Parents who have children who refuse to go to school know how difficult an issue it can be. Many times the children begin by having a variety of symptoms before school including headaches, stomachache, or diarrhea. These symptoms may improve significantly once the child is allowed to stay home only to reappear the next day. Some children who begin with these symptoms may become even more difficult when they are made to go to school by using tantrums, avoidance, and defiance as ways to avoid going to school.

When parents have children who struggle with school, it can be difficult to pinpoint what the cause is. It may be a recent move, a transition from one grade to the next, fear of failure, or even issues such as bullying. If parents are experiencing school refusal they should talk with the school and consider professional assistance. In the meantime, some strategies for addressing school refusal include the following:

- Keep the child in school
- Expose the child to school in small degrees
- Try to meet with the teacher away from the classroom
- Work with the school counselors for support and direction
- Talk with your child about their fears
- Discuss the positives of school
- Build on the aspects of school your child does like
- Avoid becoming angry, your child’s fears are real to them
- Help your child to build a support system

School refusal may be a situational issue for some children, while for others it may be rooted in an anxiety disorder that may require professional help. Parents need to remain calm and address the issue with the help of the school and other parents. School refusal is not a reflection of the parents, but rather a symptom of stresses in your child’s life that they are learning to deal with.

For More Information:

Family Service Inc.
(605) 336-1974/800-589-1974
Sdfsio.org