# SCUSD Core Value and Guiding Principle

## SCUSD Core Value

We recognize that our system is inequitable by design and we vigilantly work to confront and interrupt inequities that exist to level the playing field and provide opportunities for everyone to learn, grow and reach their greatness.

## SCUSD GUIDING PRINCIPLE

All students are given an equal opportunity to graduate with the greatest number of postsecondary choices from the widest array of options

# Presentation Objectives

- **School Avoidance Disorders- What They Are**

- **Common Causes and Triggers**

- **Strategies to Support Your Child and Resources Available for Assistance.**

# Understanding School Avoidance Disorders

- **Definition:** School avoidance disorders refer to a child's difficulty in attending or staying at school due to emotional distress. It's more than just "not wanting" to go to school—it's often linked to underlying anxiety, depression, or other mental health concerns.
- **Different from Truancy:** Unlike truancy, which is often willful absence without concern, school avoidance is typically driven by intense fear or anxiety related to the school environment.
- **Impact on Students with Disabilities:** Students with disabilities may be more prone to school avoidance due to additional challenges like social anxiety, health conditions, sensory sensitivities, or difficulties with academic demands.
- **Importance of Recognition:** Early recognition and understanding of these disorders are crucial for providing the right support and intervention to help the child feel safe and supported in their learning environment.

# What Triggers School Avoidance?

- **Anxiety:** School can be a source of anxiety for many children, especially those with disabilities. This can include generalized anxiety, social anxiety, or specific fears related to school.

- **Academic Challenges:** Struggling with schoolwork, particularly if the child has a learning disability, can lead to feelings of inadequacy and avoidance.

- **Bullying or Social Issues:** Negative interactions with peers, including bullying or social exclusion, can make school feel like an unsafe place.

- **Sensory Sensitivities:** For students with sensory processing disorders, the school environment (bright lights, loud noises, crowded spaces) can be overwhelming and lead to avoidance.

- **Changes in Routine or Environment:** Transitions such as moving to a new school, changes in teachers, or shifts in routine can be particularly stressful and trigger avoidance behaviors.

- **Medical or Physical Issues:** Chronic health issues or fatigue can also contribute to school avoidance, particularly if the child feels physically unwell at school.

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# Identifying School Avoidance in Your Child

**Physical Symptoms:**

- Frequent complaints of stomach aches, headaches, or other physical ailments, especially on school days.
- Noticeable increase in fatigue or tiredness in the mornings before school.
- Repeated visits to the school nurse or requests to be picked up early due to feeling unwell.

**Emotional Signs:**

- Heightened anxiety or nervousness when discussing school or attending school.
- Mood swings, irritability, or outbursts related to school activities or the idea of going to school.
- Signs of depression, such as sadness, withdrawal from activities they once enjoyed, or changes in appetite and sleep patterns. ...

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# Identifying School Avoidance in Your Child

**Behavioral Signs:**

- Frequent requests to stay home from school or making excuses to avoid going to school.
- Increased tardiness or reluctance to leave the house in the morning.
- Avoidance of specific school-related activities, like field trips, social events, or particular classes.

**Academic Impact:**

- Decline in academic performance due to missed school days or difficulty concentrating in class.
- Loss of interest in schoolwork or avoidance of homework and studying.

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# Supporting Your Child

**Establish a Consistent Routine:**

- Create a predictable morning and evening routine to help reduce anxiety. This includes consistent wake-up times, a calming bedtime routine, and preparing for the next school day in advance.

**Open Communication:**

- Encourage your child to express their feelings and concerns about school. Listen without judgment and validate their emotions to build trust and understanding.

**Collaborate with the School:**

- Work closely with your child's teachers, school counselor, and IEP team to develop a support plan. This might include accommodations like modified assignments, a safe space at school, or a gradual re-entry plan. …

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# Supporting Your Child

**Positive Reinforcement:**

- Use positive reinforcement to encourage school attendance. Celebrate small successes, like making it to school on time or participating in a challenging activity.

**Create a Safe Space:**

- Establish a "safe space" at home where your child can decompress after school. Include comforting items like sensory toys, books, or a cozy blanket to help them relax.

**Gradual Exposure:**

- If your child has been avoiding school for some time, gradually re-introduce them to the school environment. Start with short visits or part-time attendance, slowly increasing as they become more comfortable. …

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# Supporting Your Child

**Teach Coping Skills:**

- Help your child develop coping strategies for managing anxiety, such as deep breathing exercises, mindfulness techniques, or using a worry journal.

**Stay Informed and Involved:**

- Stay informed about what's happening at school and maintain regular communication with teachers and staff. Being involved in your child's education can help you address issues promptly.

# Utilizing the IEP to Support School Attendance

**Review and Update the IEP:**

- Conduct an IEP meeting to discuss the child's school avoidance and its impact on their learning. Review current goals, accommodations, and supports to determine if changes are needed.

**Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA):**

- Request a Functional Behavior Assessment to identify the underlying causes of the school avoidance. This assessment helps understand the "why" behind the behavior, guiding the development of an effective intervention plan.

**Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP):**

- Based on the FBA, create a Behavior Intervention Plan that includes specific strategies to address school avoidance. This can involve positive reinforcement, gradual exposure techniques, and strategies to reduce anxiety triggers.

# Utilizing the IEP to Support School Attendance

- **Accommodations and Modifications:**
  - Include accommodations in the IEP that support the child's needs, such as:
    - A modified schedule or gradual re-entry plan to ease the child back into the school environment.
    - Access to a safe space or designated person at school for times of heightened anxiety.
    - Flexibility in attendance policies, allowing for partial days if necessary.
    - Reduced homework load or extended time for assignments to reduce academic pressure.
- **Social-Emotional Support:**
  - Add goals and supports focused on social-emotional learning, such as coping skills training, social skills groups, or counseling services.

# Utilizing the IEP to Support School Attendance

- **Regular Check-Ins and Progress Monitoring:**
  - Include regular check-ins with a school counselor or designated staff member to monitor the child's progress and address concerns as they arise.
  - Use progress monitoring tools to track the child's attendance, emotional well-being, and response to interventions. Adjust the IEP as needed based on this data.
- **Collaboration with Outside Providers:**
  - If the child is receiving therapy or support from outside providers (e.g., a therapist or psychiatrist), collaborate with these professionals to align school-based and external interventions.
- **Family Involvement:**
  - Include a plan for ongoing communication with the family, ensuring they are involved in decision-making and informed about their child's progress and needs.

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# Questions?