

Get Smart About

**ADHD**

# REPORT CARD

A Tool for Parents of Teens with  
Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

#### About the Author

**Peter S. Jensen, M.D.**

*Ruane Professor of Child Psychiatry,  
Columbia University College of  
Physicians and Surgeons*

Dr. Jensen is the Director of the Center for the Advancement of Children's Mental Health — Putting Science to Work, and Ruane Professor of Child Psychiatry at the Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons. He previously served as the lead National Institute of Mental Health investigator on a major ADHD treatment study. An award-winning researcher, author, and educator, he is on the scientific advisory board of Children and Adults with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (CHADD), among other organizations. Dr. Jensen is also author of the best-selling book series "Making the System Work for Your Child".

**T**he Get Smart About ADHD Report Card is a tool to teach parents of teens with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) how to get actively involved in helping their teen better manage the condition. The Report Card is divided into five areas, each with a check list of steps parents can take towards becoming their teen's friend, mentor and advocate through the sometimes difficult, often rewarding journey of living with ADHD. Parents can then grade themselves on their level of involvement and get advice on how to get more engaged.



CENTER FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH  
AT COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

PUTTING SCIENCE TO WORK

## In The Home

- Schedule weekly family meetings to discuss new rules, coordinate schedules, celebrate accomplishments, make weekly chore assignments and encourage teen and other family members to talk about feelings or family matters
- Create a daily routine with designated times for homework, bedtime, and leisure activities (i.e., watching TV, etc)
  - Be flexible and reasonable when routines need adjustment
  - Require other siblings to also follow routines, to avoid alienating your teen with ADHD

### Sample Routine for Teens (for school days)

- Wake-up time: 6am
- Take meds: 7am
- After-school sports practice: 3-4pm
- After-school snack/TV: 4:30-5pm
- Homework: 5-7pm
- Dinner: 7-8pm
- Clean-up dishes: 8-8:30pm
- Family social time (board game, favorite TV show): 8:30-9:30pm
- Bedtime: 9:30pm

- On a weekly basis, have a private, low-key, and pleasant conversation with your teen to seek their input on how you are doing as a parent and ways in which you could be more helpful to them
  - Make this a casual, quiet activity, perhaps while having a snack together, or when driving with your teen to an activity
- Work with teen to create a dedicated area free of distraction to complete homework or study
- Establish consistent discipline, with no more than three to four clear rules which are reinforced by non-physical punishment, like loss of privileges for teens

### Sample Rules for Teens

- Get home by 10 p.m. on weekends
- No physical aggression or pushing
- Complete one hour of homework before watching TV
- Clear plates off table after meals and place in dishwasher
- Only brief phone calls allowed until homework is completed

- Work together to create and maintain a reward system with your teen to recognize positive behaviors like adherence to routines or completion of chores

### Sample Rewards for Teens

- Extension of curfew by one hour
- Permission to take car out on Saturday evening
- Extra TV watching time
- Exemption from one chore

TASKS COMPLETED

## Social Life/Leisure Activities

- Encourage your teen to pursue hobbies or activities that interest them
  - Enroll teen in classes to help them improve in the activities they enjoy, but may be embarrassed to engage in (e.g., pitching classes, computer camp or dance lessons, etc.)
- Create occasions that encourage your teen to foster friendships
  - For example, allow teen to invite a friend to a family outing like a baseball game or shopping, or even a short family vacation
- Volunteer to chaperone school functions like dances or field trips to observe your teen in a social environment
  - Maintain a low-key presence to avoid embarrassing teen
- Talk to teachers about your teen's in-school social behavior with peers
  - If teen is having difficulty making or maintaining friendships, seek advice from teen's guidance counselor about extracurricular activities or clubs teens could join to interact with peers
- Schedule one-on-one time to pursue an activity that your teen likes and can help choose
  - Use time to gently initiate conversations with your teen about their social likes and dislikes and friendships in and out of school
- Consider helping teen find a job which may be rewarding for their self-esteem and encourage them to socialize with peers

Overall, remain positive and encouraging when teen appears to be struggling in this area. Remind them that when it comes to having friends, it is quality, not quantity that matters; one to two friends are more than enough.

TASKS COMPLETED

# Working Together with the School

- Arrange monthly meetings with teachers to get input on teen's classroom behavior and academic progress
- Work with teachers to make rules and consequences consistent with those at home
- Keep teachers informed of important changes in your teen's treatment and how they may impact on their behavior
- Show appreciation to collaborative school professionals with notes or small gestures, like baking cookies
- Find out about special provisions offered by school to help teen understand material and succeed in classwork
  - Contact your local school district and ask to speak with the special education coordinator. Ask that person for a listing or handout about the district's 504 plan provisions.  
\* *The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires public schools to offer a free appropriate education in the least restrictive environment appropriate to a child's individual needs.*<sup>i</sup>
- Meet with the school nurse to discuss teen's ADHD and what behaviors they may expect
  - If teen is taking medication, inform teachers and school nurse and make arrangements for teen to have discreet access (if taken during school hours)

## Sample Provisions for Teens

- Modified homework assignments and teacher supervision of homework completion
- Alternative testing arrangements (i.e., location, circumstances, time, etc.)
- Reduction in the amount of written work, extended deadline to complete any assignments, breaking work into smaller pieces, etc.
- Access to a computer for written work, if easier
- Alternate seating arrangements (i.e., closer to teacher or blackboard)
- Continual progress reports assessing behavior and/or assignments

TASKS COMPLETED

<sup>i</sup> A Guide to Disability Rights Law.  
U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division, Disability Rights Section, August 2004.  
Accessed 9/20/05.  
<<http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/cguide.htm#anchor65310>>

## Getting the Most from the Physician

- Prepare a list of questions to ask the physician in advance of the visit; encourage your teen to do the same
  - Discuss important milestones in teen’s life, like driving, and seek physician’s advice
- Work with your teen to keep a running journal of your teen’s appetite, behaviors, moods and share them with your teen’s physician during visits
- Schedule frequent visits to reevaluate symptoms and behaviors based on teen’s response to treatments
- Seek teen’s feedback on their relationship with their physician; if feedback is negative consider switching to another physician
- Encourage private dialogue between teen and their physician during appointments to give teen opportunity to get any “personal” questions answered; it’s important for teen to have their own relationship with their physician
  - Don’t pry about what was privately discussed; the physician is on your side, so he/she will alert you to issues you need to be aware of
- Ask office for referrals to other physicians or specialists for additional opinions on diagnosis and treatment

TASKS COMPLETED



## Managing Your Teen’s Medication

- Keep a file on any medications your teen has been prescribed for ADHD
  - List names, dates, dosages and responses/reactions (side effects, if any)
- Track teen’s overall health, behavior, appetite and sleep behavior in daily or weekly log
- Learn how different medications work and the behavioral changes to expect
- Know any potential side effects and note and report them to your teen’s physician promptly
- Make sure medication is taken as prescribed (i.e., frequency, with/without food, etc.)
- Inform other physicians, including dentists, what medications your teen is taking

TASKS COMPLETED



## Taking the Test

Getting the Report Card was the first step to show that you want to get more involved in helping your teen manage ADHD. Below is a self-rating scale to assess just how well you did, so you can take steps to do more and better.

For each of the five sections, count how many of the six tasks you completed.

In the Home	Social Life/ Leisure Activities	Working Together with the School	Getting the Most from the Physician	Managing Your Teen's Medication
-------------	---------------------------------------	--	---	---------------------------------------

## What Your Score Means (for each section)

### 0–2 Needs Improvement

While you may be doing a few things, you could be doing more to help your teen. Refer to the “Scoring a Better Grade” section for additional advice on getting involved.

### 3–4 Good

You’re doing your part to help your teen. However, as parents we always want to give our kids the best we can. Refer to the “Scoring a Better Grade” section for additional advice.

### 5–6 Excellent

You are helping your teen get the most out of their ADHD management and can serve as a model for other parents. Visit the website of the non-profit group Children and Adults with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (CHADD) at [www.chadd.org](http://www.chadd.org) to learn how to help other parents in your community.

# Scoring a Better Grade

Below are a few additional tips for increasing your score:

## If you're pressed for time due to work or being a single parent...

- Use paid leave (vacation time) to perform one or more tasks
- Pick one day/night of the week to take your teen on “a date” (i.e., a special breakfast, after dinner trip to ice cream shop, etc.)
  - \* Use this opportunity to communicate about school, friends, physician, treatments and life in general
- Contact your local CHADD chapter (details available on CHADD website at [www.CHADD.org](http://www.CHADD.org)) to join parent support groups
- Request help from friends and family in order to free up time to devote to your teen

## If your teen is unresponsive or doesn't follow through on tasks...

- Talk to teen about what you could do to make rules and routines more helpful and fun
- Talk to other parents of teens with ADHD and seek their advice
  - \* Parents can be located through local CHADD support groups
- Seek advice from your physician on ways to motivate your teen
- Consider visiting a therapist with your teen to encourage them to communicate their feelings/fears
- Seek more information about teens and ADHD online (Refer to page eight for a list of online resources for ADHD information)

## Online Resources for Information on ADHD

American Academy of Pediatrics (847) 434-4000 <b>www.aap.org</b>	Focus on ADHD <b>www.FocusOnADHD.com</b>
Attention Deficit Disorder Association (847) 432-ADDA <b>www.add.org</b>	National Center for Gender Issues and ADHD (202) 966-1516 <b>www.ncgiadd.org</b>
Attention Deficit Information Network, Inc. (781) 455-9895 <b>www.addinfonet.com</b>	National Institutes of Mental Health (301) 443-4513 <b>www.nimh.nih.gov</b>
Attention Deficit Disorder Resources (253) 759-5085 <b>www.addresources.org</b>	National Mental Health Association (703) 684-7722 <b>www.nmha.org</b>
CHADD (Children and Adults with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder) (800) 233-4050 <b>www.chadd.org</b>	National Resource Center on ADHD 800-233-4050 <b>www.help4adhd.org/index.cfm</b>