

# Back-to-School Checklist: Creating a Recovery-Ready Home

From the adolescent behavioral health team at  
River's Bend

"Recovery is not one-size-fits-all and rarely  
heads in a straight line, but home is the  
launchpad."

— Kelley Gavigan, LMSW



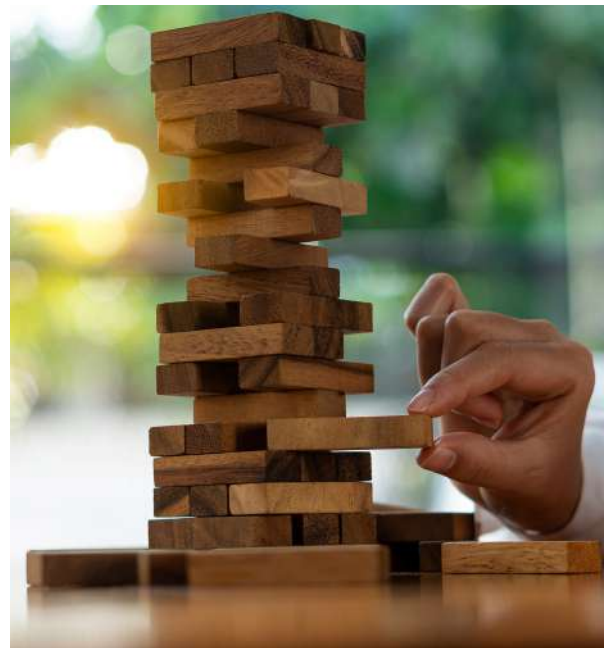
# Why a Recovery-Ready Home Matters

Returning to school can be exciting but can also bring stress, pressure, and temptation. For teens navigating recovery or at risk for substance abuse, a safe and supportive home environment can make the difference between setback and success.

This checklist offers practical steps to create a space where your teen can stay focused, feel supported, and build resilience.

## 1. Secure and Remove Risks

- **Lock up or dispose of alcohol** in the home.
- **Secure prescription medications** (including painkillers, anxiety meds, and ADHD medications) in a locked container.
- **Limit access to cash and valuables** that could be sold or traded for substances.
- **Review car use rules**—consider limiting unsupervised driving if safety is a concern.
- **Monitor online purchases and social media** to watch for drug-related content or transactions.



## 2. Create Structure

- **Set consistent daily routines**—sleep, meals, homework, and downtime.
- **Keep a visible family calendar** to track schoolwork, extracurriculars, and appointments.
- **Schedule regular check-ins** with your teen to discuss stress, friends, and challenges.

### 3. Build Positive Connection

- **Share at least one meal together daily** to maintain open communication.
- **Engage in shared activities** (sports, games, hobbies) that strengthen your bond.
- **Encourage open dialogue** about peer pressure, mental health, and substance use.

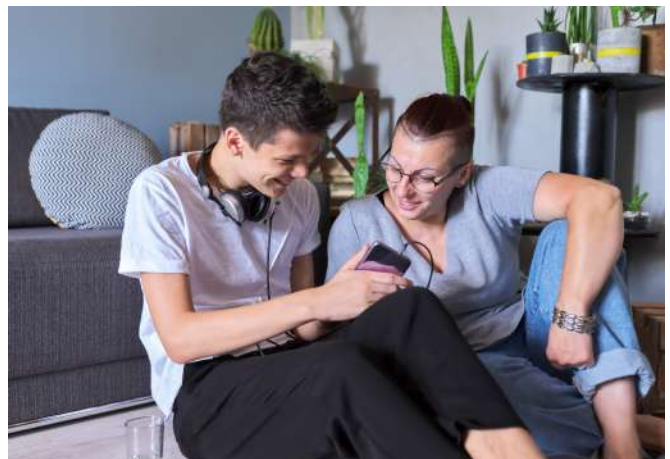


### 4. Strengthen Social Supports

- **Inform trusted adults**—such as teachers, school counselors, coaches, and extended family—about your teen’s recovery needs.
- **Encourage positive peer connections** through clubs, sports, or volunteer work.
- **Know your crisis contacts**—keep numbers for therapists, doctors, and local crisis lines handy.

### 5. Model Healthy Coping Skills

- Show your teen how you handle stress, through exercise, mindfulness, or talking with friends.
- Share stories of times you overcame challenges without turning to unhealthy coping mechanisms.
- Normalize seeking help by being open about your own support networks.







## 6. Prepare for High-Risk Situations

- **Anticipate stressful events** like tests, dances, or sports tryouts, and make a plan to navigate them.
- **Role-play responses** to peer pressure so your teen feels confident saying “no.”
- **Have a safe space** in the home where your teen can decompress.

# Your Teen's Safety Team

Consider building a network of adults who can help watch for warning signs and step in if needed:

- Other parent or guardians
- School counselor or social worker
- Pediatrician or primary care doctor
- Therapist or counselor
- Trusted family members

## Don't Go Through It Alone

Substance abuse impacts the entire family. Get support for you, whether it's through a therapist, Al-Anon, or a family recovery coach. You need tools, perspective, and people who understand the complexity of loving and helping a child with SUD.