



SCHOOL NURSE DISCUSSION GUIDE

Understanding and Responding to Anxiety

This discussion guide supports school nurses in reflecting on and discussing how to respond effectively and compassionately to students showing signs of anxiety—either in a group setting or for individual reflection. Facilitators may choose the questions most relevant to their group.

■ Icebreaker Questions:

- How does anxiety impact students in your school or your work in the clinic?

■ Recognition of & Response to Anxiety

- What are common reasons students come to the nurse that may mask anxiety symptoms?
- What questions or approaches have helped you open up a conversation with a student showing signs of worry or distress?
- How do you explain anxiety to students in a way that feels validating and non-threatening?
- In your experience, how do younger students show anxiety differently than older students?
- How do trauma or chronic stress influence the way anxiety presents in students?
- What have you noticed about how anxiety may affect students differently based on their cultural background, identity, or family situation?

■ Systems and Supports

- Who do you usually involve when you're concerned about a student's anxiety?
- How does your school support students who frequently avoid class or school due to anxiety (e.g., missing gym, lunch, or arriving late)?
- What does your follow-up look like after a student has an anxiety episode in your clinic?
- What small tools or coping strategies have you shared that seemed to help anxious students (e.g., grounding techniques, deep breathing)?
- What are some school-wide practices that support students struggling with anxiety?

■ Personal Reflection and Wellness

- What parts of supporting students with anxiety feel most challenging or emotionally taxing for you?
- What helps you recharge or reset after helping a student in crisis?
- What professional development or training would help you feel more prepared to support anxious students?

■ Conclusion

- What is one new approach you would like to try with an anxious student after today's discussion?