

FAMILY FOLLOW-UPS

Families are the most important people in their children's education. But family follow-ups can be one of the hardest jobs for RSAS teams. They often involve having difficult conversations with families about why their children did not attend school. Families may feel ashamed, offended or even angry. This can make family follow-ups hard. No matter how difficult it can be, it is important families are included in RSAS every step of the way.

You might not see better attendance straight away. Be patient and keep trying. There are no 'quick fixes' for some problems. Let families know you are there to help, keep following up, and be there when the family is ready to talk.

➤ **Be friendly and positive - you are there to provide advice and support.**

- Families may be embarrassed or feel shame. They may even get scared. RSAS is not here to make them feel bad, but to offer friendly advice and support.
 - Tell families you are there to help;
 - Let them know they are not in trouble;
 - Talk about how important school is for their children's future;
 - Getting kids to school can be hard. Let families know that everyone needs help sometimes;
 - Remind families the most important thing they can do is make sure their children go to school every day.

➤ **Make sure family follow-ups happen in a comfortable environment.**

- Some families might not like getting a visit from RSAS. They might get angry, be quiet or avoid you. No matter what, stay positive and friendly and remind them you are there to help.
- Invite families to meet in a place they feel safe. Let them know they can bring someone for support (for example an Elder, a relative or even a case worker).
- If families tell you about a problem, listen and try to help them solve it. You could help fill out paperwork, offer to talk to the school for them or set up a meeting with a teacher.
- Let families know if you are bringing someone new to their house and ask if this is okay.

➤ **Try to get families involved in their children's education.**

- Ask families to help you to come up with a strategy to get their children back into school.
- Set small goals and ask the family to work together to achieve them (for example, getting attendance from two days a week up to three).
- Show families when their children are doing well in school. This might be sharing their children's art, passing on positive feedback from the teacher, or letting families know about good things their children are doing (for example, helping younger kids on the bus).

➤ **Do not only visit with bad news, or people will stop opening the door. Try bringing good news when you get the chance.**

- When a student does well, tell their family the good news. It could be something small, like looking after their friends, being helpful or polite, or doing well in sport.
- Talk to families about their children's future and their dreams. Show how school can help them and the community.
- If you do have to bring bad news to the family, try to follow it with some good news. For example, you could say "it is sad they missed school today, as they have been doing really well in music".

➤ **Your safety is the most important thing. Do not go anywhere you feel unsafe.**

- If you do not feel safe going to a house, ask the family to meet you somewhere public, such as the community centre.
- Do not go by yourself. Ask your manager or another team member to go with you.

➤ **Use other support services in the community.**

- Learn how to refer to other support services in the community, such as counselling or health services.
- If a family tells you about a problem, let them know where they can get help.
- Work with other local services to support families.

➤ **Managers should support the wellbeing of their staff.**

- Make sure all new team members attend training to be ready for family follow-ups.
- Check in with staff to make sure they are okay with family follow-ups and to talk about any problems they are having.
- Make sure the team has access to counselling to talk about any problems. You can use the *'if you want to know more'* section to find out more information about available services.
- Help staff set up referral pathways.