

Students facing extended absences from school eligible for school district's home hospital program

James Pinkley's school year almost came to a complete halt about this time last year due to a collarbone injury on the soccer field.

The injury put him out for the season and also prevented him from attending classes for the next six weeks.

The Harlan County Public School's Home Hospital Program, however, helped keep James from falling behind with his studies. It resulted in him having his lessons delivered to his home in Lynch, along with personal instruction twice a week during the recovery process.

"It was good," said Pinkley, recalling his enrollment into the program. "It kept me on track. I didn't get super behind. When I came back to school I was right on track... It didn't overwhelm me."



James Pinkley

Vickie Pinkley, his mother, said they learned about the program through local educator Jerry Edwards. They enrolled and Harlan County High School Science Teacher Jay Dunaway provided services to Pinkley.

"I had no idea the program was available here," she said. "Mr. Dunaway came twice each week while James was in the program. He brought his work and went over lessons to make sure James knew what he was doing. Mr. Dunaway was terrific. He worked around our schedule, which was phenomenal. A parent has to be with the student. If it had not been for the program, we would have had to go to the school and get his assignments... It would have been a major hardship on us. You can't miss six weeks of school and not fall behind."

"The program worked really well. I was very impressed with it," said Mrs. Pinkley. "From the top to the bottom, it was good. He took care of James."

Mrs. Pinkley pointed out that the school work actually provided welcome relief to James from the boredom that came with his home confinement.

"He was bored out of his mind. You can only watch so much TV. The school work actually gave him something to do," she said.

Harlan County students facing an extended absence from school due to medical reasons are eligible for home hospital instruction.

Any Harlan County student with an injury or illness preventing school attendance for more than five days should inquire about this program, said Scott Pace, the home hospital program's director.

"Home Hospital Instruction allows us to continue serving our students, even though they are unable to come to school," said Pace. "It is a win for the student, the family, the school and our district."

A medical form must be completed by a student's medical provider, thereby allowing services by a teacher at the student's home, he said.

A teacher will be assigned to the student to provide two visits per week, with one hour of instruction per visit. Students are not counted absent when assigned to the home hospital program.

Pace said an incentive to pursue this route of instruction is that assigned teachers will gather assignments and books from the students' regular scheduled teachers and bring to the home.

"Then, when the student returns to school, he or she won't feel so overwhelmed with makeup work and be up to date on assignments with their peers," he said.

Examples of qualifying events, include bone and muscle injuries, surgeries, illnesses that require extended periods for healing, and numerous others.

"We encourage any parent or guardian to contact us if their child is facing more than five days out of the regular classroom," said Linda Hendrickson, attendance auditor. "We are here to help you in setting this up. Forms are available at the central office, at each school in the district and on the district website."

Guidance counselors, attendance clerks and principals can assist you in securing the proper forms for the physician to complete.

"It is good to prepare by picking up the forms in advance of doctor visits if you know situations are coming up. We understand there are those that occur unexpectedly and will work with when requested."

Diana Wood, an employee of the school district, said that the home hospital program "allowed my son, Noah, to continue to get his education without falling behind in his school work. If it wasn't for the home hospital program, he would have had to drop out of his dual credit classes. Mrs. Robin Sanders, his home hospital teacher, went above and beyond to make sure that Noah did not fall behind his peers."

Noah also managed to retain his valedictorian status as a result of his participation in the program.

Pace emphasized again that there is no cost to the student or family for this service.

"We simply want you to know and be aware of the Home Hospital Instruction and encourage you to take advantage of it," he said. "We ask for your assistance in sharing this information with family and friends. We want these students to receive the services for which they are eligible."

For more information to obtain a form contact Linda Hendrickson at 606-573-4330, extension 2048, or the office personnel at your child's school. You may visit www.harlan.kyschools.us and click on the home hospital link at the top of the page to view and download the home hospital application.