**Truancy Case Study**

**Background:**  
Jamal is a 13-year-old seventh-grade student at a public middle school in a mid-sized Wisconsin community. Over the past two months, he has accumulated 18 unexcused absences and several tardies. The school has issued multiple automated calls to his guardian. A habitual truancy referral has been filed with juvenile intake.

**Initial Observations:**

* **Teachers** describe Jamal as “disengaged” and “frequently disruptive.” One teacher reports, “He shows up late, never has his homework, and gives a lot of attitude when asked to participate.”
* **School Resource Officer (SRO)** has interacted with Jamal several times and has noted him as “uncooperative” and “possibly heading for more serious behavior issues.”
* **School Social Worker** has called home repeatedly, and conducted home visits, but has rarely spoken to an adult.
* **Juvenile Intake Worker** is reviewing the truancy referral and considering whether a court petition is appropriate.

**Additional Details from Records:**

* Jamal has transferred schools twice in the past two years.
* He lives with his grandmother. A note in the school system mentions a previous CPS report, though it was unsubstantiated.
* Jamal has younger siblings also enrolled in the district, with varying attendance records.
* A past Individualized Education Plan (IEP) expired last year; there’s no updated documentation.
* Teachers have mentioned that Jamal appears tired and irritable most mornings.

**Discussion Prompts for Participants:**

1. Based on this information, what questions would you want answered before moving forward?
2. What assumptions might be influencing how each professional (educator, law enforcement, intake, social work) is interpreting Jamal’s behavior?
3. How might Jamal experience each of the adults or systems involved?
4. What potential strengths or protective factors can you identify in this case?
5. If you were in a collaborative meeting with all parties, what steps might you propose to support Jamal’s return to regular school attendance?