

This resource is meant to educate school staff on spinal muscular atrophy (SMA) so that they can provide a supportive and successful educational environment for students with SMA. Please email communitysupport@curesma.org with any questions. Thank you for your willingness to learn more about how to best support students with SMA in your school!

There are some simple accommodations that can be made in the classroom to help a student with SMA feel comfortable and be successful. The list below is not exhaustive and will need to be tailored to your student's needs. It is a helpful starting place for you, the student, and the educational team to look at when discussing potential accommodations.

Classroom Considerations

- Have an **extra set of books** in the classroom so that the student does not have to carry books back and forth between home and school.
- Likewise, have an **extra set of supplies** that may be going back and forth between home and school - pens/pencils, markers, scissors, etc.
- Consider **placement of lockers or cubbies** to allow for easy access. It's helpful to have the student's locker or cubby on the end of the row to allow space for getting ready at the beginning or end of the school day.
- Additionally, consider **using different types of locks if using a secured locker** that may work better based on the student's fine motor skill. If nothing valuable will be kept in the locker, consider removing the need for a lock all together as those can be difficult to manipulate for individuals with SMA.
- It can also be helpful to **have a small stool or chair next to the student's locker** to allow a space for the student to set items as they unpack/pack-up at the start and end of the day.
- Because students with SMA are at risk of weakened respiratory muscles and complications from respiratory illness, **it is beneficial to allow them their own set of supplies to use**, especially in the younger grades when sharing supplies is more common. This will cut down on germs exchanged and the risk of picking up an illness.
- On the same note, **have a plan for sanitizing their desk, hands, and wheelchair joystick or wheelchair grab bars** throughout the day. They should be involved in the process (no one should ever touch the student's chair or body without permission) but having a consistent sanitizing schedule will help to reduce the risk of catching any viruses from classmates.
- **Ensure that the classroom layout is conducive to the student getting around** in their chair. Consider the turning radius that they will need to maneuver in and out of a space, as well, if they are using a wheelchair or other mobility device.
- **Wheelchair accessible desk or table:**
 - Tray or moveable table on wheels to set laptop or keyboard on
 - Communication devices to assist those with weaker speech muscles.
 - An additional table or rolling cart next to the student's desk or nearby, to allow easier open access to supplies.
- **Bookshare** (<https://www.bookshare.org/cms/>) is a useful resource that allows some textbooks to be downloaded/accessed from a website. This can be especially helpful for someone with muscle weakness who may have trouble lifting books.

Bathroom Accommodations

- **Where are the bathrooms located** and are they easily accessed for the student? Is there enough room to utilize them comfortably? Is any **special equipment** needed such as a raised toilet seat or toileting system, table to assist with changing, or some kind of lift?
- **Assistance with toileting** - does the student need assistance using the bathroom and if so who will be responsible for assisting in this matter? Who does the student feel comfortable assisting them and how will training on assisting happen?

Other Space or General Accommodations

- **Assistance with lunch**
 - Does the student need assistance eating, or getting lunch ready and if so who will be responsible for assisting?
 - Is there seating in the lunch space that accommodates a wheelchair, if that is needed.
- Can the student **reach all classes/levels of the school** that they will need to? How will they access entering the school? Do automatic doors allow for student to enter and exit, or will a person be available at all times to allow student access to school?
- What is the **emergency evacuation plan** for fires, safety drills, tornadoes, etc.? How will you ensure a safe, prompt exit from the building or securing a safe location for the student during an emergency?
- During **busy transition times** (beginning and end of school day or when changing classes for older grades), it is helpful to arrange for the student to be able to leave the classroom a few minutes early to avoid the crowded hallways, which often make it impossible for the student to get to their next class on time.
- Many school settings, especially middle and high schools, prohibit students to carry cell phones, however **students with SMA need to have a way to contact someone at all times** in case of emergency (such as an elevator not functioning, a wheelchair malfunctioning when the student is alone, etc.).