potential summer stressors, such as being home alone, parents fighting, issues with siblings, etc.

Coping Strategies and Strengths

“When I feel _____, I know I can...”

(Help the student identify warning signs, such as feeling angry, stressed, sad, etc. to fill in the blank. Then, help the student make a list of coping strategies such as listening to music, drawing, going outside, writing in a journal, taking deep breaths, etc.)

When I feel...	I know I can...

Fun Activities

Make a list of fun activities the student is looking forward to doing this summer.

Include some stress-relieving activities such as exercise, being in nature, doing things with friends, family, or neighbors, reading a book, trying something new, etc.

Keeping myself healthy and safe

“When I need to calm down, I know my safe places are...”

(Help the student identify safe places they can go to feel safe and calm, such as a favorite room of the house, an area outdoors they enjoy spending time and can easily get to, or a trusted adults' home)

“When I am struggling to resolve my crisis, I know me and/or my parents/caregivers can follow these steps:

Safe Places:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Steps to take if I notice I am struggling or am in crisis and need help:

1. Tell your parent/caregiver or other trusted adult that you feel unsafe.
2. Adult: Ask the child how they are feeling. This might be a good time to review the Summer Safety Plan with the child.
3. If you are still in need of help, call your child's therapist or other mental health provider.
4. If you need additional assistance:
 - a. **Call Psychiatric Intake Response at Cincinnati Children's: (513) 636-4124**; The staff will help you decide the most effective level of intervention for your child
 - b. **Call or Text 988 Lifeline**; 988 is the national 24/7 suicide hotline; free and confidential support for anyone
 - c. **Best Point Urgent Care: (513) 527-3040**; Open Monday-Friday 9:30 am to 6 pm
5. If after you have tried numbers 1-4 above and feel you cannot keep your child safe call 911 or take your child to the nearest emergency room.