Air Travel and Special Needs

The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) provides several resources for travelers with Special Needs.

Passengers with Disabilities and Medical Conditions

To ensure your security, all travelers are required to undergo screening at the checkpoint. You or your traveling companion may consult the TSA officer about the best way to relieve any concerns during the screening process. You may provide the officer with the TSA notification card or other medical documentation to describe your condition. If you have other questions or concerns about traveling with a disability please contact passenger support.

Travel with Children with Medical Conditions, Disabilities, or Mobility Aids

To ensure your security, all travelers are required to undergo screening. TSA officers will consult parents or the traveling guardian about the best way to relieve any concerns during the screening of a child.

Inform the TSA officer if your child is able to walk through the metal detector or need to be carried through the metal detector by the parent/guardian.

You may also call to request assistance at the checkpoint.

TSA RESOURCES

https://www.tsa.gov/travel/passenger-support
https://www.tsa.gov/travel/special-procedures
https://www.tsa.gov/travel/special-procedures/traveling-children

Contact TSA Cares at (855) 787-2227 / Federal Relay: 711
Weekdays: 8 a.m. to 11 p.m. ET
Weekends/Holidays: 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. ET
Early Childhood Corner by Lakeshia Yancey - "Are you ready to make memories?"

Going on vacations and trips with your family can build lasting memories. Although there are many fun times built into the plans, there are sometimes challenges. Let’s just admit it, traveling with children can be tasking and even over-whelming. Did you pack enough extra clothes, diapers and wipes, snacks, medicine, activities to keep the little one busy and entertained? Did you remember to pack the essentials for yourself?

PEATC would like to offer you some tips that will hopefully make travel preparation a little smoother.

1. Start planning early. It is always better to be overly prepared. Start discussing the upcoming trip with your child in a developmentally appropriate manner. Read books and show them pictures of the transportation vehicle that they will be riding on, if it something other than the car. Do the same with the destination and discuss what you will do or who they will visit with.

2. Make a list and check it twice, three times, or more. If you make a list of what you need to pack or what actions need to be taken prior to departure; you can ease the tension of possible forgetting something or running out at the last minute. It’s always nice to be able to check something off of a list; you get a sense of accomplishment!

3. Research. What special needs services and accommodations are offered through your chosen method of transportation and how to go about requesting them? Many airlines and train transit systems offer this information online. Even public transportation systems will have resources.

4. Planning a road trip. Using an online trip planner can assist with finding lodging, restaurants, and rest stops on your route.

5. RX ready. If your child is on any medications, make sure that you have refilled those prescriptions and have enough of the medication to last the duration of the trip.

6. Life Hacks. Find parent blogs or sites about traveling with children who have special needs. You can usually get some real hands on tips or life hacks based on personal experience. Take that time to share your own; you never know if you are helping another parent.

7. MOST IMPORTANTLY HAVE FUN AND ENJOY MAKING MEMORIES WITH YOUR CHILD!!

Travel Resources:

My Family Travels: http://myfamilytravels.com/content/11177-10-tips-traveling-special-needs-kids

Friendship Circle: http://www.friendshipcircle.org/blog/2012/05/03/airports-and-special-needs-travel-a-complete-guide/

Amtrak Accessible Travel Services: https://www.amtrak.com/accessible-travel-services?WT.z_va_evt=redirect&WT.z_va_topic=Onboard%20Information&WT.z_va_unit=Special%20Requests&WT.z_va_group=Special%20Onboard%20Service%20Requests

Military children are a unique 1% of our population that have traveled to more places and seen more sights than most adults have the opportunity to in the entirety of their lives. Military children have frequent moves which allow them to travel to new states and new countries. They may spend 2 years on sunny California beaches, to then travel to snow covered Vermont. One day they may be picking some Georgia peaches, to wake up the next, indulging on a fresh French Café croissant. Some have had the extreme pleasure of strolling through the Vatican, seen the Cologne Cathedral in Germany, or played in the pristine blue waters at Ypao Beach Park.

Military families don’t just travel when it’s PCS time; they travel for leisure and to visit family also. Military families take every single opportunity to make memories together. We have the underlying sense and knowledge that tomorrow isn’t a guarantee. We know that around the corner is the next deployment, the next TAD, the rotating shift work that only gives the service member 1 weekend out of 5 off. Because we spend so much time on the road and in the air, military families generally have traveling down to a science.

With that being said, traveling with a special needs child can complicate things and create additional challenges. However, going into it with your arsenal fully stocked, helps ease travel anxieties, melt-downs and transition nightmares.

Whether traveling by car or by plane, military families may want to take into consideration:
- Creating a social story prior to trip to prepare your child.
- Ensure you have passports for all members if traveling outside of the US.
- Medical equipment: making sure you have brought the correct supplies and consider destination. For example, if going to the beach are their beach wheelchairs at the locations. Also find out what the hotel will provide.
- Paperwork you may need: Physician’s letter (if going to an amusement park and want the fast pass)
- Medications and medical records you may need.
- A child tracking device for those that have children that wander.
- If flying, check with your airport to see if they conduct Mock Flights.
- Be prepared to address overstimulation and under-stimulation.
- Always have a backup plan. Weather, mechanical issues, late arriving flights or missed connections can interfere with all of your carefully made plans.

Military Travel Perks:

- **Travel Discounts**
  - When making reservations, remember to identify yourself as a service member or military family.
  - Discounts often on airlines, buses, hotel, and car rental and can be as much as 50% off.
  - Military Specific websites – deep discounted vacation rentals, cruises, resorts, airline tickets, car rental.
  - Government Vacation Rewards: Search for MWR Exchange Vacations on the online mall pulldown menu.
  - Armed Forces Vacation Club: Worldwide rentals for $369 a week.
  - SPACE-AVAILABLE TRAVEL: This allows service members and their families to fly free, or for a nominal fee. More information can be found at www.amc.af.mil/amctravel.

- **Recreation Discounts**
  - Armed Forces Recreation Centers: Room rates vary and are on a sliding scale. E-1 to E-5 pays as little as $95 a night at the Shades of Green Walt Disney World, Orlando, FL.
  - Locations: Kale Koa, Honolulu, Dragon Hill Lodge, Seoul, South Korea, Edelwiess Lodge and Resort Germany, Cape Henry Inn and Beach Club Fort Story. Shades of Green Walt Disney World, FL. Sanno Hotel, Tokyo, Japan.
  - Tickets and Tours: Many programs offer free or discounted tickets.
  - Walt Disney world, Busch Gardens (Free 1 day pass for Active Duty and dependents), Universal Studies, etc.
  - Free Access to all United States National Parks
  - Rentals
  - Recreation Centers
Virginia Disability Stats:

As of the 2015 IDEA reports that 145,000 students have an identified disability.

8.5% are between the ages of 6 and 21
Autism, OHI, and ADD/ADHD in the top three areas of diagnosis

As the school year comes to an end the long days of summer begin families look to the many beautiful and educational opportunities our National and State Parks, and museums have to offer. However, accessible recreation activities continue to be an area of struggle for people with varying disabilities and their families.

Shenandoah National Park is near and dear to my family. We have spent holidays at their Lewis Mountain cabins since my son was born. In fact every year on his birthday he delights in hearing the story of how on the day he was born his aunt and I went for an off the beaten trail hike and came across a baby bear cub! We have hiked that same trail hand in hand, mother and son around his birthday every year since. This summer the National Parks Service is celebrating their 100th birthday and with that in mind we reached out to the local park staff at Shenandoah to discuss the topic of Inclusive Recreation. As a result PEATC was invited to share with National Park staff about how to reach out to families and individuals with disabilities.

In 2012, the National Park Service estimated that 282 million people visited a national park unit, and 110 million visited the nps.gov website. The estimated number of Americans with a disability is one in five. Worldwide, estimates of those with a disability range from 10% to 15% of the total population. Because the National Park Service draws from a global visitor base, we can conservatively estimate that a minimum of 28 million visitors with disabilities visit national parks annually (282 million multiplied by 10%). In 2015 the National Parks Service launched their five-year strategic plan called, All In! Accessibility in the National Park Service, https://www.nps.gov/aboutus/accessibilityforvisitors.htm

We brainstormed strategies to help Shenandoah Park meet with the All In! Accessibility in the National Park Service goals to;

1. Create a welcoming environment by increasing the ability of the National Park Service to serve visitors and staff with disabilities,

2. Ensure that new facilities and programs are inclusive and accessible to people with disabilities.

3. Upgrade existing facilities, programs, and services to be accessible to people with disabilities.

It was an inspiring opportunity and great insight and sincerity shared by the park staff to find ways to include everyone. If you plan to visit one of the state parks this summer please introduce your family to the park staff.
**Una Vacación para Todos**

Su idea de una gran vacación puede que sea descansar en la piscina. Uno de sus hijos talvez quisiera unas vacaciones super activas que implique escalar montañas todos los días. Pero su otro niño pierde rápidamente el interés en ese tipo de cosas. ¿Qué hacer?

Viajar con niños es siempre un reto, y los problemas de atención y aprendizaje no hacen ese reto más fácil. Pero usted puede planear unas vacaciones que funcionen para toda la familia simplemente usando algunas estrategias generales.

**Considere las necesidades e intereses de todos!**

Su familia puede estar acostumbrada a acomodar los problemas de atención y aprendizaje de su hijo. Pero se puede reducir la fricción entre hermanos si planea un viaje que no sea solo construido en torno a las necesidades e intereses de un niño. Piense más bien en lo que disfrutaría toda la familia. Tenga en cuenta que muchos niños que tienen dificultades en la escuela, se comportan realmente bien en vacaciones, ya que experimentan cosas nuevas y diferentes. La planificación de unas vacaciones que incluye un montón de variedad puede ayudar a todos a encontrar algo divertido que hacer.

**Deje que sus hijos ayuden a planificar el viaje!**

El obtener la atención de sus hijos cuando usted está planeando las vacaciones, puede ayudar a mantenerlos ocupados durante el viaje. Además, cuando se anima a los niños con problemas de atención y aprendizaje a tomar decisiones, puede ayudar a que se sientan más independientes.

Pregunte a sus hijos si hay algo específico que les gustaría hacer mientras están en vacaciones. Para los niños más pequeños, tal vez sería mejor crear una lista de opciones disponibles y dejar que ellos escogen.

**Divide y vencerás!**

Su familia no tiene que permanecer juntos las vacaciones enteras. A veces, la división permite que todos los miembros de la familia disfruten de diferentes actividades. Por ejemplo, si su hijo tiene problemas de procesamiento auditivo, la pasaría muy bien explorando un museo de historia por un tiempo, pero su interés podría desaparecer después de un tiempo. Sin embargo, la hermana mayor realmente lo desea y quiere tomar el tour completo de tres horas. Eso no tiene por qué ser un problema. Si hay dos adultos en el viaje, uno de ellos puede llevar a su hijo a un parque infantil, mientras que el otro acaba la gira con su hija. Si usted es el único adulto en el viaje, pregunte por adelantado si los guías del museo estarán de acuerdo con acompañar a su hijo por el resto del tour.

**Acepte que sus hijos pueden todavía cansarse, irritarse y aburrirse!**

A pesar de haber hecho un buen trabajo en planear unas vacaciones divertidas, sus hijos todavía pueden aburrirse o ponerse de mal humor durante su viaje. Grandes cambios en la rutina habitual de su familia puede hacer que cualquier niño se ponga de mal humor.

Trayendo juegos, proyectos de arte y otras actividades pueden ayudar a mantener a todos ocupados durante el tiempo de inactividad temporal. La planificación del viaje junto puede ayudar a evitar problemas de viaje y así asegurar que toda la familia la pase bien.

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**A Vacation For Everyone**

Your idea of a great getaway may be lounging at the pool. One of your kids may want a super-active vacation that involves climbing mountains every day. But your other child quickly loses interest in that sort of thing. What to do?

Traveling with kids is always a challenge, and learning and attention issues don’t make that challenge any easier. But you can plan a vacation that works for everyone using a few general strategies.

**Consider everyone’s needs and interests!**

Your family may be used to accommodating your child’s learning and attention issues. But you can reduce sibling friction if you plan a trip that doesn’t seem like it’s built around one child’s needs and interests. Think about what your whole family will enjoy. Keep in mind that many kids who struggle in school actually do well on vacation because they get to do new and different things. Planning a vacation that includes lots of variety can help everyone find something fun to do.

**Let your kids help plan the trip!**

Getting your kids’ input when you’re planning can help them stay engaged during the trip. Also, when children with learning and attention issues are encouraged to make choices, it can help them feel more independent. It might even make them more invested in the trip’s success.

Ask your children if there’s anything specific they’d like to do while they’re on vacation. For younger kids, it might be better to list a few of the available options and let them pick. You may also want to consider letting each of your children plan one whole day of the trip.

**Divide and conquer!**

Your family doesn’t need to stick together the entire vacation. Sometimes, dividing and conquering allows for every member in the family to do and enjoy different activities.

For example, if your son has auditory processing issues, he may have a good time exploring a history museum for a little while, but his interest might fade after an hour or so. His older sister, however, may really want to take the full three-hour guided tour.

That doesn’t have to be a problem. If there are two adults on the trip, one of them can take your son to a playground while the other finishes the tour with your daughter. If you’re the only adult on the trip, ask in advance if the museum guides will agree to chaperone your older child for part of the tour.

**Accept that your kids may still get tired, cranky and bored!**

Even though you may do a great job of planning lots of fun activities, your kids may still get bored or grouchy during your trip. It can be tricky finding the sweet spot between too much excitement and not enough stimulation. Big changes to your family’s usual routine can make any kid cranky.

Bringing games, art projects and other activities can help keep everyone occupied during vacation downtime. Planning the trip together and doing some troubleshooting to help avoid travel challenges can go a long way toward ensuring that everyone has a good time.
Mental Health Desk by Caroline Gendelman - "Travel Here, Travel There"

It is said that travel is the only thing you buy which makes you richer. It is never too early to add this richness to our child’s life. Many parents feel overwhelmed at the thought of taking children on a journey and possibly more so if a child has special needs. Clearly, traveling with this child will require extensive planning and organization. Putting your mind at ease by way of careful preparation will be good for your child(ren) as well. Lines can be long and rain can happen so be certain to have plan B and plan C!

What are some ways to prepare you and your family to absorb all the richness the trip has to offer?

Whatever mode of travel or type of adventure you are planning put together a social story for your child before the trip. This looks like a photo album or scrapbook. Children, especially ones with special needs, thrive on routine and knowing what to expect. This can substantially lower his anxiety and even help organize your own plans! Here are some suggestions for pictures to include in your story:

1. Where you are going, who you will visit?
2. Show pictures of items you bought for the trip.
3. Think packing, what does his suitcase look like?
4. What is in his backpack of toys, books for the trip?
5. Activities you have planned parks you will visit.
6. Menus and restaurants where you will eat.
7. The airport or train station, talk about the sounds, show pictures of the horns or whistles.

Read books with your child like The Noisy Airplane Ride. Planes, boats and trains have many sounds he has probably never heard before. The pace of the stations may overwhelm him. There are even unusual smells he will encounter. A “dry run” to your place of departure would be a good idea. Washington Reagan and Dulles airports have programs to introduce special needs children to flying however, the events are in the fall. http://www.friendshipcircle.org/blog/2011/12/05/airplane-travel-5-books-to-help-prepare-your-special-needs-child/ has more books that are helpful.

Do not forget the service animal! You are likely familiar with the general rules and laws applying to your service animal but specific carriers may have particulars you need to know. Pre-approval is most likely required for emotional support and psychiatric service animals. Delta has a very clear description and is a good reference point. http://www.delta.com/content/www/en_US/traveling-with-us/special-travel-needs/disabilities.html

Enlarging your child’s world has many benefits. Travel can be a time for your child to practice self-regulation. The changing environment may stimulate her speech and the travel offers a family bonding opportunity. Visiting friends and relatives not in your daily circle adds richness to everyone’s life. Travel is another way for your child to know there is a wide world out there anxious to have her in it.
Fatherhood Corner by Derek Flake - "Finding ways to take time to be a dad"

What are you planning to do with your family this weekend? Or next weekend? Or the weekend after that? Coordinating schedules and managing our time is a big part of parenting.

Between bringing kids to practice or afterschool activities, having mom and dad on different work schedules, and handling an inevitable child care disruption, it can be easy to lose sight of the importance of making the effort to create time for you and your kids.

With such busy schedules in mind, the NRFC Activities of the Week is filled with ideas on easy, fun, and inexpensive ways you can make the most of the time you have together. Here are a few examples you can try:

Volunteer together!
Research suggests that families who volunteer together forge stronger ties. Also, kids who become involved in community service develop greater self-esteem and are less likely to engage in risky behaviors in their teen years. Check out our Volunteering page for ideas on ways to volunteer together.

Take a 'what if' trip.
Looking for a conversation starter over your next family dinner? Try this: If you could visit anywhere, or any time, in the world, where would it be, and why? Share your answer too. Learn more about your dream locations by visiting your local library.

Say Thank You to Your Kids.
Saying 'thank you' to your children not only lets them feel loved and appreciated, it also helps teach them the importance of showing thanks to others. How? Say it, spend time together, or give them a card.

Make a fort.
Next time you're stuck inside, make a blanket fort. Grab blankets, pillows, and flashlights then build something incredible. Even a simple tent between two chairs can feel like an adventure if you and your children are working together.

It's not about how much time you spend together, the important part is that you are together. Those are the moments that can make the biggest difference in your child’s life.

Find more inspiration for spending fun, quality time together by watching these PSA videos!

National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse
https://www.fatherhood.gov/dadtalk-blog/finding-ways-take-time-be-dad
Family Engagement Corner by Tina Norris - "Summer is almost here!"

What better way for families to engage than spending quality time together traveling. Detaching from your daily stress can benefit the entire family.

Researchers have found that family vacations can improve communication and bonding while creating great memories. Traveling can expose your children to new places, people, cultures, and foods. These new experiences will help shape how they see and view the world.

There are numerous modes of transportation to reach your destination. Some families prefer to drive while others may take the train, bus or even fly. Either way, vacations give families time to connect with one another in less stressful environments.

However, planning a trip with a child who has special needs can be overwhelming especially for families new to the service system. Where do you start?

We found some resources to assist you in advocating for the supports your child needs. The memories you make will last a lifetime!

**Resources:**

7 Travel Agencies for special needs travel

A Special Needs Pre-Flight checklist

32 Vacation Destinations for Individuals with Special Needs

70+ Tips and Tricks for Special Needs Road Trips

Your Rights as an Air Travelers with a Disability
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<th>Start Date</th>
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<td>6/7/2016</td>
<td>PEATC</td>
<td>Online</td>
<td>TIME: 11:00am to 12:00pm EDT REGISTER HERE: <a href="https://cc.readytalk.com/registration/?r=meeting=9-v0vB6q9waw">https://cc.readytalk.com/registration/?r=meeting=9-v0vB6q9waw</a> &amp;campaign=7zpl19wq5p</td>
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<td>EFMP/SLO Training, Woodbridge, VA</td>
<td>6/8/2016</td>
<td>PEATC</td>
<td>Hilton Garden Inn Woodbridge, 2500 Neabsco Common Pl, Woodbridge, VA 22191</td>
<td>To apply, please go to: <a href="https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/2016EFMPSLO">https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/2016EFMPSLO</a></td>
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<td>&quot;How to Talk&quot; workshop, Norfolk, VA</td>
<td>6/10/2016</td>
<td>Care Connection for Children for Hampton Roads</td>
<td>Independence Center in Norfolk 6300 E Virginia Beach Blvd, Norfolk, VA 23502</td>
<td>Please contact: JoAnna Bryant, Parent Coordinator, at <a href="mailto:joanna.bryant@chkd.org">joanna.bryant@chkd.org</a> or (757) 668-7132</td>
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<td>PEATC Play Date_June</td>
<td>6/11/2016</td>
<td>PEATC</td>
<td>PEATC office, 8003 Forbes Pl Springfield, VA</td>
<td>Contact PEATC at 703-923-0010 or <a href="mailto:hyancey@peatc.org">hyancey@peatc.org</a> for more information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Annual Health Expo, Falls Church, VA</td>
<td>6/11/2016</td>
<td>Council of Christian Life of the Hispanic Apostolate of the Diocese of Arlington</td>
<td>Saint James Catholic School Gymnasium 820 W. Broad St Falls Church, VA 22246</td>
<td>Contact PEATC at 703-923-0010 or <a href="mailto:sweeneys@peatc.org">sweeneys@peatc.org</a> for more information</td>
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<td>&quot;ABCs of Behavior&quot; workshop, Annandale, VA</td>
<td>6/12/2016</td>
<td>Messiah United Methodist Church</td>
<td>6215 Rolling Rd. Springfield, VA 22152</td>
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<td>PEATC Plastic</td>
<td>6/15/2016</td>
<td>PEATC</td>
<td>PEATC office, 8003 Forbes Pl Springfield, VA</td>
<td>Contact PEATC at 703-923-0010 or <a href="mailto:sweeneys@peatc.org">sweeneys@peatc.org</a> for more information</td>
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<tr>
<td>I’m Determined Youth Summit</td>
<td>6/15/2016</td>
<td>Virginia Department of Education (VDDE)</td>
<td>JMU Festival Conference and Student Center 1301 Carrier Drive</td>
<td><a href="http://www.imdetermined.org/youth/youth_summit/">http://www.imdetermined.org/youth/youth_summit/</a></td>
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<td>Understanding Testing Results for Dyslexia-WEBINAR</td>
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<td>PEATC</td>
<td>Online</td>
<td>11:00am to 12:00pm EDT REGISTER HERE: <a href="https://cc.readytalk.com/registration/?r=meeting=69pde711m5">https://cc.readytalk.com/registration/?r=meeting=69pde711m5</a> &amp;campaign=frpmhdp4k1st</td>
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<td>Resource Fair, Richmond, VA</td>
<td>6/18/2016</td>
<td>ReEstablished Richmond</td>
<td>Tuckahoe YMCA 3300 West Broad Street, Richmond, VA 23223</td>
<td>Contact PEATC at 703-923-0010 or <a href="mailto:sweeneys@peatc.org">sweeneys@peatc.org</a> for more information</td>
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<td>&quot;IEP Measurable Goals&quot; workshop, Springfield, VA</td>
<td>6/21/2016</td>
<td>Infant &amp; Toddler Connection of Fairfax Falls Church</td>
<td>8350 Richmond Hwy Alexandria VA 22306</td>
<td>Silvia Zaleta-Maza Regional Family Support Liaison at 703-704-6491, will be taking registrations for the event.</td>
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<td>IEP Organization</td>
<td>6/22/2016</td>
<td>Marine Corps Base Quantico</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>Open to Military families; please contact <a href="mailto:walieman@peatc.org">walieman@peatc.org</a> for more information</td>
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<td>Cafecito, &quot;Transition tips&quot;</td>
<td>6/29/2016</td>
<td>PEATC</td>
<td>PEATC office, 8003 Forbes Pl Springfield, VA</td>
<td>Please email information, flamencos at 703.923.0010 o via email a <a href="mailto:sweeneys@peatc.org">sweeneys@peatc.org</a></td>
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<td>6/30/2016</td>
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<td>Richmond Marriott Short Pump 4240 Dominion Blvd, Glen Allen, VA</td>
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**PEATC On Demand & In the Spotlight by Kristin Kane - "Organization and Planning"

When parents, teachers or other adults in a student's life talks about organization and planning, they are talking about things they can do NOW to get ready for end of the summer and the beginning of the next school year.

The fall and the 1st day back to school may seem far away, but the more you plan now, the easier your first steps into the new school year will be!

Viewers will explore strategies to plan and organize information for success in a new school, new school year, and new experiences in general!

You can view PEATC's "Organization and Planning" webinar at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=82XBVErEtm4