

Practicing Caring Conversations for Attendance



Role #1: Facilitator



Instructions

Break out into groups (3 min)

- In small groups of 4, introduce yourself (*name, position, school/district, state*)
- Count off from 1-4 on who will take on each role



FACILITATOR-1



TEACHER-2



STUDENT-3



PARENT-4

Prepare (5 min)

- Open the small group handout.
- Read the scenario for your role.
- Consider the factors that contribute to chronic absence. Write down 2-3 factors.

Roleplay Activity (5 min)

- Do the roleplay, following the Caring Conversations worksheet at the end of this handout

Debrief (2 min)

- For those in the role play, how did you feel during the discussion?
- For the observers, what did the teacher do well in the discussion?
- Are there any other observations?

Role #2: Teacher/School Staff



SCENE

Student: Maria Brown

Family Member: Mrs. Brown (mother)

Grade: 6th

Time Frame: 12th week of class

Tier 2 Case Study, Middle

Purpose: The purpose of this caring conversation with the family and student is to build a positive relationship and make a plan. Remember to:

- Ask open-ended, supportive questions to build rapport.
- Listen to the parent/family member and respond to them in an accepting way.
- Determine the obstacles to attendance and plan effective solutions.

Observations:

Maria is a student who performs on an average level. She struggles to keep up with some of her more challenging classes. Since the first of the year Maria has been unusually quiet and distracted in class. She has been sitting alone during recess. In the first twelve weeks of school, she has missed 8 days. Maria has asked to see the school counselor often but has not shared details with you.

Academic History:

Maria is an average student who struggles to keep up with some of her more challenging classes.

Attendance History:

Maria has an excellent attendance record from 4th and 5th grade.

Instructions:

- Use the Caring Conversations Worksheet at the end of this document to prepare for the practice.

Role #3: Student



SCENE

Student: Maria Brown

Family Member: Mrs. Brown (mother)

Grade: 6th

Time Frame: 12th week of class

Tier 2 Case Study, Middle

Read the scenario and think about the situation from the perspective of the student.

- How do you feel?
- What would you say?
- What do you know that the teacher/school staff member may not?

Student Information

I can't sleep, the nightmares come every night. I wish I had never gone to my cousin's party. What if that man had shot the gun at us? We could have been killed! I don't feel safe leaving my house. I worry in class and on the playground that there could be a shooting at school. Shootings happen all the time at schools.

As you play the part of the student, keep in mind:

- You are 11 years old and you were witness to an altercation at a family party while visiting your cousins.
- You do not feel protected at school. Anyone can have a gun. There have been school shootings before.
- I try to talk to the school counselor and she just tells me it is OK to be afraid, but it is very unlikely anything like that would happen here. When I am calm, I just go back to class.
- I just want to stay home with my Mom where I feel safe.

Role #4: Parent/Family Member



SCENE

Student: Maria Brown

Family Member: Mrs. Brown (mother)

Grade: 6th

Time Frame: 12th week of class

Tier 2 Case Study, Middle

Read the scenario and think about the situation from the perspective of the parent.

- How do you feel?
- What would you say?
- What do you know that the teacher/school staff member may not?

Our Family: (Mrs. Brown)

Maria and I live alone after my divorce. I have sole custody and Maria's father is not present in her life. Maria is very fond of her older cousins that live in a neighboring town. They invited her to stay for a long weekend before school started back this summer. Unfortunately, Maria was witness to a violent altercation at a party with a lot of alcohol and a drunk pulled a gun when Maria's cousin told him to leave. No one was hurt, but Maria was scared for herself and her cousin. Maria was asked questions by the police about what she saw. She is having night terrors and often up most of the night. She does not want to leave me in the morning.

Hopes and Dreams:

I want Maria to recover from this with no long-term effects. She is a good kid and I want her to have a normal childhood. My hope is that she will be able to move forward and feel confident that she can handle whatever life brings.

As you play the part of the mother, keep in mind your perspective:

- You feel guilty because your daughter was exposed to an adult party where there was alcohol and dangerous people with weapons.
- You were not there to assess the situation. You trusted your sister and brother-in-law to keep the kids safe on the weekend visit.
- You are exhausted from staying up with Maria and having her sleep disturbed with nightmares.
- You feel that it is most important that Maria is comforted and feels safe, even if that means extra time in the mornings.

Caring Conversations Worksheet *(blank)*

	Key Points	Questions and Messages
1. Learn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Gather information ● Ask open-ended, supportive questions 	
2. Share	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Positive observations about student so far ● What you want students to accomplish this year ● One goal is helping students acquire good habit of attendance 	
3. Inform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Progress you've seen (start positive) ● Areas where child is struggling ● Review report card & update parents on child's attendance ● Deliver appropriate attendance messages 	
4. Discuss	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Challenges, attendance barriers ● Learning at home activities ● How to stay connected 	
5. Ask & Arrive at a Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Are there any questions? ● Is there anything you can do to support a partnership between home and school? ● Make referrals to community resources 	

Caring Conversations Worksheet (example)

Here is an example of a completed Caring Conversations Guide.

	Key Points	Questions and Messages
1. Learn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Gather information ● Ask open-ended, supportive questions 	<i>What is your vision for _(student's)_ future? (ask parent and student)</i>
2. Share	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Positive observations about student so far ● What you want students to accomplish this year ● One goal is helping students acquire good habit of attendance 	<i>_____ is such a good listener. We love having her (you) in our class.</i>
3. Inform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Progress you've seen (start positive) ● Areas where child is struggling ● Review report card & update parents on child's attendance ● Deliver appropriate attendance messages 	<i>_____ is excelling at math! and is making progress with reading. Reading remains the area that needs work. _____ has been late five times and has missed two days during this first month of school. Absences impede reading and overall learning progress.</i>
4. Discuss	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Challenges, attendance barriers ● Learning at home activities ● How to stay connected 	<i>What makes it hard for _____ to get to school?</i>
5. Ask & Arrive at a Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Are there any questions? ● Is there anything you can do to support a partnership between home and school? ● Make referrals to community resources 	<i>What questions do you have? How can I help you? Would it help you to work with...?</i>