

GETTING DISENGAGED STUDENTS BACK TO SCHOOL

When students start missing a lot of school, or fall behind in class, they can become disengaged. There are many reasons why students might disengage from school. Getting them back to school is important, but not easy. RSAS teams should work with the school, families and community to help get students back into the classroom.

Boys, girls, young men and young women may stop attending school for very different reasons. Their reasons will also depend on their age, and other things that are happening in their lives (for example health issues or problems at home).

Each child is different and will need different types of support to get back to school. Below are some tips to help RSAS teams to work with disengaged students.

➤ **Look out for students who might be at risk of disengaging.**

- Students are most likely to disengage at times of change. For example, moving schools; going from primary to secondary school; or starting at boarding school for the first time.
- Know the signs that a student may be at risk. They may be disruptive in class, struggle to keep up or not do their classroom work. Students might also be quiet, act out, or stop attending school regularly.
- Talk to teachers and families to find out if any students are showing some of these signs.

➤ **Work with students to come up with a plan to support them with things that are happening in their life.**

- When primary school students disengage, RSAS should work closely with the family to get them back to school.
- Older students may be more independent and you will need to work directly with them (as well as the family) to improve their attendance.
- Some young men may think school is only for kids. Ask families and other people in the community (particularly any men they look up to) to promote that “learning is for life and school is everyone’s business”.
- If young women are staying home from school to care for family members, you could refer the family to other support services, such as a local day care centre.
- When students have low self-esteem (particularly teenagers), this can stop them going to school. Small things may help, like having a mirror and some hairbrushes available for students to use before school.

➤ **Use your Governance Committee to set up referral pathways to support services for disengaged students.**

- Create a list of local support services and their contact details. Work with them to develop referral pathways for students. For example, RSAS could refer a student to a counsellor to get some extra help.
- Help find suitable mentors for at risk students. This could be an Elder, teacher or RSAS staff member. A mentor can be anyone that can work with the student and check in with them regularly.
- Remind staff it is important to also work with the families of disengaged students. They should include families in planning and refer to family support services.

➤ **Work with schools to develop individual plans for at risk students.**

- Ask the school to support personalised return to school plans. These plans may include half days or starting back in particular classes. This can help students to slowly build attendance.
- Work with teachers to create individual learning plans for disengaged students. As part of this, teachers and students should set personal goals and agree the steps to achieving them.
- Encourage the school to connect students with other support services, such as programs aimed at reducing bullying or addressing learning disabilities.

