

MANAGING “FREQUENT FLYERS” - BEST PRACTICES FOR SCHOOL NURSES

As a nurse your role in students’ lives is crucial. You have the ability to not only provide needed treatment for students, but to also help students feel listened to, cared for, welcomed and safe.

Sometimes the most important thing that you can do for your students is *pay attention*. Most of the time, the reasons a student enters your office is clear. However, sometimes the reasons are not clear or they are more complicated than providing a bandage or giving medication.

What is a frequent flyer?

There may be students who come to the medical room often with subjective complaints such as:

- Nauseous
- Headache
- Having very vague symptoms

You inform parents about student’s complaints but there is no chronic health condition reported. The student visits your office every day and at the same time. These students can be called a “frequent flyer.”

What are some of the reasons these students go to the nurse’s office/medical room:

- Possible undiagnosed condition
- They have difficulty with classwork
- Problems with other students, peer altercations/arguments, bullying
- They want someone to pay attention listen and then listen to them
- Avoiding to go home- avoiding problems with siblings, parents, abuse
- There are other symptoms/feelings that they are scared to talk about such as: anxiety, depression, trauma

What can be done?

- Speaking kindly using non-judgmental words can help a student open up.
- Reach out to other school staff that can help, such as guidance counselors, teachers
- Inform parents about the visits and ask parent to follow up with the doctor to help rule out any unforeseen health condition. Send home a referral form with any internal or community referrals.
- Connect with school attendance teacher and/or team to see how often has this student been absent and the reasons for the absences
- If you think a student is being abused please follow department protocol.
- Continue to assess yourself: how can help this student be healthy and be as prepared as possible for academic success