



SCHOOL NURSE DISCUSSION GUIDE

Understanding and Responding to School Avoidance

This guide helps school nurses think through and talk about how to respond to school avoidance. You can use it for group discussions or for your own reflection. Pick the questions that make the most sense for your group and what you're seeing in your school.

Icebreaker Questions

- What are some of the challenges that you've experienced in your school regarding school avoidance?
- In what ways has students' attendance changed since the pandemic?

Strategy Reflection Questions

- What early signs or patterns help you recognize potential school avoidance before it becomes chronic?
- What external or student-specific factors have you seen in your school that contributed to a student avoiding school (e.g., bullying, family issues, mental health challenges)?
- What are some helpful and nonjudgmental ways to approach families about school avoidance or frequent absences?
- What's worked well for you in terms of early outreach or follow-up with families (for example, what types of questions or approaches have helped build trust)?

Prevention and Re-entry Strategies

- What small changes to routines, language, or environment might help students feel more welcomed or safe at school?
- What support systems or activities at school (e.g., clubs, mentors, trusted adults) might increase connectedness for students who are struggling to attend?
- How can we make sure we're considering the full context of a student's life—such as poverty, discrimination, or trauma—when communicating with them or their caregivers?

Systems and Supports

- What protocols does your school have—or need—to help nurses track, address, and support school avoidance cases?
- How can we create a communication system to keep nurses informed about students who are missing school but not visiting the clinic?
- How do you advocate for 504 plans, IEPs, or accommodations when school avoidance is linked to health or mental health conditions?
- What community or school-based resources may be or have been useful in helping families overcome barriers to attendance?

Personal Reflection and Wellness

- What techniques help you stay empathetic when addressing persistent attendance issues?

Conclusion

- What's one thing you might try differently after viewing the module and participating in today's discussion?