



SCHOOL NURSE DISCUSSION GUIDE

Understanding and Responding to Panic Attacks

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

■ 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?

■ System 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 has 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 is 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?