

# Supporting Students Returning from Mental Health Absences

Reintegrating into school after a mental health crisis requires a comprehensive, compassionate approach that considers both the emotional and academic needs of the student.



## 1 TEAM APPROACH AND SAFETY PLANS

A coordinated team approach is fundamental when reintegrating students after a mental health crisis. It is important for school administrators, counsellors, and teachers to work together to support a seamless transition back to school. Acquiring a safety plan from the student's mental health professionals is crucial as it outlines the necessary steps and precautions for both the student and the school staff. This plan should clearly define the roles of each school member involved in the student's return, facilitating effective communication and actions that support the student's recovery.

## 2 CREATING A WELCOMING ENVIRONMENT

The environment that greets the returning student should be one of understanding, patience, and support. It's critical to engage with the student collaboratively to explore the best path forward, allowing for a gradual increase in academic and social engagement. This approach helps alleviate the overwhelming nature of jumping back into full-time education. Educators should strive to make connections and reassure the student that their well-being is the school's priority. *Remember, the enduring memories students hold about school often revolve around the relationships and support they felt, versus their academic achievements.*

## 3 ACCOMMODATING DIVERSE NEEDS

Recognizing that some students may not fit neatly into the conventional educational frameworks is essential. It is helpful when schools are adaptable, making accommodations and modifications that cater to the diverse needs of returning students. This could include adjusting learning materials and methods or the physical classroom environment to make them more engaging and accessible. By tailoring educational experiences to fit individual needs, such efforts not only aid in the student's academic recovery but also enhance their overall engagement and connection to the school community.

By implementing a coordinated support plan, creating a welcoming environment, and accommodating individual needs, schools can significantly ease the transition for students. The goal is to rebuild their confidence and sense of belonging, enabling them to thrive both personally and academically.