



SCHOOL NURSE DISCUSSION GUIDE

Understanding and Responding to School Avoidance

This discussion guide supports school nurses in reflecting on and discussing effective responses to school avoidance—either in a group setting or for individual reflection. Facilitators may choose the questions most relevant to their group.

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 has 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 & 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 is one thing you might try differently after viewing the module and participating in today's discussion?