

School Letter Recommendation of Inclusions to Support a Patient with Functional Neurological Disorder (FND) or Functional (dissociative) Seizures in the School Setting.

This document is a recommended framework for healthcare providers when communicating with educators and school personnel. It aids in understanding and supporting patients with FND by outlining essential information to consider for reasonable and appropriate accommodations and effective responses when in the school setting.

Recommended Considerations to Include in School Letter: (see sample letter for a detailed outline of these recommendations below)

- **Patient's name and date of birth**
- **Provider Name and Contact Information**
- Name of clinic and/or healthcare provider managing FND care
 - Phone/Email Contact Information
- **Diagnosis Confirmation** of Functional Neurological Disorder
- **Definition of Diagnosis:** (see sample letter)
- **Patient presentation/symptoms:** Example: Currently, {Patient name} symptoms and presentation include (List here):
- **Plan** for response to a patient's symptoms when experienced at school.
- What **supports/accommodations** could be helpful (Example: creating an individualized healthcare plan, time to make up missed work, intervention plan for symptom onset and recovery, etc.)
 - Discuss and collaborate with the treatment team and family prior to removing/adjusting support or accommodations.
- **Reminder to the school team**, this is not a medical emergency and does not require removal from school. It is important to collaborate with the patient's healthcare providers treating FND and parent/guardians when making changes to any support plan.
- **ATTACHMENTS:** School Pack
 - FND Response Plan
 - What is FND?
 - Nervous System Calming Tips
 - Adaptive Devices for Schools

SAMPLE LETTER:

This document is a diagnosis notification sample letter for healthcare providers to send to school teams. The intent is to aid in the understanding and support of patients with FND, outline essential information, and guide potential next steps.

[Clinic Letterhead]

Date: [Insert Date]

To: [School Name]

Re: Support for [Patient Name], DOB: [Date of Birth]

From: [Healthcare Provider Name], [Clinic Name]

Contact: [Clinic Phone Number], [Clinic email]

Introduction

[Patient Name], born [DOB], has been diagnosed with **Functional Neurological Disorder (FND)**. They are currently receiving care at [Clinic Name] under my supervision, and their primary care pediatrician is [PCP Name] at [PCP Clinic Name].

We are reaching out to collaborate with your team to ensure [Patient Name] receives the support they need to thrive in the school environment. Below is a summary of FND and guidance on how the school team can help.

What is Functional Neurological Disorder (FND)?

FND is a neurological condition that affects motor and/or sensory function due to a disruption in how the brain and body communicate. It is not caused by structural damage and typically does not show abnormalities on imaging. Symptoms may resemble other neurological conditions but are distinct in origin.

FND may also be referred to as:

- Psychogenic Non-Epileptic Seizures (PNES/PNEE)
- Functional Seizures
- Conversion Disorder
- Dissociative Seizures
- Functional Movement Disorder

More information is available at www.neurosymptoms.org.

Presentation and Symptoms

[Patient Name] typically experiences:

- [List individualized functional symptoms: (e.g., muscle spasms/twitching, involuntary movement, weakness, altered gait, loss of balance, dissociation, loss of consciousness, fainting, functional seizure, pain, fatigue, cognitive fog, visual and speech impairments, sensory sensitivities, etc.)]

Symptoms may fluctuate daily and can be influenced by stress, emotional/physical illness or injury, fatigue, or environmental factors.

Key Considerations for Schools

FND is a serious but **not life-threatening** condition.

- Symptoms may appear alarming but **do not require emergency medical intervention** unless another health emergency is present.
- **911 should not be called** unless there is a clear life-threatening concern.
- **Minimizing disruption and attention** during symptoms often leads to quicker resolution.
- [Patient Name] is actively working toward recovery with their team of FND healthcare providers.

- *Establishing and maintaining a routine is a key part of their care plan. This includes:*
 - **School attendance**
 - **School participation**
 - **Reentry into their daily schedule**

School Team Preparation

Develop an **Individualized Healthcare Plan (IHP)** or **Student Support Plan**, which may include:

- Collaboration with [Patient Name] and their family
- Consideration for **Section 504 eligibility**
- Flexible academic accommodations:
 - Extended time for assignments/tests
 - Modified workload during symptom flares
 - Gradual reentry plans if not attending full-time
- Avoiding restrictive measures (e.g., homebound instruction) unless medically necessary

Supportive strategies may include:

- Brief relaxation or sensory reset breaks
- Nervous system regulation prompts (e.g., “Would you like to try a coping skill?”)
- Preferential seating based on student needs

Responding to FND Symptoms

An **FND Symptom Response Plan** should be in place and include:

- Description of symptoms and language [Patient Name] uses
- Preferred coping strategies/tools
- Recovery space and time if needed
- Use calm, supportive language: “Take your time,” or “Would you like a quiet space?”
- Encourage re-engagement in class as soon as possible.

Avoid:

- Emergency calls unless medically necessary
- Sending the student home unnecessarily
- Over-medicalizing the episode

Collaboration is Key

Effective support for [Patient Name] involves:

- Ongoing communication between school staff, family, and healthcare providers
- Inclusion of all relevant team members in planning meetings
- Flexibility and understanding from the school team

A care team meeting (virtual or in-person) is recommended to align on goals and strategies.

Additional Resource Links

{ list additional FND resources (i.e. what is FND, FND response plan, Nervous System Calming Tips, Adaptive Devices for School (as needed)) and websites to help the school better understand diagnosis and plan. Examples include: www.neurosymptoms.org }

Please feel free to contact me with any questions or to coordinate a care team meeting.

Thank you for your partnership in supporting [Patient Name].

Sincerely,

[Healthcare Provider Name]

[Clinic Name]

[Clinic Phone Number]