

School Refusal Behavior (SRB) interview questions and prompts, adapted from Kearney & Albano (2018).

1. How often does your child refuse school, specifically because he/she is generally distressed or upset about school?

- Response:

Follow-up questions:

Is your child upset about school more than most children his/her age?

- Response:

What school-related objects or situations does he/she avoid (especially the bus, classroom items or animals, a certain peer or teacher or class, transitions between classes/activities, unpredictable circumstances, playground, cafeteria, gymnasium or locker room, hallway, fire alarm)?

- Response:

Has your child told you of recent negative life events, or have you noticed he/she has suddenly changed his/her behavior in any way?

- Response:

Has your child expressed to you, or have you noticed any specific emotions or physical symptoms about going to school? What are they?

- Response:

What is your child's level of anxiety upon entering school or in the morning before school, and how do others respond?

- Response:

Does your child's anxiety primarily occur at home, in the car on the way to school, curbside, on the school playground immediately before the start of school, or during the day at school?

- Response:

Do these problems occur every day or primarily on school days?

- Response:

2. How often does your child refuse school specifically because he/she wants to escape social and/or evaluative situations at school?

Response:

Follow-up questions:

Does your child try to escape these situations more than most children his/her age?

- Response:

What specific social or evaluative situations does he/she stay away from (especially writing or speaking before others; meeting new people; interacting with peers; performing during recitals, tests, athletic contests; or being in or approaching groups of people)?

- Response:

Has your child told you of recent negative social or evaluative events or have you noticed he/she has suddenly changed his/her social behaviors in any way?

- Response:

Has your child expressed to you or have you noticed any specific emotions or physical symptoms about interacting in social or evaluative situations? What are they?

- Response:

What is your child's level of anxiety upon entering school or in the morning before school, and how do others respond?

- Response:

Does your child's anxiety primarily occur at home, in the car on the way to school, curbside, on the school playground immediately before the start of school, or during the day at school?

- Response:

Do these problems occur primarily in all social or evaluative situations or primarily in those situations related to school?

- Response:

3. How often does your child refuse School specifically because he/she wants to get attention from you or a significant other?

Response:

Follow-up questions:

Does your child show this attention-seeking Behavior more than most children his/her age?

- Response:

What specific behaviors does your child do to get attention from you (especially clinging, reassurance seeking, refusal to move, tantrums, telephone calls or texting, protest, verbal demands for attention, guilt-inducing behavior, or running away from school to get you)?

- Response:

Has your child told you of recent negative life events, or have you noticed he/she has suddenly changed his/her behavior towards you in anyway?

- Response:

Has your child expressed to you or have you noticed any specific emotions or physical symptoms about interacting with you or being away from you? What are they?

- Response:

What is your child's level of misbehavior upon entering school, or in the morning before school and how do others respond?

- Response:

Does your child's misbehavior primarily occur at home, in the car on the way to school, curbside, on the school playground immediately before the start of school, or during the day at school?

- Response:

Is your child willing to go to school if you accompanied him/her?

- Response:

Do these problems occur in most daily situations or primarily in school-related situations?

- Response:

4. How often does your child refuse school specifically because he/she wants to pursue tangible rewards from some source outside of school?

Response:

Follow-up questions:

Does your child pursue tangible rewards outside of school more than most children his age?

- Response:

What specific things does he/she leave school to pursue (especially spending time with friends; substance use; watching television or playing video games at home; sleeping semicolon riding a bicycle; or visiting shopping centers, restaurants, or other public places)?

- Response:

Has your child told you of recent negative life or school events or have you noticed he has suddenly changed his/her behavior in any way?

- Response:

Has your child expressed to you or have you noticed any specific emotions he/she has about being in or leaving school? What are they?

- Response:

What is your child's level of misbehavior upon entering school or in the morning before school and how do others respond?

- Response:

Do your child's school attendance problems occur primarily in the morning or during the school day? At what point does your child leave school during the day?

- Response:

Would your child be willing to attend school if incentives were provided for attendance?

- Response:

Does your child's pursuit of tangible rewards occur in many daily situations or primarily when school is in session?

- Response:

5. Does your child refuse school for a combination of reasons that we just discussed?

Response:

If so, which reasons are most prominent?

- Response:

6. Additional questions that may apply to determine the function of school refusal behavior:

Is your child's refusal to attend school legitimate or understandable in some way?

- Response:

It is important to determine if there is a legitimate school-based threat (bullying, cyberbullying, or other maltreatment), other family dynamics, medical conditions, or transportation problems

What is your child's academic status course schedule and required makeup work?

- Response:

Establishing the student's current grades, what must be accomplished to pass the school year, and the likelihood of passing the school year or achieving full credits.

Are you currently working with school officials to resolve the problem?

- Response:

Successful resolution of school refusal behavior almost always depends on a close working relationship among family members, therapists, and school officials. Some cases may require mediation and gradual repairing of these relationships.

Is your child on or eligible for a 504 plan or individualized education plan?

- Response:

How much school attendance can your child tolerate?

- Response:

Often, cases of school refusal behavior are urgent in nature (given that other academic, social, and family-related problems can accumulate quickly). The purpose is to establish a baseline and level of functional impact for school refusal behavior.

What school or district policies regarding absenteeism apply most to your child?

- Response:

It is important for parents to understand and be aware of their school's policies that may trigger truancy citations, a referral to juvenile justice or child protective agencies, or suspensions. In addition, absences may impact academic credits, passing grades, and school behavior.

What alternative educational programs and schools might your child be eligible for?

- Response:

Certain cases may involve school refusal behavior throughout the course of an academic year to the extent that severe academic problems have accrued. In these cases, alternative educational programs and schools may be necessary to salvage the school year and attain at least partial academic credit and avoid grade retention.

What cultural variables might be impacting your child's absenteeism?

- Response:

This may not be a direct question to parents, but cultural and language variables can influence school refusal behavior and should be assessed in some way.