Treating school avoidance to help students thrive

“I don’t want to go to school today.”

Every student has experienced feelings of anxiety about school. For many adolescents, school can become a constant struggle, and a place they would rather avoid.

In response to this growing problem, Northwestern Medicine Behavioral Health has created a special track within our hospital outpatient program to help students, ages 13-18, successfully return to school after a prolonged absence, maintain consistent attendance, and renew their engagement.

What issues contribute to avoiding school?

Issues may include:

- Peer relationships
- Bullying
- Family issues
- Learning problems
- Performance anxiety
- Depression

Who benefits from the School Avoidance track?

School Avoidance is for students who:

- Consistently refuse to attend school
- Have difficulty staying in school all day
- Have difficulty tolerating or adjusting to a school environment
- Have a number of absences that jeopardize academic success

Continued
**Treatment Overview**

Treatment addresses avoidance behaviors, as well as how the student is functioning physically, emotionally and interpersonally in family and other relationships.

A thorough evaluation is done to determine the issues that significantly contribute to the school avoidance behavior.

**Treatment may include:**
- Individual and group therapy
- Family therapy
- Psychiatric evaluation and follow-up
- Cognitive behavioral therapy
- Relaxation skills education
- Gradual exposure therapy
- Coordination with school staff
- Discharge planning, including re-entry into school

**For more information about our School Avoidance track, please call 630.933.4000. TTY for the hearing impaired 630.933.4833.**