

FACT SHEET

SCHOOL REFUSAL



SCHOOL REFUSAL OCCURS WHERE A YOUNG PERSON ISN'T ATTENDING CLASSES AND:

THEY ARE LIKELY TO BE EXPERIENCING ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION;

AND (UNLIKE TRUANCY) THEIR PARENTS ARE AWARE OF THE CHILD'S SCHOOL REFUSING AND ARE UNABLE TO SUPPORT THE CHILD TO RE-ENTER SCHOOL.

ENGAGE IN A COLLABORATIVE PROCESS WITH THE YOUNG PERSON & FAMILY

- | Encouragement
- | Time
- | Small steps
- | Practice runs
- | Exceptions
- | In their space
- | Challenge
- | Honesty and fun
- | Following up
- | Flexibility

SUPPORT YOUNG PERSON TO JOIN/RE-JOIN SCHOOL AND FAMILY

- | Explore school supports/relationships to help hold young person in
- | Changes and adaptations at school
- | Practical supports (for example, transport)
- | Encourage positive family interaction
- | Build family communication
- | Support to join with other family members

WHAT WE DO

Community Connections work with young people, parents and schools where young people have usually been 'school refusing' for an extended period. Often the young person and family have had significant level of contact with service systems which have tried to support the child's re-entry to school.

SOME COMMON (BUT BY NO MEANS UNIVERSAL) ELEMENTS TO SCHOOL REFUSING:

- | The student has felt left behind academically.
- | The young person may be experiencing anxiety and depression.
- | There may have been experiences of bullying at school.
- | The parents and the family unit may be experiencing a variety of social stressors (for example, financial, physical or mental ill health of family members).
- | The young person's lifestyle has departed from the usual day/night patterns and they stay up late and sleep during the day.
- | The young person is not engaging in face-to-face relationships and may be heavily involved in non-face-to-face pursuits such as gaming.
- | The young person is generally not engaged in any activities outside the house (for example, casual employment, sports or recreational activities).

PRACTICE PRINCIPLES

- | Meeting young person and family in their home or community.
- | Join with the young person and family.
- | Persist (hold in for what could be a very long haul).
- | Be gentle (which does not preclude challenge).
- | Be prompt, follow up, bring new energy.
- | Be a linker, a buffer, a translator, an interpreter, a supporter between the young person and family and young person/family and the external world.
- | Celebrate the small steps.
- | Engage with the young person and family. Not with the school refusal behaviour.
- | Identify the young person's gifts and interests.

INTERVENTION FRAMEWORK

Community Connections experience is that successful school refusal intervention needs to occur across four domains.

- | Two domains are the 'internal world' of young person and family.
- | Two domains are the 'external world' of school and community.

CASE STUDY

SCHOOL REFUSAL

“ Thank you so much for being there and helping me get back on my feet... Thank you so much for supporting/encouraging me to get into gym and art, this has helped me to engage back with school.

YOUNG PERSON ”

REFERRAL

Year 8 student school refusing. Young person has a history of school refusal since primary school. Referred by Deputy Principal to YSC.

ENGAGEMENT

YSC meets with young person and family. Young person's issues include:

- | Long term school refusal patterns.
- | Sleeping 15-16 hours a day. Playing computer games.
- | Social anxiety and feelings of hopelessness.
- | Public transport phobia.

PLANNING & IMPLEMENTATION

- | YSC builds rapport with young person and his family. Regular evaluation discussion.
- | Set goals and re-establish hopes and interests for education and relationships.
- | Support school attendance. Transport young person 2 days a week; improve relationship between young person and teachers; identify and support positive peer connections.
- | Strengthen relationship between school, young person and family. Invite parent to school consultation meeting; negotiate flexibility with the school to meet the young person needs; regular follow up with the family, the school and the young person.
- | Skill development with young person. Using public transport.
- | Skill development with young person and family. Help seeking skills and access to specialist services or school supports (GP, Guidance Officer, Year Level Coordinator, Deputy Principal, school based nurse, library staff, chaplain, CYMHS, psychologist).

OUTCOMES

- | Young person re-engaged in education attending classes two days a week. Two months later attendance improved for two days to three days a week.
- | Young person looking forward to full re-engagement in education in following school year.



Community Connections

CASEWORK | COUNSELLING | GROUP FACILITATION

40 STATION STREET NUNDAH Q 4012 P 07 3266 5199 F 07 3266 5866
E INFO@COMMUNITYLIVING.ORG.AU W WWW.COMMUNITYLIVING.ORG.AU

