

IS YOUR CHILD MISSING SCHOOL DUE TO ANXIETY?

Definition of anxiety: feeling of fear and uneasiness about everyday situations

If your child is suffering from anxiety, they're not alone. In most situations, anxiety is normal and temporary. It becomes a concern if it persists and affects relationships with family, peers and teachers; contributes to academic challenges; and leads to school avoidance/refusal. Addressing anxiety is important for a child's overall well-being, not just attendance.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF ANXIETY?

- Feeling tired, irritable or easily tearful
- Having trouble separating from parents
- Experiencing difficulty sleeping or frequent nightmares
- Having trouble getting out of bed or dressed for school
- Lacking appetite
- Having trouble concentrating, which may lead to difficulty starting tasks, problems with homework and falling behind in school
- Experiencing physical symptoms, including headaches and stomachaches
- Avoiding activities previously enjoyed
- Having negative or continuous thoughts that something bad is going to happen

WHAT CAN FAMILIES DO?

Here are some tips to help your child get through these challenges and return to school:

- Don't punish your child for refusing to go to school, as this can make the situation worse.
- If possible, avoid letting your child stay home. Though staying home from school may provide short-term relief for your child, continued absence from school will lead to a feeling of being disconnected from classmates and teachers, cause your child to fall behind academically and make it harder for them to return.
- Speak with your child. Try to understand what's specifically bothering them.
- Make it clear that you're there to help and you believe they can face their fears and overcome the problem.
- Talk with the school nurse, counselor, social worker and/or psychologist about your student's challenges, identify possible solutions and develop a plan.
- In certain situations, a 504 plan or Individualized Education Program (IEP) may be needed to ensure your child receives appropriate support and resources.

