



SCHOOL NURSE DISCUSSION GUIDE

Understanding and Responding to Panic Attacks

This guide helps school nurses think through how to respond with care and confidence when a student shows signs of panic. You can use it for group discussions or on your own. Pick the questions that make the most sense for your team or situation.

■ Icebreaker Questions

- Many of you are likely seeing students experiencing panic in your clinics. What do you find most challenging when caring for them?

■ Recognition and Response to Panic Attacks

- How do you differentiate panic attack symptoms from other medical concerns (like asthma or a heart issue)?
- What words, tone, or nonverbal cues have you found most effective in helping calm and ground a student during a panic attack?
- How do you explain what's happening to a student who's panicking, especially if it's their first time?
- What have you noticed about the impact of specific school situations (e.g., testing, presentations, crowded spaces) on triggering panic?
- How might trauma, cultural background, or family beliefs influence a student's experience of panic and how they explain it?

■ Systems and Supports

- Who else in your school do you involve when a student experiences a panic attack?
- What does appropriate follow-up look like after a student visits your clinic for panic symptoms?
- What tools (e.g., grounding techniques, calming routines) have you shared with students to help them prepare for, recognize, or prevent future episodes?
- What's helped you prepare teachers or staff so they better understand panic and respond appropriately?
- Are there school policies, routines, or testing environments that could be adapted to better support students prone to panic?

■ Personal Reflection and Wellness

- What's most challenging for you when supporting a student in the middle of a panic attack?
- How do you recover emotionally or mentally after a high-stress situation like this?
- What training or resources would help you feel even more prepared to handle panic attacks?

■ Conclusion

- What's one new response, phrase, or strategy you're interested in trying after viewing the module and participating in today's discussion?