

# How People with Disabilities Can Advocate for Themselves When Returning to the Classroom or Worksite

*Tips from the Self-Advocate and Self-Determination Work Group of the Massachusetts Partnership for Transition to Employment*



- [Your safety and comfort is the priority](#). Making sure you can stay healthy and safe when you go back to work or school should always be #1 in your mind.
- Before you go back, ask your school or employer if any of the accommodations you had before have changed. For example, are wheelchair ramps and building entrances still accessible? If you had accommodations for your computer or work station, will those still be in place? If someone used to come on site to help you, will they still be coming in?



- Ask your school or employer if any NEW accommodations for your safety have been put in place. For example, will you be allowed to travel in both directions down a one-way hallway if that helps you to stay six feet away from others? If your job required you to be in contact with lots of people, can you change your duties to limit exposure?

- [The Job Accommodation Network](#) is a great resource for information regarding jobsite accommodations during COVID-19.
- Ask who is responsible for providing personal protective equipment, or PPE, such as face masks. Will you need to bring your own, or will your school or employer give PPE to you? If you need help [using PPE correctly](#), how will you get that support?



- If you are UNABLE to wear a mask or it's hard for you, let your school or employer know before you return to your school or job. They may require you to get a note from your doctor if you need an accommodation, such as working in a space far away from others or working mostly outside. You can also look for alternatives to traditional medical masks. Companies like [SensaCalm](#) make masks out of sensory-friendly material. [Safe 'N' Clear](#) makes masks with clear plastic in the middle so you can see the speaker's mouth.



**If all this is giving you stress, that's normal! Working and going to school during COVID-19 is something MOST people are having a hard time getting used to.**



- Talk with family, friends, and other self-advocates about your feelings and concerns. [The Washington State Developmental Disabilities Council](#) has a list of resources to increase communication, such as low-cost phone and internet service.



- Your safety is the priority, so clear communication is more important than ever. Use email or texts instead of phone calls so your needs are written down. You can always follow up afterwards if you change your mind about something or if something wasn't clear at first.

- Take time for yourself during the day, especially if you start getting stressed. Try out meditation or mindfulness apps such as [Calm](#) and [HeadSpace](#).



- Even though these are difficult times, remember to bring your best self to school or work. It's not always easy, but others rely on you. Leading by example through good communication and having a positive attitude can make a big difference!

**Want to learn more about self-advocacy during COVID-19?**

**Check out these resources:**

<https://selfadvocacyinfo.org/resources-about/health>