



Illinois State Board of Education

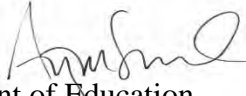
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James T. Meeks
Chairman

Tony Smith, Ph.D.
State Superintendent of Education

March 15, 2015

TO: The Honorable John J. Cullerton, Senate President
The Honorable Christine Radogno, Senate Republican Leader
The Honorable Michael J. Madigan, Speaker of the House
The Honorable Jim Durkin, House Republican Leader
James T. Meeks, Chairman, State Board of Education

FROM: Tony Smith, Ph.D. 
State Superintendent of Education

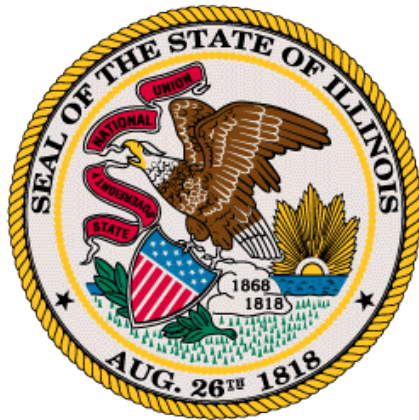
SUBJECT: Report of the Attendance Commission

Pursuant to its obligations under Public Act 99-0432 (P.A. 99-0432), the Attendance Commission (the "Commission") submits this report to the General Assembly and State Board of Education. Please note that, per P.A. 99-0432, the first report of the Commission was due December 15, 2015. However, the Commission's first meeting was convened on December 4, 2015. Therefore, the Commission was unable to file a report by that date. On November 24, 2015, Representative Linda Chapa LaVia introduced House Bill 4343, which would postpone the submission of the Commission's first report to March 15, 2016.

If you have questions or comments, please contact Stephanie Donovan, General Counsel, at (217) 782-8535.

cc: The Honorable Bruce Rauner, Governor
Tim Mapes, Clerk of the House
Tim Anderson, Secretary of the Senate
Legislative Research Unit
State Government Report Center

ATTENDANCE COMMISSION



Report to the Illinois General Assembly and the State Board of Education

March 15, 2016

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Public Act 99-0432 called for the creation of a commission to study chronic absenteeism in this state and make recommendations for strategies to prevent its occurrence. This commission was directed to identify strategies, mechanisms, and approaches to help parents, educators, principals, superintendents, and the State Board of Education address and prevent chronic absenteeism. The commission must make recommendations to the General Assembly and State Board of Education in order to achieve five outcomes designed to remediate attendance issues across the state.

The Illinois Attendance Commission (the “Commission”) has no recommendations to make at this early date, as the Commission only recently launched its deliberations at its inaugural meeting on December 4, 2015. In accordance with the legislation that created the Commission, the appointed members have begun to meet on a monthly basis to study chronic absenteeism in this state and will make recommendations for strategies to prevent chronic absenteeism after gathering and analyzing data, exploring various resources, holding hearings, consulting experts, and collaborating for solutions.

The Commission proposes a plan for gathering the expertise, research, perspectives, information, and best and effective practices that will enable members to develop comprehensive and actionable strategies and approaches. The work of the Commission is centered on the following five outcomes. The status of the work and the anticipated activities related to each of these outcomes are summarized below:

Outcome 1

A standard for attendance and chronic absenteeism, defining attendance as a calculation of standard clock hours in a day that equal a full day based on instructional minutes for both a half day and a full day per learning environment

- The Commission asserts the need for guidance and/or definition of the difference between excused and unexcused absences.
- The Commission additionally asserts the need to examine the way the state currently calculates average daily attendance and the current method’s impact on the generation of accurate attendance and absenteeism data.
- A survey of school and district administrators, educators, and parent groups will be conducted to determine current practices/policies across the state, including what constitutes a full day and a half day of instruction for students

Outcome 2

Mechanisms to improve data systems to monitor and track chronic absenteeism across this state in a way that identifies trends from prekindergarten through grade 12 and allows the identification of students who need individualized chronic absenteeism prevention plans

- It is projected that superintendents should ensure the use of a data collection system that is compatible with the Illinois State Board of Education in order to share district and

school level data. This system should be accessible to staff and easily produce monthly and annual public reports. School districts should allocate funding for districtwide professional development on understanding, collecting, tracking, disaggregating, and interpreting attendance data.

- Principals and educators should accurately identify and report all student absences throughout the school day and engage in timely communication with students and families about absences. School attendance logs should be audited and evaluated on a quarterly basis by school district staff to ensure that schools are actively identifying warning signs of excessive absenteeism and truancy. Designated staff at the school level should continually monitor attendance data to inform strategies and initiatives to improve attendance.
- Parents need to be informed about the connection between school attendance and student achievement and provided support for their role in their home languages. Attendance data should be shared with families in real time (phone call, text, or email). Principals should designate a school contact person with whom parents can develop a relationship regarding attendance. Appropriate data should be shared with parents to foster collaboration and to reinforce and support student and parental engagement.

Outcome 3:

Mechanisms for reporting and accountability for schools and districts across this state, including creating multiple measure indexes for reporting

- At the February 19 meeting, representatives from Attendance Works, a national initiative to address school attendance issues from prekindergarten through grade 12, presented *Improving Attendance and Reducing Chronic Absence in Illinois*. Attendance Works advocates gathering data through multiple measures and mining that data to develop responsive frameworks and drive strategies for solutions. The organization enlists the cooperation of school district superintendents across the country to “prioritize attendance, mobilize the community, and drive with data.”
- The Commission will seek to answer questions regarding best practices in data collection, sharing, and assessment statewide and in other states; practices and policies to improve attendance; the multiple measures for reporting that would be the most effective in generating data that can support effective improvement plans and develop priorities and targets for improvement; and current state policies that support districts, schools, and families in improving attendance and decreasing chronic absenteeism and if there are any policies that impede these efforts.
- The Commission will be additionally concerned about the impact the implementation of the new regulations and requirements in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) will have on how states measure and report attendance and absenteeism data, triggers for district and school improvement plans, the impact on nonacademic measures of school success, and new federal definitions or guidance.

- The Commission will also look at multiple index measures that can be used at the state and district level to gain clearer pictures of attendance and absenteeism patterns. Measures could include:
 - Quantifying a day of attendance through state policy changes.
 - Disaggregating excused and unexcused absences for the purposes of addressing underlying causes of absenteeism.
 - Disaggregating attendance data based on student populations so as to prioritize actions to address chronic absenteeism.
 - Including community contexts in developing attendance improvement goals (e.g., mobility rates).
 - Recommending a different method for determining average daily attendance.
- Given that average daily attendance rates are connected to the amount of state funding schools and districts receive, the Commission will also look at the proposed changes to the state school funding formula to see how those ideas are factoring in attendance rates.

Outcome 4

Best practices for utilizing attendance and chronic absenteeism data to create multi-tiered systems of support and prevention that will result in students being ready for college and career

- At the February 19 meeting of the Commission, presentations were provided by representatives from the Illinois Multi-tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) Network, an amalgam of state-sponsored efforts to build the capacity of districts to provide interventions in response to students' areas of need, including attendance-related issues.
- Attendance Works representatives at the February 19 meeting also addressed the importance of a tiered approach to improving student attendance and driving academic success.
 - They encouraged universal interventions to recognize good and improved attendance, educate and encourage students and their families, clarify attendance expectations, establish positive and engaging school climates, and address common barriers to school attendance.
 - They promoted targeted interventions for students who exhibit chronic absence by missing 10 percent of their school days: proactive text messaging, personalized early outreach, meetings with student and family, and the offer of an attendance buddy or mentor.

- Intensive interventions were advised for students who miss 20 percent or more of the school year that include intensive case management with coordination of agency and legal response.

Outcome 5

New initiatives and responses to ongoing challenges presented by chronic absenteeism

New initiatives to reduce chronic absenteeism will be derived from new attendance standards and definitions, improved data systems, improved accountability measures, and the provision of tiered supports.

Hearings

The Commission was additionally advised to hold hearings on a periodic basis to receive testimony from the public regarding attendance. A public hearing was held at the Illinois Coalition for the Education of At-Risk Youth (ICEARY) 2016 Conference on March 3, 2016, in Bloomington – Normal. This hearing provided Commission members with invaluable input from truancy professionals who are working across the state to alter the lives of young people who found the barriers to school attendance too formidable to surmount. ICEARY members offered invaluable insight into proven remedies and strategies, including increased levels of communication among all stakeholders, consistent provision of interventions and adherence to policy, and expanded mentoring programs and other means of personal support for students.

I. FRAMING THE ISSUE

Education is, simply stated, a vital preparatory process for life. While an education enables the acquisition of facts and skill mastery, it also fosters the development of higher order thinking skills and provides a context for socialization. The life that beckons a young person after twelfth grade is meant to offers choices about college, training, employment, and “for living within a family ... within a community ...and for participating effectively in the democratic process.”¹ The incremental effect of daily school attendance facilitates the transition of a student from school to career as a functioning and productive member of society.

Conversely, the incremental effect of missed school days renders a young person ill-equipped to compete or contribute. Chronic rates of absence and truancy portend prospects that provide less of a transition but rather an eventual erosion of choices, possibilities, and hope.

Diminished dreams were the reality for 8.7 percent of Illinois students who were chronically truant during the 2014-15 school year, compared to 1.9 percent reported for 2003. Chronic truants include students subject to compulsory attendance who have been absent without valid cause for nine or more of the past 180 school days. (In July 2011, the Illinois chronic truancy rate calculation was changed from missing 10 percent of school days to 5 percent.)

It is the chronic absence rate, however, that has caused alarm among educators as growing numbers of students are absent from school at a skyrocketing rate. Nationwide, an estimated 5 million to 7.5 million students are chronically absent each year, meaning they miss 10 percent or more of the school year in excused and unexcused absences. That’s about 18-19 days in a typical year.²

Here in Illinois, the Chicago Tribune laid bare school attendance issues in districts across the state, but most notably in the Chicago Public Schools (CPS). In an investigative series of stories titled *An Empty Desk Epidemic*, it was reported that during the 2010-11 school year, 32,000 CPS students missed at least four weeks of school. When the data was disaggregated, it revealed that 20 percent of African-American students missed at least four weeks of school as did large percentages of students with disabilities: 42.2 percent of those with emotional disorders, 15.4 percent of those with learning disabilities, and 21.7 percent of students with cognitive impairments, autism, and sensory disabilities. This data did not include students with disabilities requiring 504 plans for classroom accommodations. It is believed that including these students would actually increase the percentages of student with disability absences.

Perhaps one of the more shocking statistics highlighted in this series was the fact that 36 percent of African-American kindergartners missed at least four weeks of school. Students who are chronically absent in kindergarten and first grade are less likely to read proficiently by the time they finish third grade. Preliminary data in California found that 17 percent of students with demonstrated school attendance difficulties were reading at grade level by the end of third grade, compared to 62 percent who attended regularly.³

In response to the stunning revelations in this series, Illinois State Representative Linda Chapa LaVia sponsored a bill (HJR 0001) to identify the scope of truancy within Chicago and convene a Task Force to address these pressing issues. The Truancy in Chicago Public Schools Task

Force met monthly for eight months and issued a report with recommendations to address the issues of truancy and absenteeism within CPS; these recommendations are summarized in Section IV of this report.

Shortly after the Task Force concluded its work, Representative Chapa LaVia moved to facilitate the establishment of an attendance commission to operate statewide for a five-year period to provide a longer time frame for representatives from educator and administrator professional organizations and affiliations, state agencies with education and child welfare relevance, and several nonprofits that advocate for children and families to research, analyze, propose, and implement the means through which absenteeism and truancy will be sharply curtailed in our state.

¹Harvey, James, Center on Reinventing Public Education at the University of Washington

² Attendance Works. Balfanz, R., and Byrnes, V. The Importance of Being in School: A Report on Absenteeism in the Nation's Public Schools. Johns Hopkins University Center for Social Organization of Schools, Baltimore, Md., 2012.

³Attendance Works. Attendance in Early Elementary Grades: Association with Student Characteristics, School Readiness and Third Grade Outcomes, Applied Survey Research, May 2011.

II. PUBLIC ACT 99-0432 AND THE DUTIES OF THE COMMISSION

Pursuant to Public Act 99-0432, the Commission is created to study chronic absenteeism in this State and make recommendations for strategies to prevent chronic absenteeism. The Commission shall have the following duties:

- A. Identify strategies, mechanisms, and approaches to help parents, educators, principals, superintendents, and the State Board of Education address and prevent chronic absenteeism and shall recommend to the General Assembly and State Board of Education:
 - 1) a standard for attendance and chronic absenteeism, defining attendance as a calculation of standard clock hours in a day that equal a full day based on instructional minutes for both a half day and a full day per learning environment;
 - 2) mechanisms to improve data systems to monitor and track chronic absenteeism across this State in a way that identifies trends from prekindergarten through grade 12 and allows the identification of students who need individualized chronic absenteeism prevention plans;
 - 3) mechanisms for reporting and accountability for schools and districts across this State, including creating multiple measure indexes for reporting;
 - 4) best practices for utilizing attendance and chronic absenteeism data to create multi-tiered systems of support and prevention that will result in students being ready for college and career; and
 - 5) new initiatives and responses to ongoing challenges presented by chronic absenteeism.
- B. Hold hearings on a periodic basis to receive testimony from the public regarding attendance;
- C. Submit an annual report to the General Assembly and the State Board of Education no later than December 15 of each year through December 15, 2020.

As noted above, the first report of the Commission was due December 15, 2015. However, the Commission's first meeting was convened on December 4, 2015. Therefore, the Commission was unable to file a report by that date. On November 24, 2015, Representative Linda Chapa LaVia introduced House Bill 4343, which would postpone the submission of the Commission's first report to March 15, 2016.

III. CURRENT STATUTORY AND REGULATORY LANDSCAPE

With identified exceptions, Section 26-2 of the School Code [105 ILCS 5/26-2] subjects all children between the ages of 6 (on or before September 1) and 17 years to compulsory attendance. Further, Section 26-2a [105 ILCS 5/26-2a] provides the following definitions:

A "truant" is defined as a child subject to compulsory school attendance and who is absent without valid cause from such attendance for a school day or portion thereof.

"Valid cause" for absence shall be illness, observance of a religious holiday, death in the immediate family, family emergency, and shall include such other situations beyond the control of the student as determined by the board of education in each district, or such other circumstances that cause reasonable concern to the parent for the safety or health of the student.

"Chronic or habitual truant" shall be defined as a child who is subject to compulsory school attendance and who is absent without valid cause from such attendance for 5 percent or more of the previous 180 regular attendance days.

"Truant minor" is defined as a chronic truant to whom supportive services, including prevention, diagnostic, intervention and remedial services, alternative programs and other school and community resources have been provided and have failed to result in the cessation of chronic truancy, or have been offered and refused.

A "dropout" is defined as any child enrolled in grades 9 through 12 whose name has been removed from the district enrollment roster for any reason other than the student's death, extended illness, removal for medical noncompliance, expulsion, aging out, graduation, or completion of a program of studies and who has not transferred to another public or private school and is not known to be home-schooled by his or her parents or guardians or continuing school in another country.

Further, pursuant to 23 Ill Admin. Code 1.420 (f):

Sections 10-19, 18-8.05, 18-12, and 18-12.5 of the School Code [105 ILCS 5/10-19, 18-8.05, 18-12, and 18-12.5] establish certain requirements regarding the school year and the school day. School districts shall observe these requirements when preparing their calendars and when calculating average daily attendance for the purpose of claiming general State financial aid.

The School Code also provides for truant officers, duties of truant officers, and penalties for noncompliance with compulsory attendance laws. As further noted in Appendix G are the regulatory provisions of 23 Ill Admin. Code 1.290 whereby "[e]ach school district shall develop an absenteeism and truancy policy including at least the following elements:

- 1) A definition of a valid cause for absence in accordance with Section 26-2a of the School Code;

- 2) A description of diagnostic procedures to be used for identifying the causes of unexcused student absenteeism, which shall, at a minimum, include interviews with the student, his or her parents or guardians, and any school officials or other parties who may have information about the reasons for the student's attendance problem; and
- 3) The identification of supportive services to be made available to truant or chronically truant students. These services shall include, but need not be limited to, parent conferences, student counseling, family counseling, and information about existing community services which are available to truant and chronically truant students and relevant to their needs.”

Further, pursuant to 23 Ill Admin. Code 1.420 (f):

Sections 10-19, 18-8.05, 18-12, and 18-12.5 of the School Code [105 ILCS 5/10-19, 18-8.05, 18-12, and 18-12.5] establish certain requirements regarding the school year and the school day. School districts shall observe these requirements when preparing their calendars and when calculating average daily attendance for the purpose of claiming general State financial aid.

- 1) Section 18-8.05(F)(2)(c) of the School Code provides that, with the approval of the State Superintendent of Education, four or more clock-hours of instruction may be counted as a day of attendance when the regional superintendent certifies that, due to a condition beyond the control of the district, the district has been forced to use multiple sessions. The State Superintendent's approval will be granted when the district demonstrates that, due to a condition beyond the control of the district, its facilities are inadequate to house a program offering five clock-hours daily to all students.
 - A) The district superintendent's request to the State Superintendent shall be accompanied by an assurance that the local school board has approved the plan for multiple sessions, including the date of the meeting at which this occurred, and evidence of the approval of the responsible regional superintendent.
 - B) Each request shall include a description of the circumstances that resulted in the need for multiple sessions; information on the buildings and grades affected; the intended beginning and ending dates for the multiple sessions; a plan for remedying the situation leading to the request; and a daily schedule showing that each student will be in class for at least four clock-hours.
 - C) Approval for multiple sessions shall be granted for the school year to which the request pertains. Each request for renewed approval shall conform to the requirements of subsections (f)(1)(A) and (B).

- D) Students who are in attendance for at least 150 minutes of school work but fewer than 240 minutes may be counted for a half day of attendance. Students in attendance for fewer than 150 minutes of school work shall not be counted for purposes of calculating average daily attendance.
- 2) Section 18-8.05(F)(2)(h) of the School Code allows for a determination under rules of the State Board regarding the necessity for a second year's attendance at kindergarten for certain students so they may be included in a district's calculation of average daily attendance. Districts may count these students when they determine through an assessment of their individual educational development that a second year of kindergarten is warranted.
 - 3) A school district shall be considered to have conducted a legal school day, which is eligible to be counted for General State Aid, when the following conditions are met during a work stoppage.
 - A) Fifty percent or more of the district's students are in attendance, based on the average daily attendance during the most recent full month of attendance prior to the work stoppage.
 - B) Educational programs are available at all grade levels in the district, in accordance with the minimum standards set forth in this Part.
 - C) All teachers hold educator licenses that are registered with the regional superintendent of schools for their county of employment. Other than substitute teachers, licensure appropriate to the grade level and subject areas of instruction is held by all teachers.
 - 4) Sections 18-12 and 18-12.5 of the School Code set forth requirements for a school district to claim General State Aid in certain circumstances when one or more, but not all, of the district's school buildings are closed either for a full or partial day. A school district shall certify the reasons for the closure in an electronic format specified by the State Superintendent within 30 days from the date of the incident.
 - A) If the certification is submitted under Section 18-12 of the School Code, it shall indicate whether instruction was provided to students using an e-learning day authorized under Section 10-20.56 of the School Code and Section 1.422 of this Part.
 - B) If the certification is submitted for reasons of a public health emergency under Section 18-12.5 of the School Code, it shall be

accompanied by a signed statement from the local health department to the State Superintendent that includes:

- i) the name of the building that is being recommended for closure;
- ii) the specific public health emergency that warrants the closure; and
- iii) the anticipated building closure dates recommended by the health department.

5) Attendance for General State Aid Purposes

- A) For purposes of determining average daily attendance on the district's General State Aid claim, students in full-day kindergarten and first grade may be counted for a full day of attendance only when they are in attendance for four or more clock hours of school work; provided, however, that students in attendance for more than two clock hours of school work but less than four clock hours may be counted for a half day of attendance. Students in attendance for fewer than two hours of school work shall not be counted for purposes of calculating average daily attendance.
- B) For purposes of determining average daily attendance on the district's General State Aid claim, students enrolled full time in grades 2 through 12 may be counted for a full day of attendance only when they are in attendance for five or more clock hours of school work; provided, however, that students in attendance for more than two and one-half clock hours of school work but less than five clock hours may be counted for a half day of attendance. Students in attendance for fewer than two and one-half hours of school work shall not be counted for purposes of calculating average daily attendance.
- C) For purposes of determining average daily attendance for General State Aid received under Sections 18-12 and 18-12.5 of the School Code, "immediately preceding school day" shall include school days in the previous school year in instances in which the building closure occurs before three or more days of instruction have been provided in the school year for which attendance is being counted.
- D) For the purposes of determining average daily attendance for General State Aid under Section 10-20.56 or 10-29 of the School Code [105 ILCS 5/10-20.56 and 10-29], a school district operating a remote educational program shall document the clock hours of

instruction for each student, and make available to the State Superintendent of Education or his or her designee upon request, a written or online record of instructional time for each student enrolled in the program that provides sufficient evidence of the student's active participation in the program (e.g., log in and log off process, electronic monitoring, adult supervision, two-way interaction between teacher and student, video cam). "Clock hours of instruction" shall be calculated in accordance with Section 18-8.05(F)(2)(j) of the School Code [105 ILCS 5/18-8.05(F)(2)(j)].

IV. TRUANCY IN CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS TASK FORCE DEBRIEF

House Joint Resolution 0001 (HJR 0001) sought to identify the scope of truancy within Chicago and convene a Task Force to address pressing issues as exemplified by the large number of students in Chicago Public Schools who missed four weeks or more of classes during the 2010-11 school year, including large numbers of students who were in kindergarten through eighth grade, were African-American, or were students with disabilities, according to a series of stories titled *An Empty Desk Epidemic* in the Chicago Tribune.

Recommendations of the Task Force

Final recommendation of the Task Force, submitted to the General Assembly in July 2014, centered around six specific areas, each with various action items and recommendations:

A. Terminology

The Task Force emphasized the need for review of terminology related to attendance, absence, and truancy for the sake of consistency within districts across the state.

B. Data Collection and Application

Accurate attendance data should be gathered throughout the school day and be accessible to key stakeholders. Training should occur and guidelines issued concerning data review, interpretation, and application. Data should include details regarding individual students' circumstances in relation to achievement levels, disciplinary history, disability status, attendance barriers, demographics, and other personal factors as these variables help identify patterns and target interventions.

The Task Force suggested the development of a central, accessible database for CPS attendance data that is aligned with state data systems for easier tracking of individual students. Attendance data should be reviewed on at least a quarterly basis and be available to parents and community liaisons within the parameters of the Federal Educational Rights Privacy Act (FERPA) and the Illinois School Student Records Act for collaboration to support student engagement.

C. Prevention

The Task Force addressed the need for both a marketing campaign to promote the benefits of regular school attendance and intentional efforts to create more nurturing and supportive school environments.

The Task Force also promoted the hiring or training of personnel to serve as attendance liaisons to interact with students and their families to monitor attendance progress and intercede to remove barriers to attendance. Interactions with community-based groups and governmental agencies with youth service components were also recommended.

The Chicago Public Schools system was additionally reminded of its responsibility under federal law to locate students with disabilities and provide them with a free, appropriate public education with necessary services to enable learning and to observe the rights of students in temporary living situations who are guaranteed the right to attend either their school of origin or the school of temporary residence and participate in all school programs and activities.

The Chicago Public Schools system was encouraged to continue its revision of the Student Code of Conduct and to reflect trends toward the incorporation of restorative justice practices. The district is additionally encouraged to direct that the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) program be instituted at all schools.

Widespread professional development was advised in order to support the changes in policies, practices, and procedures to ameliorate excessive absences and widespread truancy in the Chicago Public Schools.

D. Interventions

The Task Force also advocated for the provision of prevention outreach and targeted interventions that embrace a Multi-tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) framework that creates system and schoolwide practices, cohort level interventions, and individualized interventions as necessary to ensure efficiency of fiscal and human resource allocation.

Targeted interventions at the prekindergarten/kindergarten and ninth-grade levels were promoted within the report as necessary to effect change at critical junctures in students' academic and personal growth.

E. Program Evaluation and Progress Monitoring

The Task Force cautioned that the effectiveness of any effort to stem and remedy unexcused student absences can only be evaluated through progress monitoring. As such, progress toward goals should be evaluated on a regular basis by comparing actual and anticipated statistics related to attendance, as well as achievement and behavior. If progress is not noted, then the attendance team has to strategize and apply new interventions.

F. Implications for Further Review and Analysis

The Task Force recommended that a permanent commission be created that addresses truancy, excessive absences, and student re-engagement on a statewide basis; enables progress monitoring of the Chicago Public Schools; and provides a clearinghouse for resources, best practices, and data collection related to absenteeism and truancy solutions.

The Task Force recommended that any further evaluation of these issues contemplate a statutorily directed definition of chronic absenteeism.

The Task Force advocated for the creation of a permanent Special Education Programming Commission to address factors in special needs populations that contribute to increases in absences and truancy among students in early childhood programs, elementary school, and high school; among the homeless population; among students involved in the Juvenile Justice System; and among those who are perceived to be harshly disciplined at a disproportionate rate.

Additional Considerations

Chicago Public Schools' administration was advised to review and update current board policies using existing data and information to inform each policy. Upon Board of Education approval, the Chicago Public Schools District 299 was mandated to immediately create, distribute, and

implement administrative procedure manuals to all schools (including charter schools) within the district and community and civic community partners.

The Task Force found that there are possibilities that exist for the State of Illinois to review current statutes that would not only support the Chicago Public Schools system in its effort to improve attendance and decrease truancy, but would be preventive and proactive in nature for the entire state. The state of Illinois was advised to review its current policy on average daily attendance and the Truants' Alternative and Optional Education Program.

1. *Average Daily Attendance*: The current statute yields a false positive indicator of school attendance for the entire state as it calls for the average of the three best months of pupil attendance, which is not representative of the entire school year. A statute change that requests both the best three and the worst three months of pupil attendance will give school districts the opportunity to analyze the gap between the best months and worst months of attendance and use that data to inform interventions, strategies, and practices.

Alternatively, a Multiple Measure Index indicator would be a more inclusive representation of student attendance as it would factor in chronic absence, chronic truancy, average daily attendance (with calculation change), and satisfactory attendance (students attending at least 95 percent of the past 180 days).

2. *Truants' Alternative and Optional Education Program (TAOEP)*: This program serves students with attendance problems and/or dropouts up to and including those who are 21 years of age and provides truancy prevention and intervention services and/or optional education. Chicago Public Schools and Community Colleges of Chicago receive about 40 percent of grant funds in the state, with Chicago Public Schools receiving 26.8 percent of TAOEP funding as part of their block grant.

In fiscal year 2013, Chicago Public Schools served 1,915 students with \$3,082,000. Support is necessary for ISBE to have the resources needed to strengthen its oversight and monitoring of per pupil allocations reported by the Chicago Public Schools from block grant funds.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE ATTENDANCE COMMISSION

The Illinois Attendance Commission has no recommendations to make at this early date, as the work of the Commission has only recently begun. In accordance with the legislation that created the Commission, the appointed members have begun to meet on a monthly basis to study chronic absenteeism in this state and will make recommendations for strategies to prevent chronic absenteeism after gathering and analyzing data, exploring various resources, holding hearings, consulting experts, and collaborating for solutions.

The legislation included five main goals for action that provide a sequential thread for deliberation and action:

- The first outcome advises standard definitions for attendance and chronic absenteeism.
- The second outcome calls for mechanisms to improve data systems to monitor absenteeism.
- The third outcome calls for mechanisms for districts and schools to report the data and account for it.
- The fourth outcome advises the utilization of the data to intervene with students and families to increase attendance.
- The fifth outcome posits the need for new initiatives in response to chronic absenteeism.

Factored into the legislation is the identification of various tiers of participants in the process to remedy chronic absenteeism in Illinois: parents, educators, principals, superintendents, and the State Board of Education.

Outcome 1

A standard for attendance and chronic absenteeism, defining attendance as a calculation of standard clock hours in a day that equal(s) a full day based on instructional minutes for both a half day and full day per learning environment

The first outcome establishes the need for state standards in the determination of a uniform attendance calculation and a definition of chronic absenteeism. The Commission additionally asserts the need for guidance and/or definition of the difference between excused and unexcused absences.

In order to achieve a consensus on the determination of a uniform attendance calculation, Commission members agreed that a survey of school and district administrators, educators, and parent groups would constitute an effective means to determine current practices across the state.

As appointees to the Commission include administrative representatives of several key professional alliances and associations whose membership rosters include district

superintendents, principals, and educators, the distribution of a survey could occur with great facility through their databases.

The Commission's initial consultation with professional and parent affiliations will be to query what their members consider to be a full day and a half day of instruction for students. The Illinois State Board of Education would also be contacted for its data on full- and half-day instruction models and definitions.

A survey would then be developed in alignment with the current School Code to determine the school day concepts, attendance-related definitions, and policies that are employed across the state. A tabulation of survey results would enable the Commission to make recommendations for uniform, statewide standards to ensure greater reliability of statewide attendance data.

Outcome 2

Mechanisms to improve data systems to monitor and track chronic absenteeism across this state in a way that identifies trends from prekindergarten through grade 12 and allows the identification of students who need individualized chronic absenteeism prevention plans

It is projected that superintendents should ensure the use of a data collection system that is compatible with the Illinois State Board of Education in order to share district and school level data. This system should be accessible to staff and easily produce monthly and annual public reports. School districts should allocate funding for districtwide professional development on understanding, collecting, tracking, disaggregating, and interpreting attendance data.

Principals and educators shall accurately identify and report all student absences throughout the school day and engage in timely communication with students and families about absences. School attendance logs should be audited and evaluated on a quarterly basis by school district staff to ensure that schools are actively identifying warning signs of excessive absenteeism and truancy. Designated staff at the school level should continually monitor attendance data to inform strategies and initiatives to improve attendance

Parents should be informed about the connection between school attendance and student achievement and provided support for their role in their home languages. Attendance data should be shared with families in real time (phone call, text, or email). Principals should designate a school contact person with whom parents can develop a relationship regarding attendance. Appropriate data should be shared with parents to foster collaboration and to reinforce and support student and parental engagement.

Outcome 3

Mechanisms for reporting and accountability for schools and districts across this state, including creating multiple measure indexes for reporting

Because the Commission is newly formed, its members are not in a position to offer strategies, mechanisms, and approaches relative to mechanisms for reporting and accountability. Rather, the Commission proposes a plan for gathering the expertise, research, perspectives, information, and

best and effective practices that will enable members to develop comprehensive and actionable strategies and approaches.

The first step in this process was completed at the February 19 meeting when representatives from Attendance Works, a national initiative to address school attendance issues from pre-kindergarten through grade 12, presented *Improving Attendance and Reducing Chronic Absence in Illinois*. Attendance Works advocates gathering data through multiple measures and mining that data to develop responsive frameworks and drive strategies for solutions. The organization enlists the cooperation of school district superintendents across the country to “prioritize attendance, mobilize the community, and drive with data.”

By carefully unpacking the data, districts can uncover the realities behind the numbers, such as how high levels of average daily attendance can mask chronic absences. A careful examination of data can also facilitate the determination of the contributing factors to a student’s pattern of absence from school.

The Commission will seek to research the issues in the list below and use that information to develop its recommendations in a range of ways, including through gathering information from experts; auditing Illinois policies and procedures; identifying best practices at the district level and in other states; connecting with superintendents, principals, teachers, and parents to understand how policies and practices impact their efforts; and evaluating research.

- Examination of the current mechanisms for reporting and accountability used by the State of Illinois and any additional mechanisms used by districts that seek to address gaps in the state’s system.
- The determination of possible triggers that currently exist that prompt the state to work with districts to create attendance improvement plans and any successful actions of this nature.
- Best practices that exist within the state that could be replicated across other districts.
- Needs of districts in terms of data sharing, data assessment, and support for improvement plans that could be met by the state.
- Best practices from other states that have been successful in improving attendance and decreasing chronic absenteeism, including the mechanisms and structures those states used and the policies that supported these efforts.
- Current state policies that support districts, schools, and families in improving attendance and decreasing chronic absenteeism and any policies that impede these efforts.
- Examination of the way the state currently calculates average daily attendance and its impact on generating accurate attendance and absenteeism data, the use of that data to develop and implement improvement plans, and the implications for school funding.

- Determination of multiple measures can be used to get more complete pictures of attendance and absenteeism at the district and school levels and the measures that can be most effective in generating data that can support effective improvement plans and develop priorities and targets for improvement.
- Understanding the impact the implementation of the new regulations and requirements in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) will have on the Commission's work.

The Commission's goal will be to develop informed recommendations concerning data sharing structures, systems for identifying absenteeism patterns early and creating intervention plans, and ways to engage families using clear, actionable data.

The Commission will also look at multiple index measures that can be used at the state and district level to gain clearer pictures of attendance and absenteeism patterns. Measures could include:

- Quantifying a day of attendance through state policy changes.
- Disaggregating excused and unexcused absences for the purposes of addressing underlying causes of absenteeism.
- Disaggregating attendance data based on student populations so as to prioritize actions to address chronic absenteeism.
- Including community contexts in developing attendance improvement goals (e.g., mobility rates).
- Recommending a different method for determining average daily attendance.

Given that average daily attendance rates are connected to the amount of state funding schools and districts receive, the Commission will also look at the proposed changes to the state school funding formula to see how those ideas are factoring in attendance rates (or redefining them). The Commission will also make sure to track the state's ESSA implementation plans and work to understand the implications that ESSA has on how states measure and report attendance and absenteeism data, triggers for district and school improvement plans, the impact on nonacademic measures of school success, and new federal definitions or guidance.

In addition, the Commission will review and align recommendations of the *Every Student, Every Day* initiative which is the result of a joint collaboration of the U.S. Departments of Justice, Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, and Education.

The Commission also will review and inform recommendations using the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights National Attendance Report which is expected to be released Spring of 2016.

Outcome 4

Best practices for utilizing attendance and chronic absenteeism data to create multi-tiered systems of support and prevention that will result in students being ready for college and career

At the February 19 meeting of the Commission, presentations were provided by representatives from the Illinois Multi-tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) Network, an amalgam of state-sponsored efforts to build the capacity of districts to provide interventions in response to various areas of need, from behavior and academic deficits to parent/family engagement and attendance-related issues. "A Multi-Tiered System of Supports is a framework for continuous improvement that is systemic, prevention-focused, and data-informed, providing a coherent continuum of supports responsive to meet the needs of all learners," according to Michele Carmichael and Julie West of the MTSS Network.

The utilization of an MTSS framework to respond to student need, in general, and chronically absent or truant students, in particular, requires district organizational support around funding and policy determination. A district leadership team would then be charged with the task of developing individual building capacity to provide tiered interventions through professional development, coaching, and evaluation. Interventions should be data-based and targeted to specific student need, implemented faithfully, and progress-monitored to determine effectiveness.

Cecelia Leong and Sue Fothergill of Attendance Works also addressed the importance of a tiered approach to improving student attendance and driving academic success.

- They encouraged universal interventions to recognize good and improved attendance, educate and encourage students and their families, clarify attendance expectations, establish positive and engaging school climates, and address common barriers to school attendance.
- They promoted targeted interventions for students who exhibit chronic absence by missing 10 percent of their school days: proactive text messaging, personalized early outreach, meetings with student and family, and the offer of an attendance buddy or mentor.
- Intensive interventions were advised for students who miss 20 percent or more of the school year that include intensive case management with coordination of agency and legal response

Outcome 5

New initiatives and responses to ongoing challenges presented by chronic absenteeism

As has been stated, the work of the Illinois Attendance Commission has only recently begun, and this outcome is predicated upon the results of the four previous outcomes. New initiatives to reduce chronic absenteeism would be derived from new attendance standards and definitions, improved data systems, improved accountability measures, and the provision of tiered supports.

Having met only three times prior to the required submission of this first progress report, the Commission has just begun to explore the statute's directives. New initiatives and responses to the challenges of chronic absenteeism will be identified and explored as the Commission deliberates.

The Commission anticipates that the combination of the following factors will guide the mission to address chronic absenteeism in Illinois:

- analysis and discussion of research and reports by experts and policymakers, such as the Truancy in Chicago Public Schools Task Force report
- proven successful state and national initiatives
- school and community input from public hearings across Illinois
- input from stakeholders
- best practices that emerge from practitioners in the field

Hearings

The legislation additionally called for the Commission to “hold periodic hearings to receive testimony from the public regarding attendance.” On March 3, 2016, several Commission members were present at the Illinois Coalition for the Education of At-Risk Youth (ICEARY) 2016 Conference in Bloomington-Normal in order to hold a hearing with the conference attendees. ICEARY is an organization whose members work in the Truants' Alternative and Optional Education Program (TAOEP), truancy intervention and alternative education, regional state schools that serve students who have been expelled or repeatedly suspended, the Alternative Learning Opportunities Program for youth who are credit-deficient, and in programs of service to the homeless community. ICEARY includes a wide representation of people who work directly with children and teens with attendance-related problems.

This hearing provided Commission members with feedback on what strategies have been successful and which have not. Strategies that resulted in improved school attendance for students who are chronically absent involved increased levels of communication with and among all stakeholders - students, families, district/school staffs, and community groups - in order to build strong, interactive, responsive relationships.

Many well-intentioned strategies failed, however, for unsurprising reasons: inconsistent interventions, uneven adherence to policy, insufficient time for personal outreach, incorrect attendance data, uncooperative families, the difficulty of navigation with the courts and other governmental bodies, and funding shortfalls.

The solutions provided by these foot soldiers in the school attendance battle include many proactive measures such as mentoring, social service support, personal empowerment campaigns, incentive programs, peer sharing of best practices, and increased efforts at prevention.

VI. IN SUMMARY.....

Although the work of the newly established and recently appointed Illinois Attendance Commission just got underway in early December 2015, a solid foundational groundwork is already in place. The recommendations of the Truancy in Chicago Public Schools Task Force report provided a springboard for research and discussion. The participation of Commission appointees from various educational associations, state agencies, and public service nonprofits assures a collaboration that will encompass the responsibilities of all tiers of participants in the formulation of strategies, mechanisms, and approaches to address and prevent attendance-related difficulties among the student-age population in our state.

Presentations by Attendance Works, a recognized national authority on school attendance problems and solutions, and the Illinois MTSS Network will help Commission members develop ongoing strategies for tiered solutions.

The hearing held at the ICEARY 2016 Conference provided Commission members with invaluable input from the truancy professionals who are working across the state to alter the lives of young people who found the barriers to school attendance too formidable to surmount. ICEARY members offered invaluable insight into proven remedies and strategies.

At this early juncture, Commission members have projected a number of goals related to each of the five outcomes that encompass common definitions for all attendance-related words, new methods to tabulate the average daily attendance rate, improved methods for data tracking, methods to plumb the data to understand the scope and causes of the problem, the provision of targeted interventions to rectify patterns of nonattendance, and the formulation of new policies to decrease the likelihood that so many Illinois students will have diminished their prospects for fulfilling and productive lives by missing time in class.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Public Act 99-0432

Appendix B: Roster of Commission Members

Appendix C: Meeting Agendas and Minutes

Appendix D: House Bill 4343

Appendix E: Attendance Works Presentation

Appendix F: Illinois Network of Multi-tiered Systems of Support Network Presentation

Appendix G: U.S. Department of Justice, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and U.S. Department of Education: *Every Student, Every Day: A Community Toolkit to Address and Eliminate Chronic Absenteeism*

APPENDIX A: PUBLIC ACT 99-0432

AN ACT concerning education.

**Be it enacted by the People of the State of Illinois,
represented in the General Assembly:**

Section 5. The School Code is amended by adding Section 2-3.163 as follows:

(105 ILCS 5/2-3.163 new)

Sec. 2-3.163. Attendance Commission.

(a) The Attendance Commission is created within the State Board of Education to study the issue of chronic absenteeism in this State and make recommendations for strategies to prevent chronic absenteeism. The Commission shall consist of all of the following members:

(1) The Director of the Department of Children and Family Services or his or her designee.

(2) The Chairperson of the State Board of Education or his or her designee.

(3) The Chairperson of the Board of Higher Education or his or her designee.

(4) The Secretary of the Department of Human Services or his or her designee.

(5) The Director of the Department of Public Health or his or her designee.

(6) The Chairperson of the Illinois Community College

Board or his or her designee.

(7) The Chairperson of the State Charter School Commission or his or her designee.

(8) An individual that deals with children's disabilities, impairments, and social emotional issues, appointed by the State Superintendent of Education.

(9) One member from each of the following organizations, appointed by the State Superintendent of Education:

(A) A non-profit organization that advocates for students in temporary living situations.

(B) An Illinois-focused, non-profit organization that advocates for the well-being of all children and families in this State.

(C) An Illinois non-profit, anti-crime organization of law enforcement that researches and recommends early learning and youth development strategies to reduce crime.

(D) An Illinois non-profit organization that conducts community-organizing around family issues.

(E) A statewide professional teachers' organization.

(F) A different statewide professional teachers' organization.

(G) A professional teachers' organization in a city having a population exceeding 500,000.

(H) An association representing school administrators.

(I) An association representing school board members.

(J) An association representing school principals.

(K) An association representing regional superintendents of schools.

(L) An association representing parents.

(M) An association representing high school districts.

(N) An association representing large unit districts.

(O) An organization that advocates for healthier school environments in Illinois.

(P) An organization that advocates for the health and safety of Illinois youth and families by providing capacity building services.

(Q) A statewide association of local philanthropic organizations that advocates for effective educational, health, and human service policies to improve this State's communities.

(R) A statewide organization that advocates for partnerships among schools, families, and the community that provide access to support and remove barriers to learning and development, using schools as hubs.

(S) An organization representing statewide programs actively involved in truancy intervention.

Attendance Commission members shall serve without compensation but shall be reimbursed for their travel expenses from appropriations to the State Board of Education available for that purpose and subject to the rules of the appropriate travel control board.

(b) The Attendance Commission shall meet initially at the call of the State Superintendent of Education. The members shall elect a chairperson at their initial meeting. Thereafter, the Attendance Commission shall meet at the call of the chairperson. The Attendance Commission shall hold hearings on a periodic basis to receive testimony from the public regarding attendance.

(c) The Attendance Commission shall identify strategies, mechanisms, and approaches to help parents, educators, principals, superintendents, and the State Board of Education address and prevent chronic absenteeism and shall recommend to the General Assembly and State Board of Education:

(1) a standard for attendance and chronic absenteeism, defining attendance as a calculation of standard clock hours in a day that equal a full day based on instructional minutes for both a half day and a full day per learning environment;

(2) mechanisms to improve data systems to monitor and track chronic absenteeism across this State in a way that

identifies trends from prekindergarten through grade 12 and allows the identification of students who need individualized chronic absenteeism prevention plans;

(3) mechanisms for reporting and accountability for schools and districts across this State, including creating multiple measure indexes for reporting;

(4) best practices for utilizing attendance and chronic absenteeism data to create multi-tiered systems of support and prevention that will result in students being ready for college and career; and

(5) new initiatives and responses to ongoing challenges presented by chronic absenteeism.

(d) The State Board of Education shall provide administrative support to the Commission. The Attendance Commission shall submit an annual report to the General Assembly and the State Board of Education no later than December 15 of each year.

(e) The Attendance Commission is abolished and this Section is repealed on December 16, 2020.

Section 99. Effective date. This Act takes effect upon becoming law.

APPENDIX B: ROSTER OF COMMISSION MEMBERS

Illinois Attendance Commission

Appointment Roster as of February 26, 2016

James R. Thompson Center
100 West Randolph Street
Chicago, Illinois 60601



Alzina Building
100 North First Street
Springfield, Illinois 62777

Jeff Aranowski
Illinois State Board of Education

Alexandra Mays
Healthy Schools Campaign

Lori Fanello
*Illinois Association of Regional
Superintendents of Schools*

Melissa Mitchell
Federation for Community Schools

Karen Fox
United Way

Matthew Rodriguez
Illinois Parent Teacher Association

Tiffany Gholson
Department of Children and Family Services

Diane Rutledge
Large Unit District Association

Jennifer Gill
*Illinois Association of School
Administrators*

Deanna Sullivan
Illinois Association of School Boards

Diane Grigsby-Jackson
Illinois Department of Human Services

Harold Sweeney
Truants' Alternative Optional Education Program

Heidi Grove
Illinois Federation of Teachers

Antoinette Taylor
Exceptional Needs Consultant

Victoria Jackson
Illinois Department of Public Health

Scott Wakeley
High School District Organization of Illinois

Madelyn James
Voices for Illinois Children

Crysta Weitekamp
Illinois Education Association

Elizabeth C. Malik
*Law Project of the Chicago Coalition
for the Homeless*

Kevin Westall
Illinois Principals Association

APPENDIX C: MEETING AGENDAS AND MINUTES

Attendance Commission

Meeting Agenda
December 4, 2015
10:00 a.m.

James R. Thompson Center
100 West Randolph Street
4th Floor, V-Tel Room
Chicago, Illinois 60601



Alzina Building
100 North First Street
3rd Floor, V-Tel Room
Springfield, Illinois 62777

-
- I. Roll Call
 - II. Welcome and Opening Remarks
 - III. Introduction of Commission Members
 - IV. Administrative Issues
 - A. Open Meetings Act Requirements
 - B. Ethics Requirements
 - V. Discussion of and Adoption of Rules of Procedure
 - VI. Selection of Commission Chairperson
 - VII. Review and Detailed Discussion of Public Act 99-432, House Bill 4343, and the Role of the Commission
 - VIII. Discussion and Possible Adoption of Mission, Goals, Timelines and Meeting Schedules
 - IX. Discussion and Possible Creation of Committees
 - X. Public Comment
 - XI. General Discussion on Other Topics by Commission Members
 - XII. Adjourn

Commission members seeking to participate by telephone may do so by dialing 1-888-494-4032 and entering the following access code: 3 6 3 3 7 5 2 7 0 9

Illinois Attendance Commission

Meeting Minutes
December 4, 2015
10:00 a.m.

James R. Thompson Center
100 West Randolph Street
Fourteenth Floor V-tel Room
Chicago, Illinois 60601



Alzina Building
100 North First Street
Third Floor V-tel Room
Springfield, Illinois 62777

I. Roll Call

Present

Jeff Aranowski (Chicago)
Mark Bishop (Chicago)
Lori Fanello (Chicago)
Karen Fox (Chicago)
Diane Grigsby-Jackson (telephone)
Heidi Grove (Springfield)
Madelyn James (Chicago)
Elizabeth C. Malik (Chicago)
Melissa Mitchell (Chicago)
Matthew Rodriguez (telephone)
Deanna Sullivan (Springfield)
Harold Sweeney (Chicago)
Antoinette Taylor (Chicago)
Scott Wakeley (Chicago)
Crysta Weitekamp (telephone)

Not Present

Jennifer Gill
Diane Rutledge
Tara Stamps

II. Welcome and Opening Remarks

Jeff Aranowski opened the meeting at 10:07 a.m. and explained there were nine more appointments to the Illinois Attendance Commission to be completed. These nine vacancies include the following:

- Director of Department of Children and Family Services or designee
- Director of Department of Public Health or designee
- Chairperson of Illinois Board of Higher Education or designee
- Chairperson of Illinois Community College Board or designee
- Chairperson of State Charter School Commission or designee
- An Illinois non-profit, anti-crime organization of law enforcement that researches and recommends early learning and youth development strategies to reduce crime
- An Illinois non-profit organization that conducts community-organizing around family issues
- An association representing school principals
- An organization that advocates for health and safety of Illinois youth and families by providing capacity building services
-

III. Introduction of Commission Members

Mr. Aranowski then asked all members present to introduce themselves and identify their particular areas of expertise that would be beneficial to the work of the Commission. He added that such background knowledge would be useful when committees are formed as members would want to gravitate to their preferred topical areas.

IV. Administrative Issues

A. Open Meetings Act Requirements

B. Ethics Requirements

Mr. Aranowski reminded all members of the need to submit certification of completion of the Open Meetings Act and the state Ethics Training requirements.

V. Discussion of and Adoption of Rules of Procedure

Mr. Aranowski drew the members' attention to the draft Rules of Procedure in their folders. He identified some of the particular components of the Rules and explained they were consistent with Roberts' Rules of Order.

Deanna Sullivan asked a question about Section 1.2 C and wondered if an end date of 2020 should be added since that date is in statute. Mr. Aranowski explained that Section 1.2C stipulated to the provision of an annual report to the General Assembly by December 15 every year, and that the end date of 2020 should be added. He went on to explain, however, that House Bill 4343 was proposed by Representative Linda Chapa LaVia to extend the due date for the first annual report to March 15, 2016 since the Commission was meeting for the first time on December 4, 2015.

Mr. Aranowski asked that members be polled as a two-thirds vote is required for adoption of the draft Rules of Procedure. All members present voted to adopt the Rules of Procedure.

VI. Selection of Commission Chairperson

Mr. Aranowski asked if any member wished to nominate someone to chair the Commission or to volunteer their own services. Antoinette Taylor volunteered to lead the Commission due to her involvement with the drafting of the legislation creating the Illinois Attendance Commission and her leadership role with the Truancy in Chicago Public Schools Task Force. Ms. Taylor expressed her feeling that the Commission facilitates continuity in the state's effort to resolve attendance problems as the legislation to create the Commission was introduced after the expiration of Truancy in Chicago Public Schools Task Force.

As there were no other recommendations or volunteers for the position of chair, the motion to accept Ms. Taylor's offer to serve as chairperson was made and seconded. Ms. Taylor was confirmed as Commission chair by unanimous agreement of all members when polled.

It was agreed that Commission members would receive by email a timeline of events that led to the creation of the Truancy in Chicago Public Schools Task Force and the final report that had been issued by this task force at the end of its term of service on July 31, 2014.

Mr. Aranowski said the work of the previous truancy task force would by no means set the parameters for the work of the Commission as it has a separate, statewide task but would provide some historical context to the effort that preceded the current undertaking to address school attendance issues in Illinois.

VII. Review and Detailed Discussion of Public Act 99-432, House Bill 4343, and the Role of the Commission

Mr. Aranowski explained that Public Act 99-432 was signed into law in August 2015. He read aloud the salient portions of the Act in order to define the Commission's mission, duties, and obligations:

The Attendance Commission is created within the State Board of Education to study the issue of chronic absenteeism in this State and make recommendations for strategies to prevent chronic absenteeism.

The Attendance Commission shall identify strategies, mechanisms, and approaches to help parents, educators, principals, superintendents, and the State Board of Education address and prevent chronic absenteeism and shall recommend to the General Assembly and State Board of Education:

- (1) a standard for attendance and chronic absenteeism, defining attendance as a calculation of standard clock hours in a day that equal a full day based on instructional minutes for both a half day and a full day per learning environment;*
- (2) mechanisms to improve data systems to monitor and track chronic absenteeism across this State in a way that identifies trends from prekindergarten through grade 12 and allows the identification of students who need individualized chronic absenteeism prevention plans;*
- (3) mechanisms for reporting and accountability for schools and districts across this State, including creating multiple measure indexes for reporting;*
- (4) best practices for utilizing attendance and chronic absenteeism data to create multi-tiered systems of support and prevention that will result in students being ready for college and career; and*
- (5) new initiatives and responses to ongoing challenges presented by chronic absenteeism*

The Attendance Commission shall hold hearings on a periodic basis to receive testimony from the public regarding attendance.

The Attendance Commission shall submit an annual report to the General Assembly and the State Board of Education no later than December 15 of each year.

Reaching back to the Truancy in Chicago Public Schools Task Force which was convened in 2013 in the aftermath of widespread media reports of the lack of oversight, accountability, and structures to track and remedy chronic truancy and absenteeism in the Chicago Public Schools,

Mr. Aranowski highlighted some of the recommendations from the task force report to indicate where that task force was leaning:

1. Need for common definitions of *absenteeism* and *chronic absenteeism*:
There is, however, a definition in statute for *truant*: “a child subject to compulsory school attendance ... who is absent without valid cause from such attendance for a school day or portion thereof.” (105 ILCS 5/26-2a)
2. Improved data collection and analysis:
The task force saw an imperative to gather and interpret data in a timely manner to inform strategies and solutions. Data should be accessible to school officials, parents, and advocates within the parameters of FERPA and student privacy concerns.
3. Preventive measures:
Such measures are necessary to combat attendance issues across a continuum, from excessive to chronic, and include family and community engagement and public awareness campaigns, specifically aimed at subsets of students with heightened attendance difficulties (homeless students, students with disabilities, and English language learners).
4. Appointment of attendance coordinators:
Positions could be assumed by someone already on staff to initiate and maintain communication with students facing attendance difficulties and their families.
5. Professional development tailored to the specific needs of a particular school or district
6. Interventions:
These range from early childhood interventions to the ninth grade on-track indicator to Multi-tiered Systems of Support (MTSS). Interventions require the support of the community; attendance problems cannot be tackled in isolation and answers often lie in a focus on the school culture.
7. Recommendations:
The truancy task force recommended an increase in evaluation efforts and progress monitoring including the call for the establishment of a permanent commission to look at truancy.

Chairperson Taylor explained that the Commission is focused on the broader issue of school attendance in order to have a greater impact on all attendance-related issues such as unexcused, excessive, and chronic absences as well as truancy. Truancy efforts are focused on recovery while attendance efforts seek to reduce the occurrence of truancy. Attendance issues are the precursors of absenteeism and truancy.

Diane Grigsby-Jackson asked about the length of the term. Mr. Aranowski explained the Commission will run for five years, and members will serve for that length of time unless they need to have a replacement named in the case of job change, move, etc.

Karen Fox inquired about financial considerations with regard to solutions. Mr. Aranowski explained the truancy task force was careful to stay away from solutions which required financing. The attendance coordinators which were identified in the task force’s

recommendations were thought to be people already on staff who would take on additional duties, people who would serve as the central points of contact rather than people hired specifically for that role. Ms. Taylor said it played in the task force's favor not to push the money factor, and to focus on root causes, raise awareness, and start discussions.

The subject of public hearings was raised, and Ms. Taylor explained their necessity as they will inform the efforts of the Commission and attach legitimacy to its work.

Harold Sweeney explained that the Commission is on the radar of anyone working on truancy today as practitioners are looking for support and solutions. Ms. Taylor concurred and explained she has heard from many administrators who want assistance tackling their attendance issues.

Madelyn James added a note of caution that the Commission needs to be very strategic about where the public hearings are held as people in different sections of the state face different problems relative to funding and transportation.

VIII. Discussion and Possible Adoption of Mission, Goals, Timelines, and Meeting Schedules

Mr. Aranowski reminded the group that the first report to the General Assembly is due March 15, 2016, and they have to be mindful about establishing goals and making progress toward meeting goals by that time. Hearings would provide valuable data.

Melissa Mitchell said we need to define absence, what is excused and what is not. A student's early dismissal from school at noon for a doctor's appointment is counted differently across the state. The Commission needs to look at attendance/absence policies across the state as well as patterns in state attendance data. There should also be an effort to discover trends in attendance data for population subgroups and by geographical areas. Ms. Mitchell also noted that it would be interesting to see how Illinois compares to other states with regard to comprehensive definitions of terms and procedures in place to support children and families.

Mark Bishop added that it is important to see what other states are doing in terms of best practices, data collection, and identifying attendance strategies. He cited the work of Hedy Chang, the director of Attendance Works, a national organization that addresses absenteeism. Ms. Chang advocates the regular tracking of attendance data and using it to shape interventions and school-wide approaches to address chronic absenteeism. Mr. Bishop also said we have to have a grasp on the difference between absenteeism and truancy as their causes are different and they look different in different populations. He also echoed the sentiment that everyone has to be on the same page with regard to the definitions.

Harold Sweeney cautioned there are kids for whom there is no data because they simply never go to school.

Scott Wakeley initiated a discussion about parents who provide an excuse for any and all absences for their children. They (school and district officials) are frustrated because the parents always provide cover when the school calls, even to the extent they are able to obtain doctors' notes. He advised that more accountability measures are necessary to stop these practices, especially since these notes are usually written by non-medical personnel. Very often, the doctors' offices do not check to see if the child was actually seen on the date in question. Mr. Sweeney said that his organization contacts the doctors to determine the validity of school excusal notes. Another point of view was offered by Deanna Sullivan who said there are dental and medical professionals who work with students who want to ensure that schools accept the

validity of the excusal notes and count the absences as excused. They would like statutory language to say doctors' visits during the school day should be excused. Mr. Sweeney concluded that there are different standards across districts. What is excused in one district is not excused in another.

Beth Malik said her organization tracks attendance data for homeless students and faces many challenges with this due to their mobility. Sometimes there are periods of weeks and months when these students are not enrolled in school, and these days are not being tracked and counted. Data does not capture days when there are gaps in student enrollment.

Melissa Mitchell brought up the state's ongoing effort to launch a longitudinal data system and its potential capability to track attendance because it would use student identification numbers across the state.

Mr. Aranowski said the Student Information System is useful, but some attendance is still not reported when enrollments change from one school to the next. The data are only as good as what is being reported.

Madelyn James wondered if Hedy Chang or someone else with a broad national perspective could speak to the group and invited other members to provide resources and information about other states' services. Ms. James further stated that some incredibly important work is being done in California, Georgia, and New York. She also advised the Commission to be positive in its approach to solutions and support children and families and not use parents as scapegoats.

Mr. Aranowski proposed we use a positive approach with districts and empower districts to make decisions that are good for kids. He explained that districts face a lot of mandates, and while it would be great to have consistent data and definitions, some districts need to retain their specific character if it works for their kids.

Ms. Mitchell said a presentation by Hedy Chang could get everyone on the same page and would inform the Commission on other states' progress. She wondered also what it looks like if a doctor is writing a note every week for a student because there are cumulative effects to absenteeism. School attendance in early years is a predictor of who will graduate from high school.

Ms. Taylor said the Commission needs to look at the task force report and also hear what Hedy Chang has to say. All members have to be mindful of the reports that are due each year, but the reality is the Commission has five years to provide effective solutions after much research and discussion. Members have to know the difference between what can be legislated and what should be recommended.

Mr. Wakeley said it makes a huge difference for districts if something is mandated or if it is recommended because what works in one place might not work somewhere else. You have to see who has similar challenges. Recommendations are better than mandates to permit some autonomy among districts. You do not want to tie the hands up of people who are doing the most important work with children.

Ms. Taylor said sometimes things need to be legislated. Children with disabilities provide a common thread with regard to attendance no matter where or who they are. When you look at the homeless population and the children in the juvenile justice system, you find they were usually students with disabilities. Sometimes you need a template solution to make things equitable.

Mr. Aranowski said something that is recommended for legislative change does not necessarily create a mandate. Sometimes there are things in the law that need to be changed because something legislated in another era no longer works today. It is not productive to suspend or expel a student for nonattendance.

Mr. Wakeley said there are hurdles and you have to do everything you can to keep kids in school, even those who fail to bring in health and dental forms. He explained we make the rules that cause problems for ourselves especially with regard to health forms and such. He cited the requirement that high school seniors must have meningitis shots and if they don't they lose out on certain achievements as a punitive measure. He said it is difficult to keep the kids who are in school in school because of arcane rules.

Ms. Mitchell said you need different triggers in the legislation. She said it never made sense to send a student home after missing school. We do need to move toward stronger policies and practices that wouldn't be a burden to districts or have some unintended consequences for districts where certain problems are not a challenge. It also does not make sense to penalize children for something that is not in their control. How effective is it to remove a child from school if no one took her to the dentist? You have to work with the family directly to give them the support they need to get inoculations and dental checkups.

Mr. Bishop said discussions involve more than educators, and we need public health involved. It has to be clearly articulated to all stakeholders that more than educators are involved in school attendance issues.

Ms. Taylor echoed this sentiment and said we need someone with a pediatric association affiliation to inform and guide us. She said the Commission doesn't necessarily have to have everyone serve on the Commission from different entities, but we will invite certain professionals in to inform us.

Mr. Aranowski asked if anyone knows any districts with exemplary programs and solutions or community engagement models

Ms. Taylor brought up the subject of meetings (once a month) and most agreed the mornings were better. Meetings would generally be 90 minutes long.

Mr. Aranowski said since the Commission is an advisory body, it does not have to physically meet. With a notice of 48 hours, the Commission could meet via a conference call if a consensus is needed, but only on an occasional basis. He reminded the Commission that the first report is due to the General Assembly by March 15 and should be approved by the Commission by March 1.

Ms. Taylor said the Truancy in Chicago Public Schools Task Force followed every protocol and its work was highly respected. She wants the same for the Commission and does not want the work to be questioned. She promised to adhere to every protocol as its mission is too important. Children's lives are at stake.

Karen Fox said former task force members can provide guidance on the policies and procedures that had been researched and discussed.

Ms. Taylor cautioned that there were superintendents who did not know the compulsory age of attendance had changed and were operating on a previous policy. She explained further that it is necessary to know what is out there on policy and what is being practiced procedurally.

Mr. Bishop said his group looked at a lot of these issues and wants to share their report with the Commission.

With regard to notable research and study summaries, Ms. Mitchell said the University of Chicago Consortium on School Research's preschool report (*Preschool Attendance in Chicago Public Schools: Relationships with Learning Outcomes and Reasons for Absences*) and the ninth grade cohort reports (*Preventable Failure: Improvements in Long-Term Outcomes When High Schools Focused on the Ninth Grade Year: Research Summary* and four others) were good and should be circulated. Ms. James suggested that the New York absenteeism study (*Meeting the Challenge of Combating Chronic Absenteeism Impact of the NYC Mayor's Interagency Task Force on Chronic Absenteeism and School Attendance and Its Implications for Other Cities*) should also be considered

Heidi Grove suggested the use of Google drive to post these documents for easy access by Commission members. Ms. Taylor recalled the work of the Best Practice Committee on the truancy task force and wondered about providing Commission members access to that information.

Mr. Bishop said things are coming down the pike that may impact the Commission's work. The Office of Civil Rights is gathering truancy data and will be issuing a report in the spring. The Every Child Every Day initiative (U. S. Department of Education) will hold a summit in early June on chronic absenteeism that will involve the creation of 20 state teams through a competitive process. There will be an application procedure in early January which he will track for us.

Harold Sweeney said there is a conference in Normal on March 3-4 for all people connected with truancy statewide. The Illinois Coalition for Educating At-Risk Youth (ICEARY) includes truancy workers, administrators, teachers, and everyone on the frontlines of the anti-truancy effort within its organization. Mr. Aranowski expressed his belief that the Commission should have several members attend in an official capacity as this conference could inform future work for the Commission. Mr. Sweeney suggested the Commission schedule a hearing at the conference to hear everyone's concerns.

Diane Grigsby-Jackson offered space within the Department of Human Services DHS space for future meetings.

IX. Discussion and Possible Creation of Committees

Ms. Taylor said we may need to meet again to decide what the committees should be. She also reminded Commission members that there is an Illinois Secretary of Education – Beth Purvis – and the Commission will be checking in with her.

X. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

XI. General Discussion on Other Topics by Commission Members

Mr. Aranowski said the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) is up for reauthorization. The current draft was passed by House a few days prior to the Commission's inaugural meeting and the Senate vote was upcoming. The state is operating under a No Child Left Behind (NCLB) waiver. There will be significant changes in an ESEA waiver which will affect funding.

Mr. Bishop said chronic absenteeism is going to be required reporting for the state plan and constitutes an allowable expense for professional development and funding.

All Commission members were provided a reminder that all Commission-related communication is to be funneled through the Commission administrator. This also applies to any media requests for information.

XII. Adjourn

There was a motion to adjourn which was seconded at 11:55 a.m.

Attendance Commission

Meeting Agenda
January 25, 2016
10:00 a.m.

James R. Thompson Center
100 West Randolph Street
Fourteenth Floor, V-Tel Room
Chicago, Illinois 60601



Alzina Building
100 North First Street
Third Floor, V-Tel Room
Springfield, Illinois 62777

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- I. Roll Call
 - II. Welcome and Opening Remarks
 - III. Approval of Minutes from December 4, 2015 Meeting
 - IV. Commission Technology Update
 - A. Commission Website and Google Drive
 - B. Email Address
 - V. Truancy in Chicago Public Schools Task Force Debrief
 - A. Chicago Tribune Article
 - B. Summary of Findings and Report
 - C. Legislative Update
 - VI. Discussion of the Commission's Five Required Outcomes
 - VII. Illinois Coalition for the Education of At-Risk Youth (ICEARY) 2016 Conference
 - VIII. Consideration of Approaches to the Commission's March 15, 2016 Report
 - IX. Public Comment
 - X. New Business and Open Discussion
 - XI. Adjourn

Commission members seeking to participate by telephone may do so by dialing 1-888-494-4032 and entering the following access code: 3 6 3 3 7 5 2 7 0 9

Illinois Attendance Commission

Meeting Minutes
January 25, 2016
10:00 a.m.

James R. Thompson Center
100 West Randolph Street
Fourteenth Floor V-tel Room
Chicago, Illinois 60601



Alzina Building
100 North First Street
Third Floor V-tel Room
Springfield, Illinois 62777

I. Roll Call

Jeff Aranowski (Present - Chicago)
Mark Bishop (Present - Chicago)
Lori Fanello (Present - telephone)
Karen Fox (Present - Chicago)
Tiffany Gholson (Present - Chicago)
Jennifer Gill
Diane Grigsby-Jackson (Represented by Maria Versher by telephone)
Heidi Grove (Present - telephone)
Victoria Jackson (Present - Springfield)
Madelyn James
Elizabeth C. Malik (Represented by Rene Heybach by telephone)
Melissa Mitchell (Present - Chicago)
Matthew Rodriguez (Present - Chicago)
Diane Rutledge – (Present – telephone)
Deanna Sullivan (Present - Springfield)
Tara Stamps
Harold Sweeney (Present - telephone)
Antoinette Taylor (Present - Springfield)
Scott Wakeley
Crysta Weitekamp (Present - telephone)

II. Welcome and Opening Remarks

Chairperson Antoinette Taylor welcomed Commission members to the first meeting of the new year and thanked everyone for their understanding when the Commission was forced to cancel its scheduled January 6 meeting due to the fact the State Board of Education and the Superintendent decided to conduct their January meeting in the same video-telephone rooms the Commission had planned to use.

III. Approval of Minutes from December 4, 2015 Meeting

Ms. Taylor suggested a slight revision to the minutes on page eight, in the fifth paragraph:
“She said the Commission doesn’t necessarily have to have everyone serve on the Commission from different entities, but we ~~have to~~ will invite certain professionals in to inform us.”

The minutes were then moved for adoption by Karen Fox and seconded by Melissa Mitchell. The minutes were ratified by all members present.

IV. Commission Technology Update

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- A. Commission Page on the ISBE Website - <http://www.isbe.net/AC/default.htm>
 - B. Email Address - attendancecommission@isbe.net
 - C. Google Drive link - Will provide a link at a later time to avoid the circuitous log-in route

Ms. Taylor issued a reminder to send all suggestions for resources or informative data to the Commission administrator and to encourage members of the public-at-large to send comments, concerns, and questions to the Attendance Commission via the email address.

V. **Truancy in Chicago Public Schools Task Force Debrief**

Chicago Tribune Article – Ms. Taylor drew everyone’s attention to the statistics in the article and said the student with disability truancy rate would be higher if students with 504 plans were included in the data. The school attendance difficulties of children with documented disabilities, those that inhibit academic achievement and those that do not but require some accommodation, is very high. The nonattendance habits of the children in these two subgroups become then a matter with legal implications because of the impact on their Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and 504 plans.

She asked members to familiarize themselves with the article as it prompted several pieces of legislation.

Legislative Update – Chairperson Taylor identified the legislation that led to the creation of the Attendance Commission - HB 3197.

Another piece of legislation (HB 3200) was introduced in reaction to the false positives of children being counted as being in school based on the average daily attendance figures that only take into account the best three months of attendance, in accordance with current law.

A further explanation of this practice was included in the Superintendent’s Weekly Message which was disseminated in December 2014.

The annual “Estimated Best Three Months Average Daily Attendance” application is now available on IWAS. The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) requests that you provide an estimate of the daily attendance figure for your district to ISBEThe daily attendance figure is your estimate of the best three months of attendance for the 2014-15 school year. You may use actual attendance data to date to calculate an estimate or develop your own estimate figure based on historical attendance patterns. The estimate you provide will be used by policymakers to determine the General State Aid (GSA) appropriation level for the 2014-15 claim payable in fiscal year 2016.

Ms. Taylor explained that the reporting of only the best three months of attendance camouflages the actual statistics for the remaining unreported months. State Representative Linda Chapa LaVia introduced HB 3200 to amend the average daily attendance calculation to be based on the previous 180 calendar days. Members of the General Assembly Ms. Taylor has spoken with agree this needs to be changed, but they want the language massaged a bit as they want to give districts more time to calculate their 180 day attendance rate. Ms. Taylor reiterated that it is a problem to only look at your best three months because of the attendance realities captured in the other months. Using current or historical data gives you false positives not only for attendance but for our state report cards.

Another bill introduced by Representative Chapa LaVia (HB 3198) proposes that school districts review and update their policies on attendance-related matters (absenteeism, truancy, attendance) every two years and use the data that they find to evaluate policies.

HB 3199 was also introduced by Representative Chapa LaVia to require charter schools to comply with all absenteeism and truancy policies and requirements applicable to public schools under the laws of the State of Illinois. This bill also stipulates that a charter school must define a truant, chronic or habitual truant, truant minor, and dropout.

Ms. Taylor explained that subject matter hearings on HB 3198 and HB 3200 had been held, and during these legislators and participating stakeholders discovered gaps in superintendents' knowledge and realized that some school attendance policies had not been revised in years. An example of the knowledge gap is the fact that the compulsory age of attendance had been changed from age 7 to age 6 and took effect in the fall of 2014, yet some thought it was still age 7. Ms. Taylor explained further that it was found that some school attendance policies at Chicago Public Schools (CPS) dated back to 1996. Many of these policies referred parents and members of the general public to websites that no longer exist and some even bore the Pershing Road address from which CPS moved in the late nineties.

Ms. Taylor recalled that she and State Representative Chapa LaVia met with Mayor Rahm Emanuel and his chief of staff for education (Arnie Rivera) on December 1, 2014. They went over the Truancy in Chicago Public Schools Task Force recommendations and differentiated what CPS could tackle directly and what items required legislation. The mayor offered his assurance that CPS would work on the recommendations. Ms. Taylor looks forward to an update on CPS's progress especially since she and Jeff Aranowski participated in some meetings with CPS officials where policy changes had been drafted prior to being presented to the Chicago Board of Education.

Melissa Mitchell asked about the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and how it will impact the Commission's goals. She wondered if there was anything in the ESSA about attendance requirements, data recording, school improvement, etc. and added that it will be good to know the content of this bill so the Commission does not try and duplicate something that is required in the ESSA.

Jeff Aranowski said at this juncture, ISBE is looking at the accountability framework in ESSA and referenced the fact that there was a significant reauthorization of the McKinney-Vento piece of the ESEA, so there will be updates regarding the homeless population. He said there will be data requirements that will impact our work and our schools such as reporting requirements for states and LEAs on chronic absenteeism. ISBE is preparing a crosswalk document which will be shared with the Commission when it is complete.

Mr. Aranowski said implementation of the ESSA goes into effect at the start of the 2017-2018 school year. Plans for implementation of the ESSA are due on July 1, 2016, but Mr. Aranowski thinks that date might be pushed back.

Rene Heybach informed the Commission that homeless children's attendance rates in CPS are not being accurately tracked. Since tracking data is engaged only from the date of enrollment, the dates of absence for homeless students who missed school because of their transience aren't tracked. Ms. Taylor added that when you factor in that many of these children are also those with disabilities, it creates a grave concern because a plan is supposed to follow the child and the district is responsible for educational services and related services via IEPs and 504 plans. When children who are homeless are not in school, it is a problem as the IEP is not implemented or it expires. This creates a situation of lost opportunities. Rene Heybach said over 3,000 CPS students fall into this category of being homeless and having a disability.

VI. Discussion of the Commission's Five Required Outcomes

Ms. Taylor called everyone's attention to five required outcomes worksheet template to keep the group focused on the outcomes the Commission is required to complete. She reminded everyone that they represent various agencies and organizations and should make an entry into the template if something in the course of their everyday work relates to any component within each outcome. Ms. Taylor said the template will help us differentiate what is on the books and what we might need to take to our legislators.

Mr. Aranowski said we have the potential to do some great work and we have to be mindful that we are responsive to the legislation. The template will keep us focused.

VII. Illinois Coalition for the Education of At-Risk Youth (ICEARY) 2016 Conference

Harold Sweeney said ICEARY is an organization whose members work in the Truants Alternative and Optional Education Program (TAOEP), truancy intervention and alternative education, regional state schools that serve students who have been expelled or repeatedly suspended, the Alternative Learning Opportunities Program for youth who are credit-deficient, and in programs of service to the homeless community. ICEARY includes a wide representation of people who work directly with children and teens with attendance related problems.

On March 3-4, 2016, ICEARY is hosting their annual conference at the Marriott Bloomington-Normal Conference Center. The Attendance Commission will hold a public hearing at the conference on Thursday, March 3, 2016, at 3:30 p.m., in order to hear from the people who are on the frontline, knocking on doors, working with the families of the students with attendance issues. These people can help the Commission members understand what is good with current truancy laws, what isn't working, and their recommendations for things that need to be fixed. The hearing will be attended by representatives from across that state as attendance issues vary by region. The conference is open to the public.

Members should let the Commission administrator know if they plan to attend the hearing.

VIII. Consideration of Approaches to the Commission's March 15, 2016 Report

The first annual report of the Commission's progress was originally due on December 15, 2015, but the due date is likely to be extended by legislation (not passed yet) because the Commission did not begin to meet until December 4, 2015, due to the lack of a full roster. A report is due each year on December 15 until 2020 when the Commission will reach its legislated end date.

Mr. Aranowski said the Commission needs to discuss a focus/format for the first report which must be completed by March 1 because of the routes it must follow to the General Assembly and the Governor by March 15. He suggested dividing the report into sections according to each of the five required outcomes written into the legislation. Mr. Aranowski suggested the formation of a report subcommittee and asked for discussion on the matter. He said the initial report will likely be brief but should feature a roadmap about how the Commission will fulfill its obligations.

Melissa Mitchell suggested an audit of existing state law and policy according to each outcome would be a beneficial inclusion to the first report. She said one of the things we will want to demonstrate in the reports and throughout the course of the Commission's existence is to build on what is happening and what is working, rather than replicate or reinvent things. Ms. Mitchell also thinks there should also be a section that includes the potential implications of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) to align the Commission's efforts with state requirements under the new law.

Mr. Aranowski concurred and suggested an audit of state policies and procedures as well as local policies and procedures.

In response to a question from Deanna Sullivan about what the audits would look like, Mr. Aranowski said it would be a review of best practices, what has worked in other states, other school districts, charter schools, etc. and what hasn't. It would be an attempt to find innovative ideas that could be extrapolated for consideration by the Commission.

Ms. Mitchell added that the Commission needs to look at existing legislation, statutes, and rules that may have been on the books for a long time and haven't been effectively followed. The Commission must not act in isolation and should look to fill gaps in what already exists. Ms. Mitchell also advocated for a survey of all districts (or at least a sampling of districts because there are 859 in Illinois) to gather data on policies and procedures.

Mr. Aranowski cautioned about overloading districts with additional tasks as they are burdened with many such demands on their time. Ms. Sullivan said her position with the Illinois Association of School Boards (IASB) provides her access to districts across the state as many use IASB Policy Services.

Ms. Taylor advised that the Commission should examine large school districts across the state for exemplary practices in remediating or preventing attendance issues through the cooperative efforts of regional superintendents and the Large District Unit Association (LUDA).

Mr. Sweeney asserted that he works with 13 separate districts as part of the Boone-Winnebago Regional Office of Education, and he said there are 72 TAOEP programs throughout the state, all of which could provide the Commission with data and information.

With regard to the content of the first annual report of the Commission to the General Assembly, there was extensive discussion of the format and content. It was generally agreed that the report should focus on providing roadmaps for the five outcomes as delineated in the legislation creating the Commission. It was also acknowledged that the outcomes provide a sequential thread for deliberation and action:

- The first outcome advises standard definitions for attendance and chronic absenteeism.
- The second outcome calls for mechanisms to improve data systems to monitor absenteeism.
- The third outcome calls for mechanisms for districts and schools to report the data and account for it.
- The fourth outcome advises the utilization of the data to intervene with students and families to increase attendance.
- The fifth outcome posits the need for new initiatives in response to chronic absenteeism.

Tiffany Gholson asked about the specific needs of certain demographic groups such as those who are in the care of the Department of Children and Family Services, the homeless, and the homebound. Ms. Taylor responded that these groups plus others such as those with IEPs and 504 plans are embedded in the outcomes as attendance issues look different for every child and in every school or district.

Mr. Aranowski advised the formation of subcommittees for ongoing focus on each of the five outcomes for greater specificity. Such committees should be representative of the entire group and create outlines for future work.

Lori Fanello said she and Harold Sweeney would do a roadmap for the first outcome, standard definitions for attendance and chronic absenteeism.

IX. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

X. New Business and Open Discussion

Ms. Taylor reminded everyone that need to complete the Open Meetings Act training.

Members were also informed that they had to complete the Ethics training anew for the new year as this must be completed on an annual basis for everyone who is an appointee to an Illinois board, commission, or task force.

Ms. Taylor spoke about Attendance Works, a national group that promotes improved policy, practice, and data tracking to increase school attendance. She said a representative from this initiative will be presenting at a future Commission meeting, either in person or via virtual means.

Ms. Taylor said she is also in contact with a representative from ISBE's Multi-tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) initiative to speak with the Commission as this endeavor is aligned with Commission outcome #4.

Victoria Jackson asked about a plan for a list of sections of the School Code that pertain to attendance and truancy. Mr. Aranowski directed her to the Google docs website where pertinent rules and statutes are listed.

XI. Adjourn

Victoria Jackson moved to adjourn the meeting.

Matthew Rodriguez seconded the motion.

The motion to adjourn was approved by all present.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:39 a.m.

Attendance Commission

Meeting Agenda
February 19, 2016
10:00 a.m.

James R. Thompson Center
100 West Randolph Street
Fourteenth Floor, V-Tel Room
Chicago, Illinois 60601



Alzina Building
100 North First Street
Third Floor, V-Tel Room
Springfield, Illinois 62777

- I. Roll Call
- II. Welcome and Opening Remarks
- III. Approval of Minutes from January 25, 2016 Meeting
- IV. Attendance Works Presentation
- V. Illinois Multi-tiered Systems of Support Network Presentation
- VI. March 15 Annual Report Update
- VII. Public Comment
- VIII. New Business and Open Discussion
- IX. Adjourn

Attendance Commission*

Meeting Minutes
February 19, 2016
10:00 a.m.

James R. Thompson Center
100 West Randolph Street
Fourteenth Floor, V-Tel Room
Chicago, Illinois 60601



Alzina Building
100 North First Street
Third Floor, V-Tel Room
Springfield, Illinois 62777

I. Roll Call

The meeting was called to order at 10:04 a.m. by Chairperson Antoinette Taylor.

Jeff Aranowski (Present - Chicago)
Lori Fanello (Present - telephone)
Karen Fox (Present - Chicago)
Tiffany Gholson (Present - Chicago)
Jennifer Gill
Diane Grigsby-Jackson
Heidi Grove (Present - telephone)
Victoria Jackson
Madelyn James (Present - Chicago)
Elizabeth C. Malik (Present - Chicago)
Alexandra Mays (Present - telephone)
Melissa Mitchell (Present - Chicago)
Matthew Rodriguez
Diane Rutledge (Present – Springfield)
Deanna Sullivan (Present - Springfield)
Harold Sweeney (Present - telephone)
Antoinette Taylor (Present - Chicago)
Scott Wakeley (Present - telephone)
Crysta Weitekamp (Present - telephone)

II. Welcome and Opening Remarks

III. Approval of Minutes from January 25, 2016 Meeting

A motion to approve the minutes was made and seconded. No one was opposed.

IV. Attendance Works Presentation

**Please note that as of the date that this document was printed, the Attendance Commission had not yet formally approved these minutes from the February 19th meeting. However, for purposes of openness, the draft minutes have been included in this publication. When approved, the meeting minutes will appear on the Commission's website at www.isbe.net/ac.*

Attendance Commission*

Meeting Minutes
February 19, 2016
10:00 a.m.

James R. Thompson Center
100 West Randolph Street
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Alzina Building
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Cecelia Leong, Associate Director of Programs, and Sue Fothergill, Associate Director of Policy, for Attendance Works were present via conference call to address the commission. They explained that Attendance Works is a national and state initiative that promotes awareness of the important role that school attendance plays in achieving academic success starting with pre-school. Since their founding in 2010, they have offered practitioners and policy makers resources and solutions to address attendance problems; there have been over a million hits on their website, and users have downloaded thousands of their free data toolkits.

The initiative has three focus areas to improve student attendance:

- Build public awareness and political will
- Foster state campaigns
- Encourage local practice

The group is currently gearing up its 'Superintendents Call to Action' webinar on April 12, 2016, at 1:00 p.m., to mobilize district superintendents to prioritize attendance with a heightened emphasis on data collection and analysis. Planning is also underway for the organization's Attendance Awareness Month in September 2016, and Attendance Works has welcomed several national partners to the effort including the Healthy Schools Campaign which has a representative serving on the Attendance Commission. Last year over 400 communities and districts participated in Attendance Awareness Month, and Illinois had the third highest level of participation in the country.

Ms. Leong and Ms. Fothergill explained they had been asked to provide frameworks and strategies to solve attendance problems, and they explained they promote the utilization of multiple measures of attendance.

Average Daily Attendance

For example, in Illinois the Average Daily Attendance (ADA) figure is used to calculate how money is allocated; however, the ADA represents only the best three months of attendance. This calculation overstates the actual number of students who are in school and can mask chronic absence. The Attendance Works speakers demonstrated with a slide showing six schools in Oakland, California in a district with an ADA of 95%. Despite the high district ADA, the six schools had chronic absence rates that varied from 7-16%. The same slide depicted six schools in New York City where the ADA is 90%; however, these six schools had chronic absence rates of 20-26%. The speakers related that while funding tied to attendance in other places can result in over-counts, district policies on what constitutes an attendance day impact accurate data collection as was demonstrated with the example of a middle school in California where a student's presence in school for one period of the school day counts as a full attendance day.

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Attendance Commission*

Meeting Minutes
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Truancy data is very important but the calculation varies by state. In Illinois, if a student is absent for any portion of the school day without permission, that student is truant. In Maryland, the truancy standard is unexcused absences that exceed 20% of days in a school year. In California, you are truant if you are missing for three days without an excuse.

Chronic Absence Effects

Chronic absence, however, is the measure that matters most at Attendance Works because this data can inform who is at greatest risk for academic failure. Truancy rarely occurs in the primary grades as a child who is absent from school will have a note excusing the absence. A pattern of these absences, however, has been shown to affect future achievement and create a pattern of behavior that predicts future absences. Tracking student attendance is very important to take note of which children are falling off-track. It is easy for teachers and parents not to notice a pattern of two absences a month, especially if the absences are all excused. The calculation for chronic absence varies around the country but ranges generally from 5-10% of the total school year days. The Office of Civil Rights within the U. S. Department of Education currently defines chronic absence as missing fifteen days.

Patterns of absence, excused or unexcused, have a cumulative effect on learning. When children miss school, they miss exposure to a language-rich environment, an essential component of the school experience for low-income children. They do not reap the benefit of time spent on task in a class and miss valuable class instruction. Regular school attendance puts children on track for success and predicts engagement in learning which can lead to college enrollment through a pattern of persistence. Such a result is possible for all children if schools, families, and communities collaborate on the importance of school attendance.

Barriers to Attendance

Chronic absence is solvable, especially if data is used to help unpack contributing factors, according to Robert Balfanz of Johns Hopkins University. The contributing factors don't occur at the same rate in every community. Districts have to mine the data to learn why chronic absence occurs in their communities and within the families of their enrolled students.

In many communities, there are misunderstandings about school attendance, like whether or not it is important for a young child to attend school every day. Most families say they want their children to go on to college, to successful careers, but they are in denial about the importance of school attendance during the formative years. Pre-kindergarten and kindergarten lay the foundation for future grade levels, and attendance matters greatly. Research has shown that children who are chronically absent in kindergarten, even if their attendance improves as they

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Attendance Commission*

Meeting Minutes
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Springfield, Illinois 62777

move through the succeeding grade levels, have lower rates of achievement. Children are building social and academic skills as well as lifelong habits in pre-kindergarten and kindergarten. Parents understand how much is missed if a child misses four days of school, but do not understand how much is missed by missing two days here and two days there. Having conversations with parents, school psychologists, and counselors about the reasons for absence can help a school unpack its attendance data. What are the barriers? Are there issues around school climate? Are there aversions, like bullies or a parent's own bad school experiences? You have to break it down into smaller problems that are manageable and solvable.

Other common barriers to regular school attendance, as cited by the Attendance Works presenters, included chronic health problems, expectations within families for older siblings to care for younger ones, and unmet basic needs such as transportation, housing, food, and clothing.

Tiered Interventions

A public health pyramid was utilized by the presenters to demonstrate the utility of providing tiered interventions to remedy school attendance issues.

- Tier 1 - All students
 - Recognize good and improved attendance
 - Educate and engage students and families, set high expectations
 - Monitor attendance data – dig into data for kids at risk, need data at their fingertips, rewarding just perfect attendance does not support a schoolwide strategy, better to set goals and reward that success
 - Clarify attendance expectations and goals - foundational
 - Establish positive and engaging school climate – very important to make kids feel good
 - Address common barriers to getting to school – busing, dangerous neighborhoods; address the barrier with a school strategy rather than a one on one
- Tier 2 - Students exhibiting chronic absence missing 10%
 - Proactive text messaging combined with response to each absence
 - Provide personalized early outreach
 - Meet with student/family to develop plan; adjust as needed if not working.
 - Offer attendance mentor/buddy
- Tier 3 - Students who missed 20% or more of the prior school year (severe chronic absence) or have a history of truancy.
 - Intensive case management with coordination of public agency and legal response as needed

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Attendance Commission*

Meeting Minutes
February 19, 2016
10:00 a.m.

James R. Thompson Center
100 West Randolph Street
Fourteenth Floor, V-Tel Room
Chicago, Illinois 60601



Alzina Building
100 North First Street
Third Floor, V-Tel Room
Springfield, Illinois 62777

Tier one interventions for the entire school community benefit all students as they foster sustainability. Interventions on the other two tiers drive the change that needs to occur. Of paramount importance in crafting solutions to chronic absenteeism, however, is the responsibility of district and school administrators to focus on positive engagement by developing and encouraging caring relationships, effective messaging, and a positive school climate to motivate daily attendance

Key Ingredients for Change and Sustainability

The presenters identified key ingredients that are essential to systems change and sustainability:

- **Capacity Building** expands ability to work together to interpret data, engage in problem solving, and adopt best practices
- **Strategic Partnerships** between district and community partners address specific attendance barriers and mobilize support for all ingredients
- **Shared Accountability** ensures chronic absence is monitored and reinforced by policy, operating with knowledge
- **Actionable Data** needs to be taken in multiple levels. Must be accurate, timely, and virtually reported. You cannot wait for the end of the school year to monitor trends over time to see if things are getting better or worse.
- **Positive Engagement:** Uses caring relationships, effective messaging, and a positive school climate to motivate daily attendance

Actionable Data

Actionable data is accurate, accessible, and regularly reported, and can be used to monitor at the school level. Administrators must ensure everyone understands the data in order to determine attendance barriers for both individual students and the community at large. School level multi-disciplinary teams should be formed to address barriers and mobilize support for actions. One of the most important things you can do with data is to look for disproportionality to identify issues with particular subgroups. Students with disabilities are among the groups with the highest rate of absenteeism. Absence rates tend to spike in some communities for ninth graders as they transition to high school. A ninth grade bridge program is necessary to stem this tide.

How can chronic absence and suspension data be used?

- To determine the size and scope of the issue
- To identify the right points for interventions

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-
- To see trends over time
 - To identify positive outliers and best practices
 - To find schools needing greater support
 - To identify student sub-groups disproportionately affected
 - To allocate scarce resources more efficiently

The Attendance Works presenters emphasized the importance of looking for positive outliers and best practices as well as school principals and leaders who are making a difference in the lives of children. When districts face common challenges, administrators can work with peers for solutions and to share practices that have proven to be successful. Peer-to-peer learning can also create excitement around shared challenges and practices. Peers can share inspiration and knowledge at the local level and build training around proven solutions.

Federal Initiatives

The Office of Civil Rights within the U.S. Department of Education plans to release a first-ever national chronic absenteeism data report in Spring 2016.

The *Every Student, Every Day* campaign is a shared initiative sponsored by the following federal agencies: Department of Education, Department of Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, and the Department of Justice. These agencies are shining a spotlight on the problem of chronic absence and have offered ideas around their particular areas of operation in a toolkit that includes a “Dear Colleague” letter with guidance for states, schools, and local communities. There will be an *Every Student, Every Day* virtual summit on November 12, 2016.

Tied into the *Every Student, Every Day* campaign is the My Brother’s Keeper (MBK) Success Mentors Initiative, sponsored by the U. S. Department of Education, the Ad Council, and the Mott Foundation which began in January 2016.

A national chronic absenteeism summit will be held in June 2016.

Chronic absence is included in the recently passed *Every Student Succeeds Act* and is a required reporting metric for schools. Chronic absence could be adopted by states as an additional metric for measuring school performance.

Comments

Alex Mays was asked to comment on the Healthy Schools Campaign’s partnership with Attendance Works and Title IV which she said previously was structured as a series of grant programs for physical education programs, anti-bullying efforts, and school safety issues. Schools

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are asked to look at their data and decide what their greatest student needs are and how to address them and Title IV funding could be used to address those needs. Ms. Mays said the connection between chronic absence and chronic health problems is quite strong and one of the health issues that impacts attendance very heavily is asthma.

Madelyn James asked about geo-mapping of communities and the presenters responded that they had engaged in efforts to determine areas of need in certain communities. A fairly common problem they found was the difficulty some rural residents had with transportation to and from school. Another uncovered problem was around the issue of school uniforms and the effect stringent policies had on school attendance. Ms. James also referred to a recent Illinois Department of Public Health report and its assessment/mapping of health concerns affecting children across the state.

V. Illinois Multi-tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) Network Presentation

The presenters were Michele Carmichael from the Illinois State Board of Education (Behavioral Health Supports) and Julie West, Co-coordinator of the Illinois MTSS Network Statewide Program. Also in attendance was Patricia Brown, also Co-coordinator of the Illinois MTSS Network Statewide Program.

Ms. Carmichael drew a parallel to Attendance Works and their efforts to focus on attendance through a process to develop a continuous improvement plan based on data collection, analysis and interpretation of data, interventions, and progress-monitoring.

She provided a historical perspective on the evolution of the Illinois State Board of Education's attempts to provide districts across the state with the means to address barriers to student achievement. ISBE took a look at various efforts to resolve issues related to discipline, effects of disabilities on academic achievement, reading and literacy development, English language learning difficulties, and a lack of parent/family engagement, among other student-centered issues, and arrived at the conclusion that many of these problems could be tackled in the same way.

Many of the existing programs relied on tiered interventions methodologies, but they were operating in siloes and had affiliations with multiple advocacy groups. The problem was compounded by a lack of sustainability because the focus of each effort was not on the process itself.

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Ms. Carmichael said the people involved discovered they needed to train on the system first and then show how each practice/process would be able to be maintained and sustained. They implemented a model of training, coaching, and technical assistance to be used statewide that was an integration of the content-specific pieces from the previous separate models; this early merger operated initially as the Illinois Statewide Technical Assistance Center. This amalgam of a variety of programs that utilized the tiered response strategy eventually lead to the creation of the Illinois Multi-tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) Network, a framework for continuous improvement that is systemic, prevention-focused, and data-informed, providing a coherent continuum of supports responsive to meet the needs of all learners.

Sustainability was ensured through strategic partnering with school districts to coach staff in MTSS implementation and with the Illinois Institutes of Higher Education to insert MTSS into educator preparation programs at nine universities. Another component is the MTSS Network's effort to encourage parent/family engagement awareness of and involvement in the process. An MTSS evaluation component, a two-pronged approach to evaluate and provide tools, enhances the MTSS Network's efforts to sustain. Finally, a statewide network of coordinators and coaches engage in training, team-building, and technical assistance.

The MTSS Network takes a systemic approach and builds district capacity by focusing on organizational supports to build internal capacity and tailor school level models. Ms. Carmichael explained that a district plan for MTSS can be adapted for whatever need is demonstrated by the data: behaviors, attendance, achievement, etc. Districts can use their data to identify students who are struggling, determine the root cause for the struggle, and intervene early.

The district must find the funding, develop policy, get stakeholder support, and achieve visibility for whatever the issue or need is. The district must focus then on developing capacity at the building level through professional development, coaching, and evaluation. Ms. Carmichael referred to Attendance Works' emphasis on peer learning and supports since the MTSS network model utilizes teacher leaders who diffuse the process throughout their buildings.

The continuum of supports to be provided through an MTSS model for school attendance would begin with an initial layer of universal supports to entire student bodies. Progress-monitoring will reveal students who continue to struggle with regular school attendance. Layers of supports would continue as the number of struggling students dwindles from some to a few. Supports at this level will involve families, analyses of physical and mental health, the appointment of an adult mentor in a school community, and any other intervening strategy that can remedy students' nonattendance issues.

VI. March 15 Annual Report Update

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Ms. Taylor informed the commission that HB 4343, which provides an extension of the commission's annual report due date from December 15, 2015 to March 15, 2016, is currently with the Rules Committee.

A draft copy of the annual report will be sent to members by the commission administrator on February 26 and any comments, changes, or edits should be submitted by March 1.

VII. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

VIII. New Business and Open Discussion

Ms. Taylor issued a reminder to members that the first public hearing conducted by the Attendance Commission will take place at the ICEARY Annual Conference on March 3, 2016, at the Bloomington-Normal Marriott Hotel and Conference Center.

IX. Adjourn

Madelyn James moved to adjourn, and the motion was seconded by Karen Fox at 12:07 p.m.

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Attendance Commission
Notice of Public Hearing

Attendance Commission: Notice of Public Hearing

Date: March 3, 2016

Time: 3:30 p.m.

Host: Illinois Coalition for Educating At-Risk Youth

Venue: Marriott Bloomington-Normal Conference Center
Redbird Rooms C and D
201 Broadway Avenue
Normal, Illinois 61761

Agenda:

- I. Welcome and Opening Remarks
- II. Invitation for Attendees to Address the Commission/Public Comment
- III. Closing Remarks and Next Steps
- IV. Adjourn

About the Attendance Commission

Pursuant to P.A. 99-432, the Attendance Commission is created to study chronic absenteeism in this State and make recommendations for strategies to prevent chronic absenteeism. The Commission shall have the following duties:

1. Identify strategies, mechanisms, and approaches to help parents, educators, principals, superintendents, and the State Board of Education address and prevent chronic absenteeism and shall recommend to the General Assembly and State Board of Education:
 - a) a standard for attendance and chronic absenteeism, defining attendance as a calculation of standard clock hours in a day that equal a full day based on instructional minutes for both a half day and a full day per learning environment;
 - b) mechanisms to improve data systems to monitor and track chronic absenteeism across this State in a way that identifies trends from prekindergarten through grade 12 and allows the identification of students who need individualized chronic absenteeism prevention plans;
 - c) mechanisms for reporting and accountability for schools and districts across this State, including creating multiple measure indexes for reporting;
 - d) best practices for utilizing attendance and chronic absenteeism data to create multi-tiered systems of support and prevention that will result in students being ready for college and career; and
 - e) new initiatives and responses to ongoing challenges presented by chronic absenteeism.
2. Hold hearings on a periodic basis to receive testimony from the public regarding attendance;
3. Submit an annual report to the General Assembly and the State Board of Education no later than December 15 of each year through December 15, 2020.

Attendance Commission

Meeting Agenda

March 10, 2016

10:00 a.m.

James R. Thompson Center
100 West Randolph Street
Fourteenth Floor, V-Tel Room
Chicago, Illinois 60601



Alzina Building
100 North First Street
Third Floor, V-Tel Room
Springfield, Illinois 62777

-
- I. Roll Call

 - II. Welcome and Opening Remarks

 - III. Approval of Minutes from February 19, 2016 Meeting

 - IV. Public Hearing Debrief

 - V. Final Report Update

 - VI. Discussion of the Possible Public Relations Campaign

 - VII. Discussion of Attendance Works Survey

 - VIII. Public Comment

 - IX. New Business and Open Discussion

 - X. Adjourn

Commission members seeking to participate by telephone may do so by dialing 1-888-494-4032 and entering the following access code: 3 6 3 3 7 5 2 7 0 9

APPENDIX D: HOUSE BILL 4343

Bill Status of HB4343 99th General Assembly

[Full Text](#) [Votes](#) [View All Actions](#) [Printer-Friendly Version](#)

Short Description: SCH CD-ATTENDANCE COMMISSION

House Sponsors

Rep. [Linda Chapa LaVia](#)

Last Action

| Date | Chamber | Action |
|-----------|---------|---|
| 12/2/2015 | House | Referred to Rules Committee |

Statutes Amended In Order of Appearance

105 ILCS 5/2-3.164

Synopsis As Introduced

Amends the School Code. Provides that the Attendance Commission's initial report to the General Assembly and the State Board of Education must be submitted no later than March 15, 2016 (instead of December 15, 2015). Effective immediately.

Actions

| Date | Chamber | Action |
|------------|---------|--|
| 11/24/2015 | House | Filed with the Clerk by Rep. Linda Chapa LaVia |
| 12/2/2015 | House | First Reading |
| 12/2/2015 | House | Referred to Rules Committee |

HB4343



99TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY

State of Illinois

2015 and 2016

HB4343

by Rep. Linda Chapa LaVia

SYNOPSIS AS INTRODUCED:

105 ILCS 5/2-3.164

Amends the School Code. Provides that the Attendance Commission's initial report to the General Assembly and the State Board of Education must be submitted no later than March 15, 2016 (instead of December 15, 2015). Effective immediately.

LRB099 15482 NHT 39769 b

A BILL FOR

1 AN ACT concerning education.

2 **Be it enacted by the People of the State of Illinois,**
3 **represented in the General Assembly:**

4 Section 5. The School Code is amended by renumbering and
5 changing Section 2-3.163 as added by Public Act 99-432 as
6 follows:

7 (105 ILCS 5/2-3.164)

8 (Section scheduled to be repealed on December 16, 2020)

9 Sec. 2-3.164 ~~2-3.163~~. Attendance Commission.

10 (a) The Attendance Commission is created within the State
11 Board of Education to study the issue of chronic absenteeism in
12 this State and make recommendations for strategies to prevent
13 chronic absenteeism. The Commission shall consist of all of the
14 following members:

15 (1) The Director of the Department of Children and
16 Family Services or his or her designee.

17 (2) The Chairperson of the State Board of Education or
18 his or her designee.

19 (3) The Chairperson of the Board of Higher Education or
20 his or her designee.

21 (4) The Secretary of the Department of Human Services
22 or his or her designee.

23 (5) The Director of the Department of Public Health or

1 his or her designee.

2 (6) The Chairperson of the Illinois Community College
3 Board or his or her designee.

4 (7) The Chairperson of the State Charter School
5 Commission or his or her designee.

6 (8) An individual that deals with children's
7 disabilities, impairments, and social emotional issues,
8 appointed by the State Superintendent of Education.

9 (9) One member from each of the following
10 organizations, appointed by the State Superintendent of
11 Education:

12 (A) A non-profit organization that advocates for
13 students in temporary living situations.

14 (B) An Illinois-focused, non-profit organization
15 that advocates for the well-being of all children and
16 families in this State.

17 (C) An Illinois non-profit, anti-crime
18 organization of law enforcement that researches and
19 recommends early learning and youth development
20 strategies to reduce crime.

21 (D) An Illinois non-profit organization that
22 conducts community-organizing around family issues.

23 (E) A statewide professional teachers'
24 organization.

25 (F) A different statewide professional teachers'
26 organization.

1 (G) A professional teachers' organization in a
2 city having a population exceeding 500,000.

3 (H) An association representing school
4 administrators.

5 (I) An association representing school board
6 members.

7 (J) An association representing school principals.

8 (K) An association representing regional
9 superintendents of schools.

10 (L) An association representing parents.

11 (M) An association representing high school
12 districts.

13 (N) An association representing large unit
14 districts.

15 (O) An organization that advocates for healthier
16 school environments in Illinois.

17 (P) An organization that advocates for the health
18 and safety of Illinois youth and families by providing
19 capacity building services.

20 (Q) A statewide association of local philanthropic
21 organizations that advocates for effective
22 educational, health, and human service policies to
23 improve this State's communities.

24 (R) A statewide organization that advocates for
25 partnerships among schools, families, and the
26 community that provide access to support and remove

1 barriers to learning and development, using schools as
2 hubs.

3 (S) An organization representing statewide
4 programs actively involved in truancy intervention.

5 Attendance Commission members shall serve without
6 compensation but shall be reimbursed for their travel expenses
7 from appropriations to the State Board of Education available
8 for that purpose and subject to the rules of the appropriate
9 travel control board.

10 (b) The Attendance Commission shall meet initially at the
11 call of the State Superintendent of Education. The members
12 shall elect a chairperson at their initial meeting. Thereafter,
13 the Attendance Commission shall meet at the call of the
14 chairperson. The Attendance Commission shall hold hearings on a
15 periodic basis to receive testimony from the public regarding
16 attendance.

17 (c) The Attendance Commission shall identify strategies,
18 mechanisms, and approaches to help parents, educators,
19 principals, superintendents, and the State Board of Education
20 address and prevent chronic absenteeism and shall recommend to
21 the General Assembly and State Board of Education:

22 (1) a standard for attendance and chronic absenteeism,
23 defining attendance as a calculation of standard clock
24 hours in a day that equal a full day based on instructional
25 minutes for both a half day and a full day per learning
26 environment;

1 (2) mechanisms to improve data systems to monitor and
2 track chronic absenteeism across this State in a way that
3 identifies trends from prekindergarten through grade 12
4 and allows the identification of students who need
5 individualized chronic absenteeism prevention plans;

6 (3) mechanisms for reporting and accountability for
7 schools and districts across this State, including
8 creating multiple measure indexes for reporting;

9 (4) best practices for utilizing attendance and
10 chronic absenteeism data to create multi-tiered systems of
11 support and prevention that will result in students being
12 ready for college and career; and

13 (5) new initiatives and responses to ongoing
14 challenges presented by chronic absenteeism.

15 (d) The State Board of Education shall provide
16 administrative support to the Commission. The Attendance
17 Commission shall submit an initial report to the General
18 Assembly and the State Board of Education no later than March
19 15, 2016. The Attendance Commission shall submit an annual
20 report to the General Assembly and the State Board of Education
21 no later than December 15, 2016 and each December 15 thereafter
22 ~~of each year.~~

23 (e) The Attendance Commission is abolished and this Section
24 is repealed on December 16, 2020.

25 (Source: P.A. 99-432, eff. 8-21-15; revised 10-5-15.)

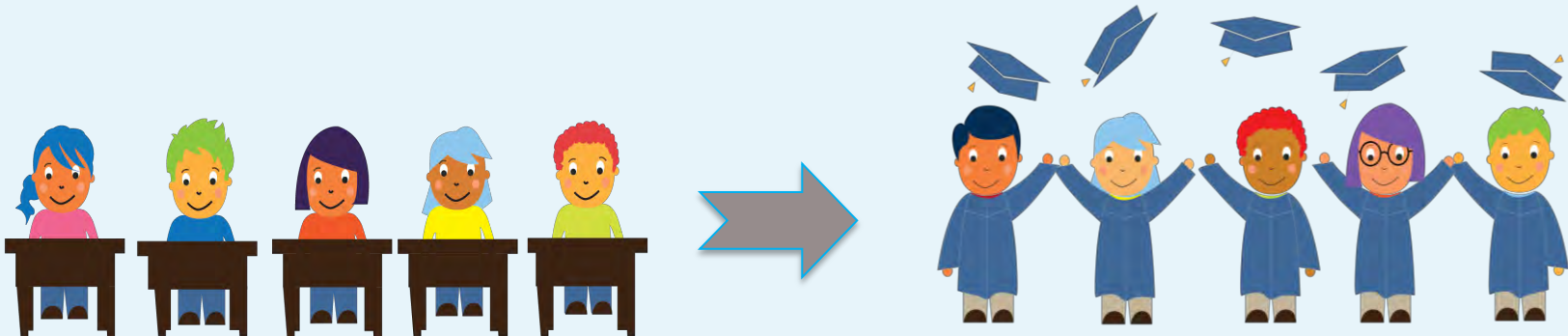
26 Section 99. Effective date. This Act takes effect upon

1 becoming law.

APPENDIX E: ATTENDANCE WORKS PRESENTATION

Improving Attendance and Reducing Chronic Absence in Illinois

Why Does It Matter? What Can We Do?



The Attendance Works Team



Cecelia Leong
Associate Director of Programs



Sue Fothergill
Associate Director of Policy



Attendance Works

Attendance Works is a national and state initiative that promotes awareness of the important role that school attendance plays in achieving academic success starting with pre-school. We are an implementation partner for attendance with the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading.

Our three focus areas to improve student attendance are:

- Build public awareness and political will
- Foster state campaigns
- Encourage local practice

www.attendanceworks.org



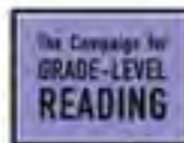
The Go-To Resource on Attendance

- Since our founding in 2010, nearly a million hits on the Attendance Works website
- Users have downloaded free toolkits including: Teaching Attendance, Leading Attendance, Bringing Attendance Home and Count Us In
- Users in all 50 states registered for our free data tools



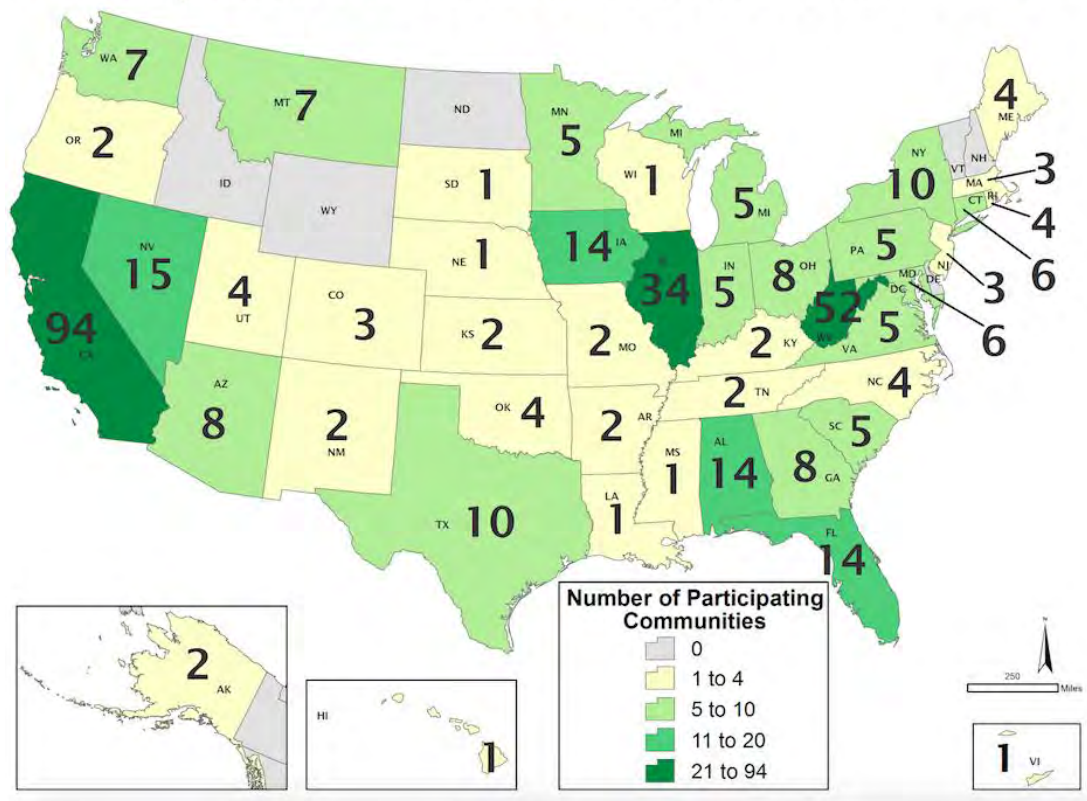


Attendance Awareness Month and Nationwide Campaign 2015



Who participated?

Participation in Attendance Awareness Month



- 404 schools & communities pinned on the Attendance Action Map.
- California, West Va. & Illinois dominated



The Superintendents Call to Action

**Prioritize
Attendance**

**Mobilize
the
Community**

**Drive With
Data**

*To sign-up for the Call to Action, or to learn more, please visit:
www.attendanceworks.org/superintendents-call-to-action*



Attendance Awareness 2016

Save the Date!

April 12, 2016 at 1 Central Time

**This webinar launch will include speakers
from: Attendance Works**

US Department of Education

California Attorney General's Office

Harvard University

Parent Teacher Home Visit Project



Frameworks and Strategies for Reducing Chronic Absence



We promote the utilization of multiple measures of attendance

Average Daily Attendance

- **How many students show up to school every day?** The % of enrolled students who attend school each day. It is used in Illinois for allocating funding.

Truancy

- **Who is missing school without permission?** Typically refers only to unexcused absences. Each state has the authority to define what is truancy and when does it trigger legal intervention.

Chronic Absence

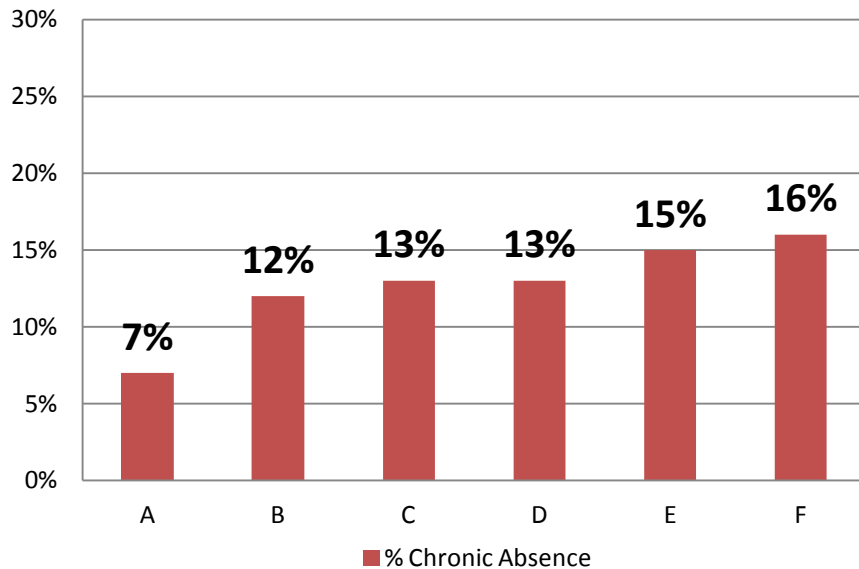
- **Who is missing so much school they are academically at risk?** Broadly means missing too much school for any reason -- excused, unexcused, etc. Researchers commonly define it as missing 10% of school. ***OCR currently defines it as missing 15 days and will be releasing a report in Spring 2016. Chronic absence is a required reporting metric in ESSA.***



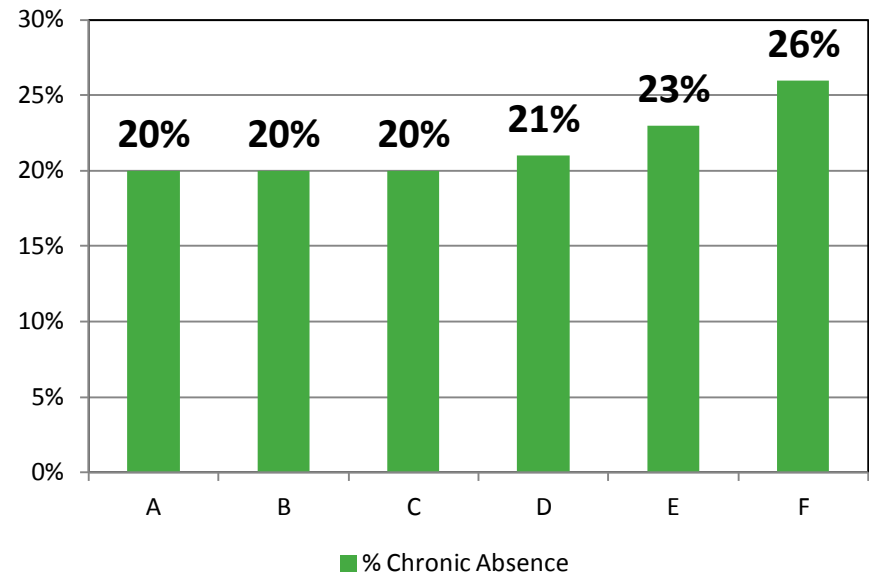
High Levels of Average Daily Attendance (ADA) Can Mask Chronic Absence

90% and even 95% \neq A

Chronic Absence For 6 Elementary Schools in Oakland, CA with 95% ADA in 2012



Chronic Absence for 6 Schools in New York City with 90% ADA in 2011-12

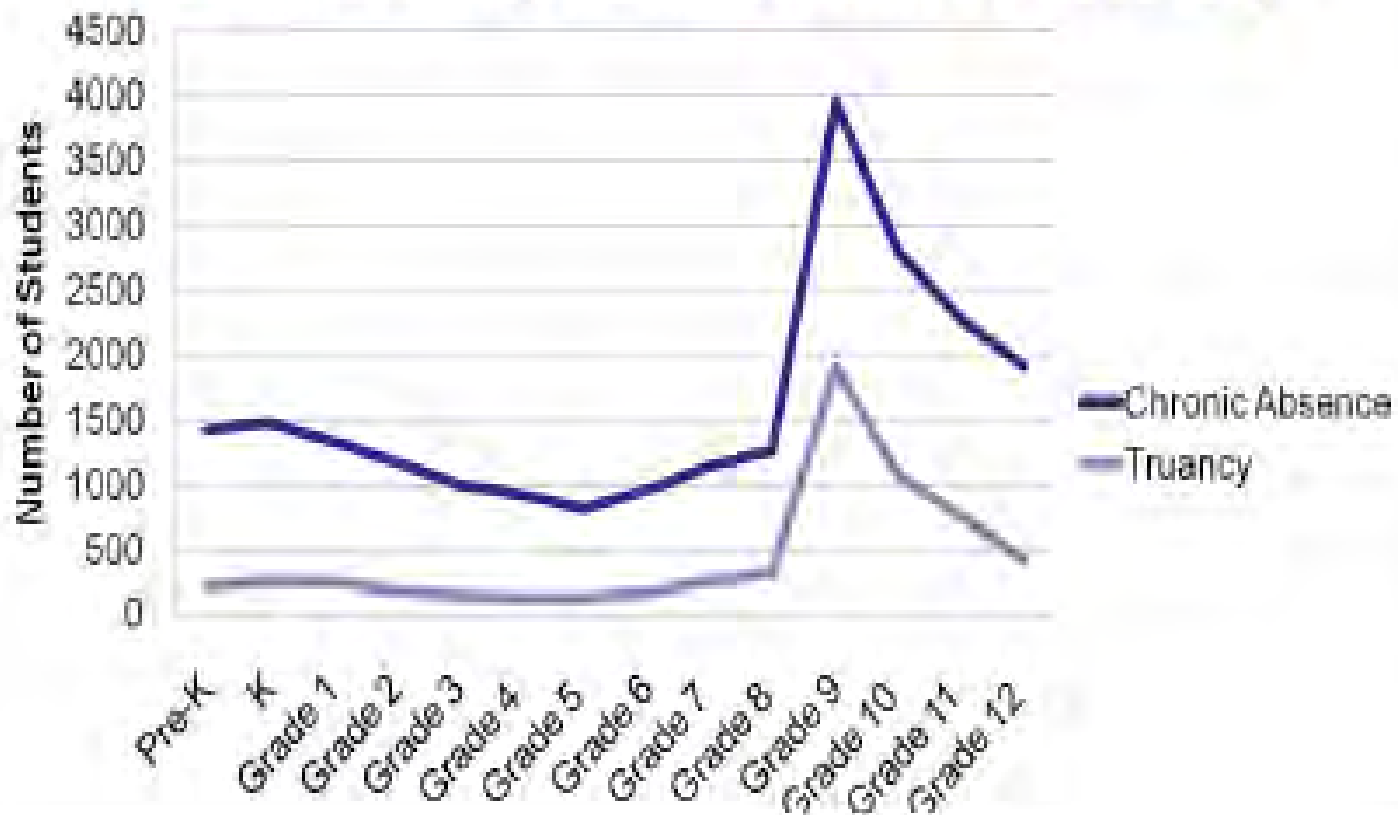


98% ADA = little chronic absence
95% ADA = don't know
93% ADA = significant chronic absence

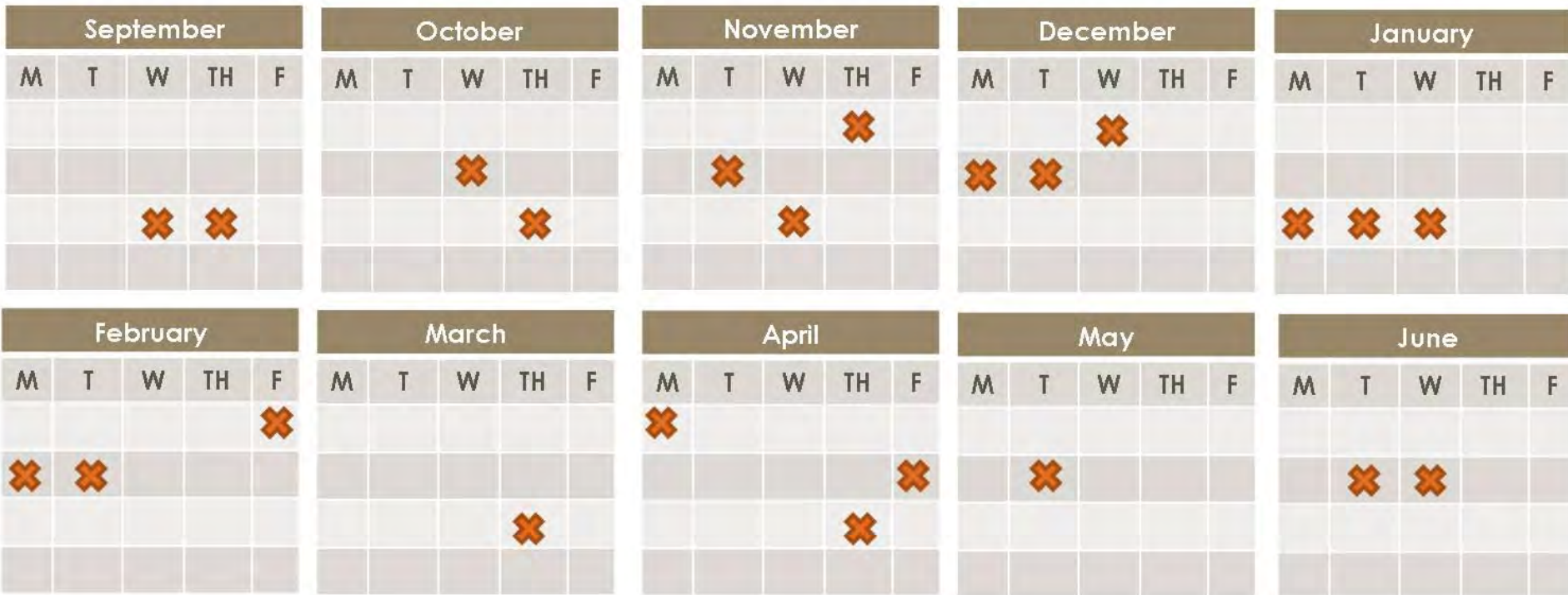


Truancy (unexcused absences) can underestimate chronic absence

Chronic absence vs Truancy
(Baltimore City Public Schools SY 2009-10)



Why We May Not Notice Chronic Absence



Absences Add Up

Chronic Absence = 18 days of absence = 2 days a month



Improving Attendance Matters Because It Reflects:

Exposure to language: Starting in Pre-K, attendance equals exposure to language-rich environments especially for low-income children.

Time on Task in Class: Students only benefit from classroom instruction if they are in class.

On Track for Success: Chronic absence is a proven early warning sign that a student is behind in reading by 3rd grade, failing courses middle and high school, and likely to drop-out.

College Readiness: Attendance patterns predicts college enrollment and persistence.

Engagement : Attendance reflects engagement in learning.

Effective Practice: Schools, communities and families can improve attendance when they work together.

(For research, see: <http://www.attendanceworks.org/research/>)



Chronic absence is solvable, especially if data is used to help unpack contributing factors

Myths

Absences are only a problem if they are unexcused

OK to miss a day here or there

Attendance only matters in later grades

PreK and K are seen as day care, not learning

Barriers

Chronic disease (asthma) or lack of health/dental care

Caring for siblings or other family members

Unmet basic needs: transp., housing, food clothes, etc.

Trauma

No safe path to school

High suspension rates

Aversion

Academic struggles

Being teased or bullied

Poor school climate, disproportionate school discipline, or unsafe school

Parents had negative school experience

Disengagement

Lack of engaging and relevant instruction

No meaningful relationships with adults in school

More exciting to be with peers out of school vs. in school



A Tiered Approach is Essential to Improving Attendance to Drive Student Success

TIER 3 Students who missed 20% or more of the prior school year (severe chronic absence) or have a history of truancy.

- Intensive case management with coordination of public agency and legal response as needed

High
Cost

TIER 2 Students exhibiting chronic absence (missing 10%).

- Proactive text messaging combined with response to each absence
- Provide personalized early outreach
- Meet with student/family to develop plan; adjust as needed if not working.
- Offer attendance Mentor/Buddy

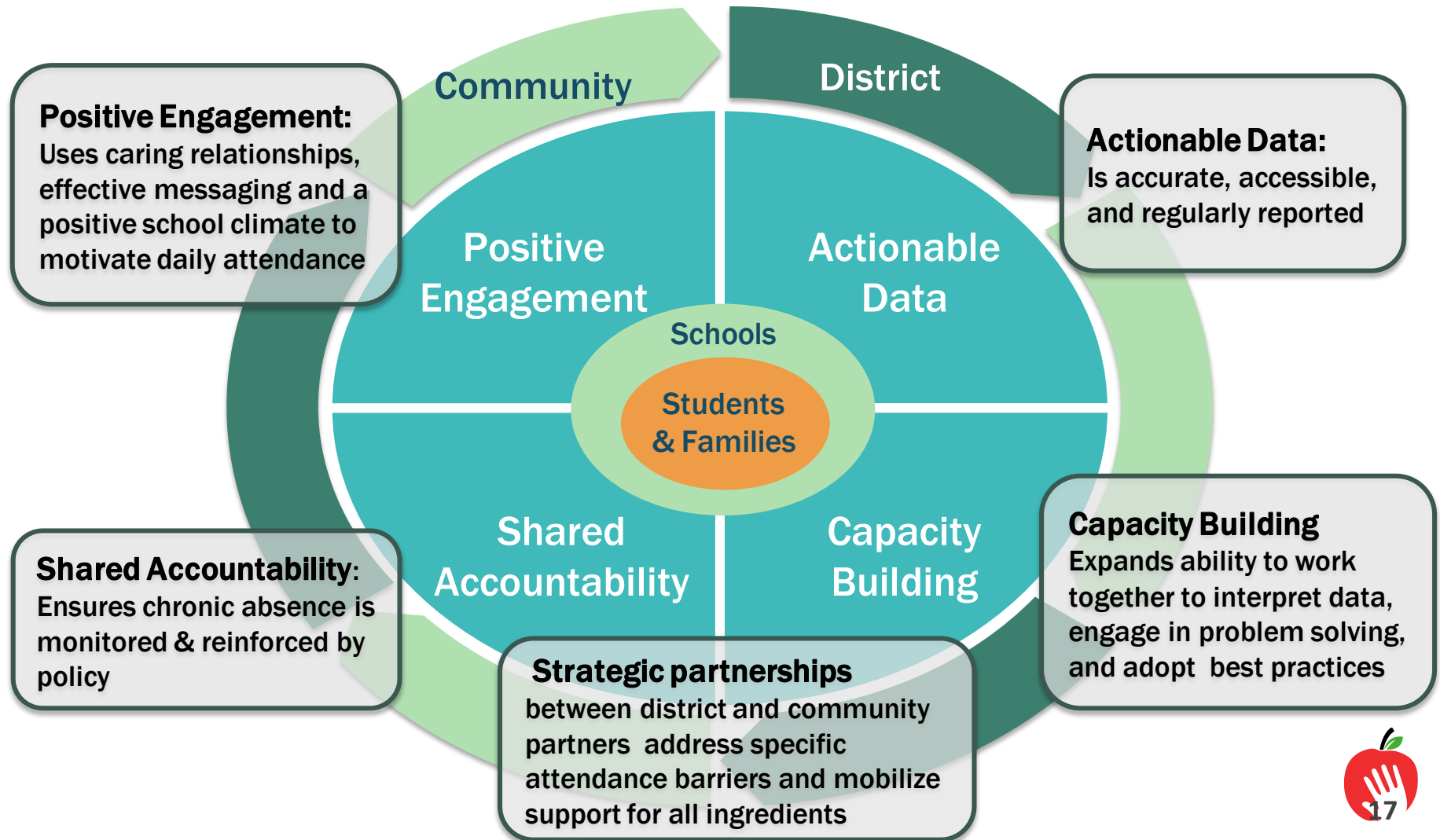
TIER 1
All students

- Recognize good and improved attendance
- Educate & engage students and families
 - Monitor attendance data
- Clarify attendance expectations and goals
- Establish positive and engaging school climate
- Address common barriers to getting to school

Low
Cost



These key ingredients are essential to systems change and sustainability.



What is Actionable Data?

For decision-makers to use data, the data must be:

- Accurate
- Accessible
- Timely
- Regularly reported



How Can Chronic Absence and Suspension Data Be Used?

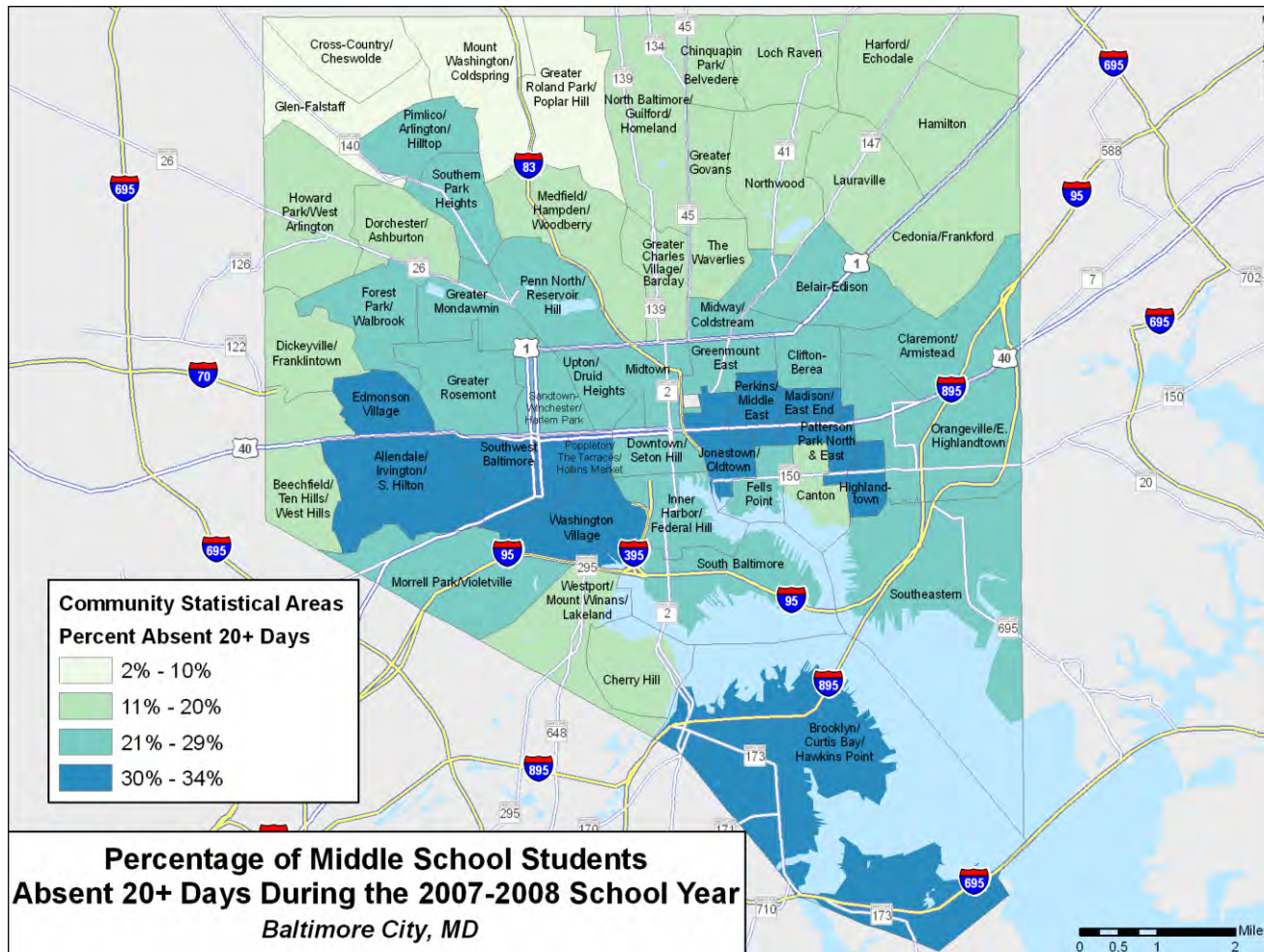
- To determine the size and scope of the issue
- To identify the right points for interventions
- To see trends over time
- To identify positive outliers and best practices
- To find schools needing greater support
- To identify student sub-groups disproportionately affected
- To allocate scarce resources more efficiently



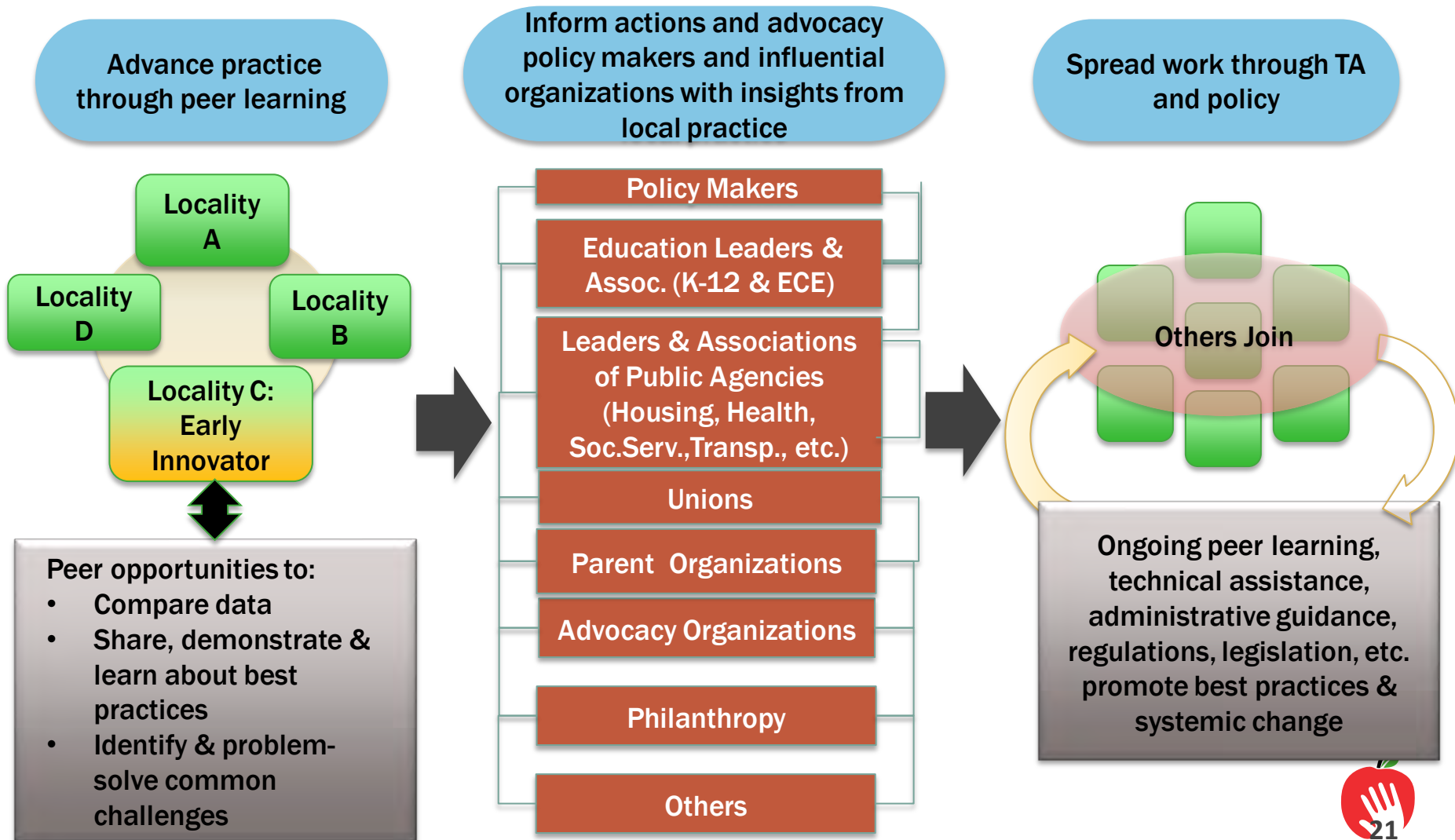
How Can Chronic Absence Data Be Used?

To See Where It Is Concentrated by School or Zip Code.

Where are students with high levels of absences concentrated?



Proposed Pathway for Change: Cultivating peer learning to inform broader policy change and practice



Opportunities Offered by Changing National Policy



Every Student, Every Day

Resource Package

The federal resource package for ***Every Student, Every Day*** includes:

- “Dear Colleague” letter with guidance for states, schools, and local communities
- ***Every Student, Every Day*** community toolkit
- ***Every Student, Every Day*** Virtual Summit on Nov. 12
- National awareness campaign sponsored by ED, the Ad Council, and the Mott Foundation, beginning in January 2016
- National Success Mentor initiative for districts
- Civil Rights Data Collection release of first-ever national chronic absenteeism data in Spring 2016
- National chronic absenteeism summit in June 2016
- ED.gov webpage on ***Every Student, Every Day***:
<http://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/chronicabsenteeism/index.html>

Opportunities created by ESSA

- Chronic absence included in Every Student Succeeds Act and is a required reporting metric for schools
- Title II funds can be used for professional development on chronic absence
- Chronic absence could be adopted by states as an additional metric for measuring school performance
- Title IV requires health needs assessments



Office of Civil Rights

First National Report of Chronic Absence

Section IV: Chronic Student Absenteeism

10. Chronic Student Absenteeism NAEP Form 2013-38 & 2015-46

Schools and justice facilities, grades K-12, UG

- A chronically absent student is a student who is absent 15 or more school days during the school year. A student is absent if he or she is not physically on school grounds and is not participating in instruction or instruction-related activities at an approved off-grounds location for the school day. Chronically absent students include students who are absent for any reason (e.g., illness, suspension, the need to care for a family member), regardless of whether absences are excused or unexcused.

Instructions

- Enter the number of chronically absent students. Include students in grades K-12, and comparable ungraded levels.

| Data Element | Hispanic or Latino of any race | American Indian or Alaska Native | Asian | Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander | Black or African American | White | Two or more races | Total | LEP | Students with Disabilities (Section 504 Only) | Students with Disabilities (IDEA) |
|--|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|-------|---|---------------------------|-------|-------------------|-------|-----|---|-----------------------------------|
| Students absent 15 or more school days during school year: | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Male | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Female | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Total | | | | | | | | | | | |

Data from the CRDC are disaggregated by race/ethnicity, gender, limited English proficiency and disability.



Questions?



**APPENDIX F: ILLINOIS NETWORK OF MULTI-TIERED
SYSTEMS OF SUPPORT NETWORK PRESENTATION**



Illinois MTSS Network

Attendance Commission February 19, 2016

Presented by:

Michele Carmichael

ISBE

*Principal Consultant-Behavioral Health
Supports*

Julie West

Roberta Brown

IL MTSS-N

Statewide Program Co-Coordinators

The Illinois MTSS Network is a federally funded (IDEA Discretionary Part B & Part D SPDG) project of the Illinois State Board of Education.



The contents of this presentation were developed under a grant from the U.S. Department of Education. However, those contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the U.S. Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government.

Illinois MTSS Network Components



Illinois MTSS Network
(coaching to build capacity within school districts)



Illinois IHE Partnership
(working with educator preparation programs)



Parent/Family Engagement *(strengthening parent/family engagement & leadership in I-Rtl Network participating districts)*



External Evaluation



Illinois MTSS Network



2 Statewide Program Co-Coordinator



Regionally-based staff (serving 8 areas)

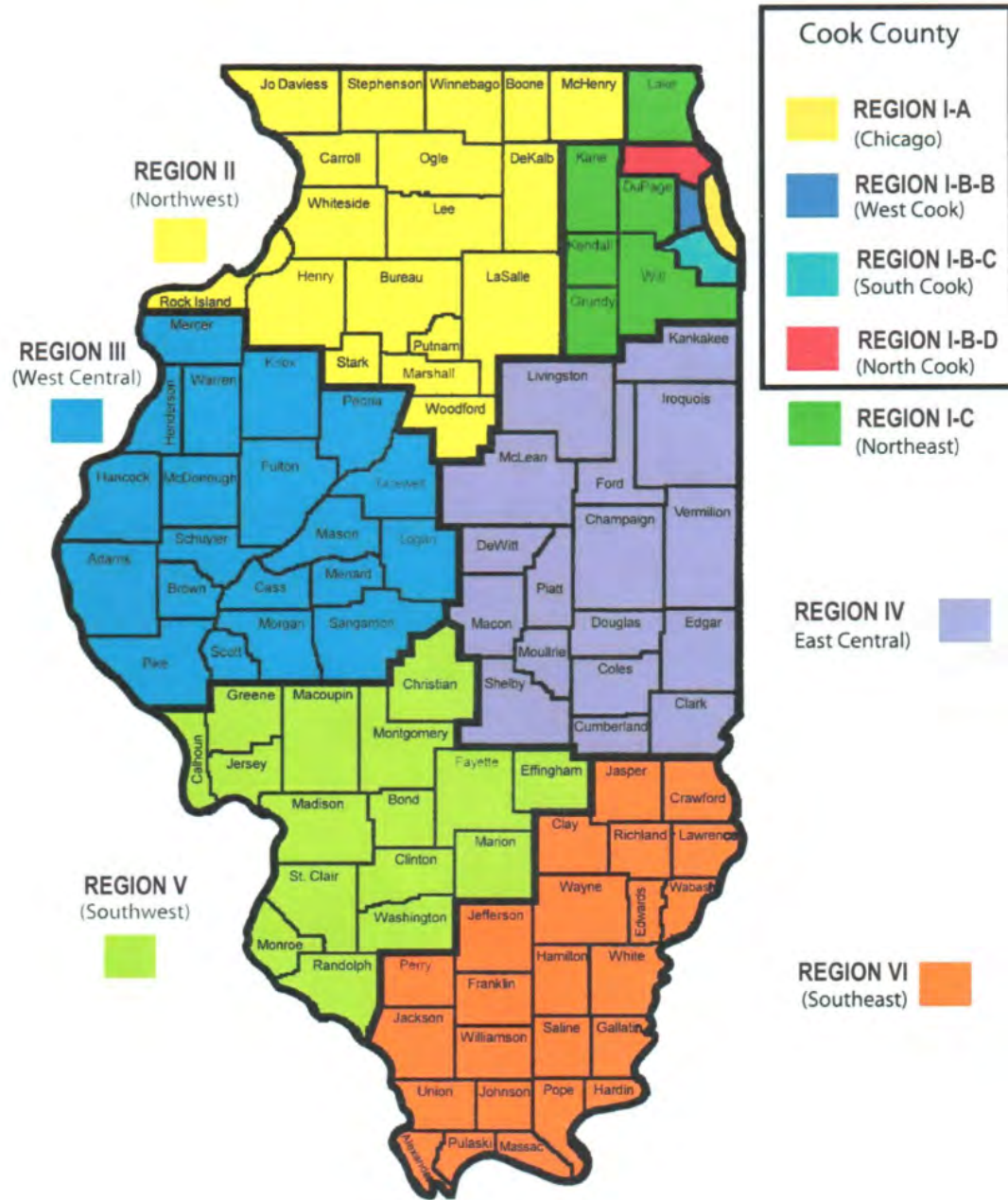


Work focused at district level

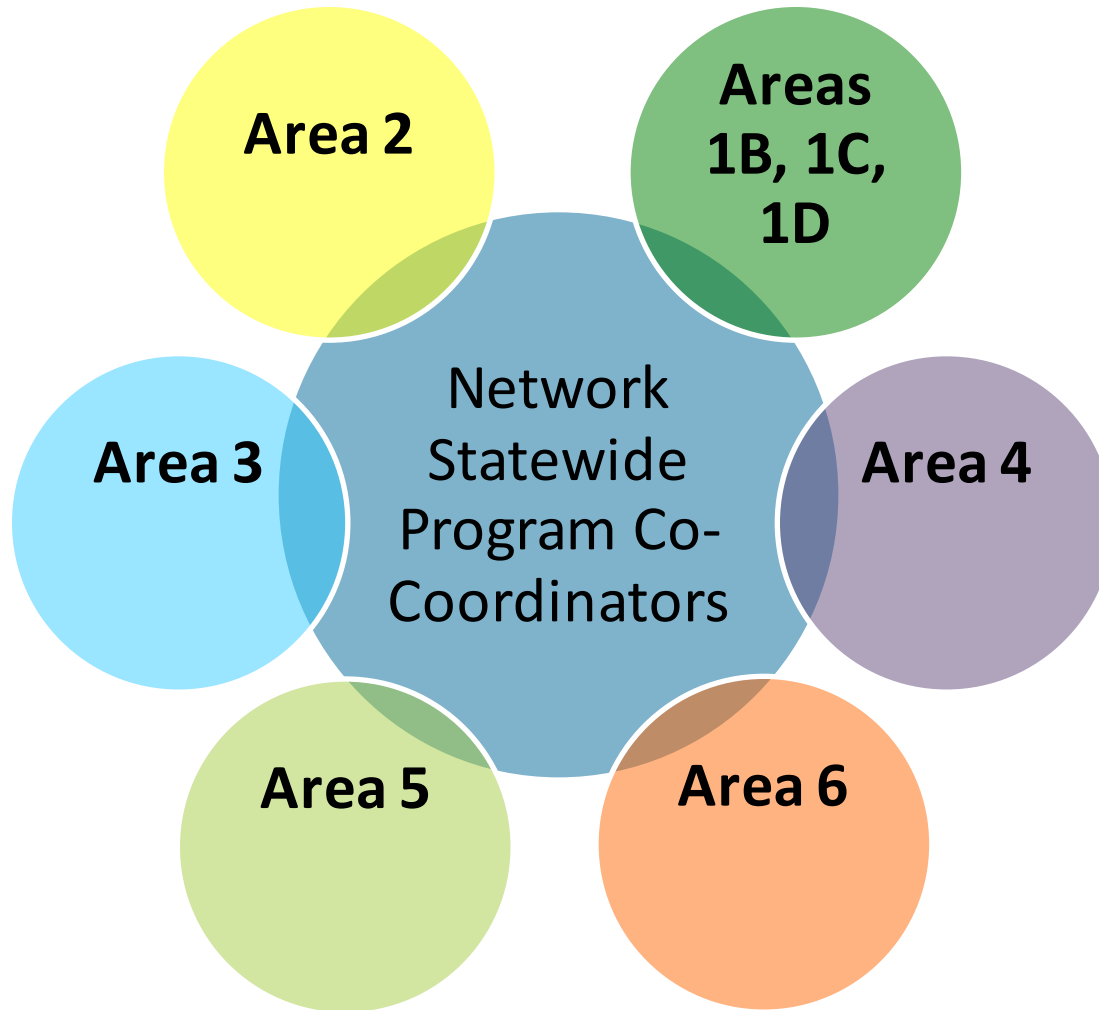


Directly serve District Leadership Teams & Coaches;
connected to district improvement process

Illinois' Regional System



IL MTSS Network Staffing Pattern

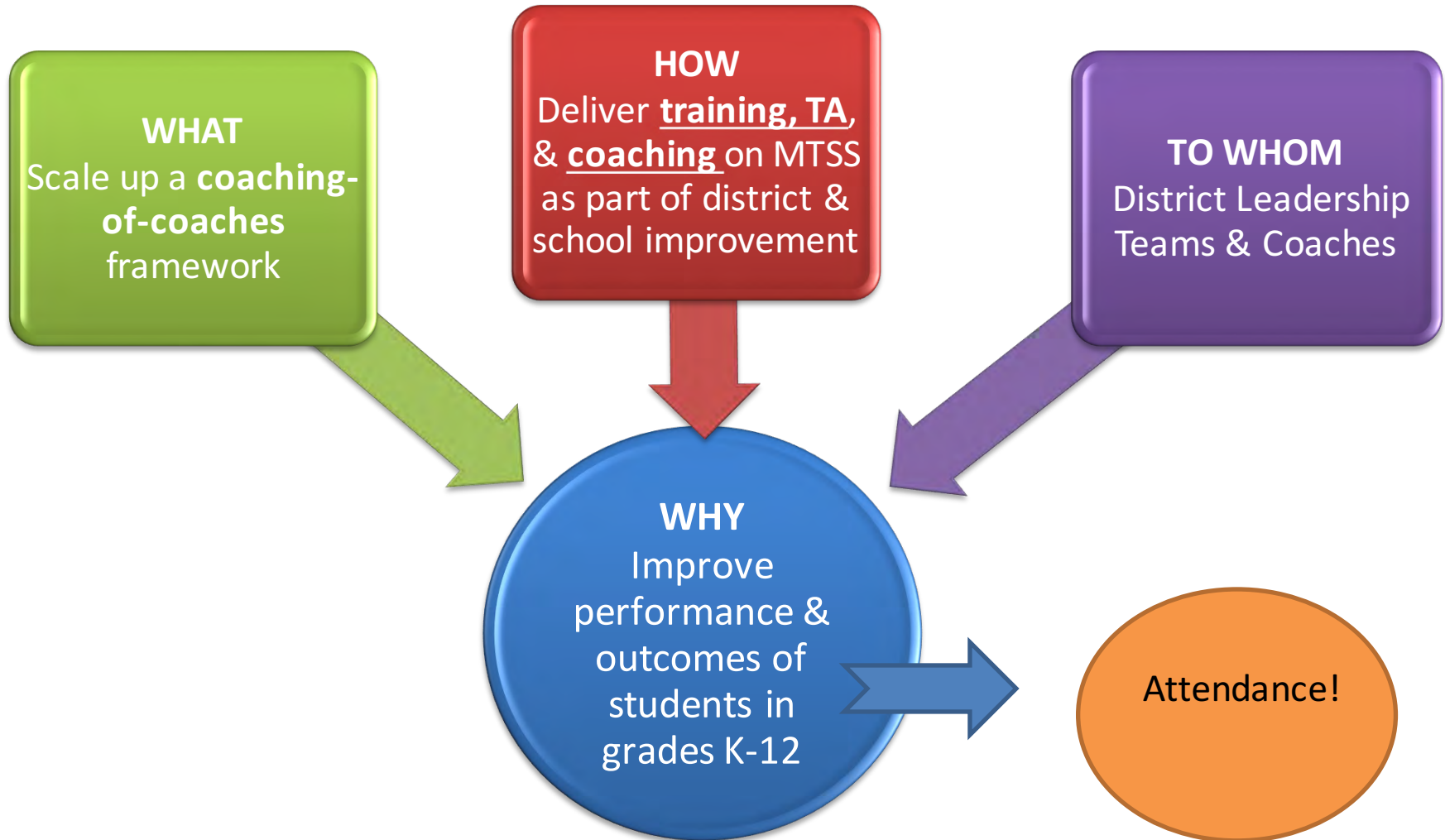


- *1 Area-wide Implementation Coordinator per region
- *Implementation Coaches allocated by need per region

Evidence-based Professional Learning



IL MTSS Network: Focusing “What” on “Why”



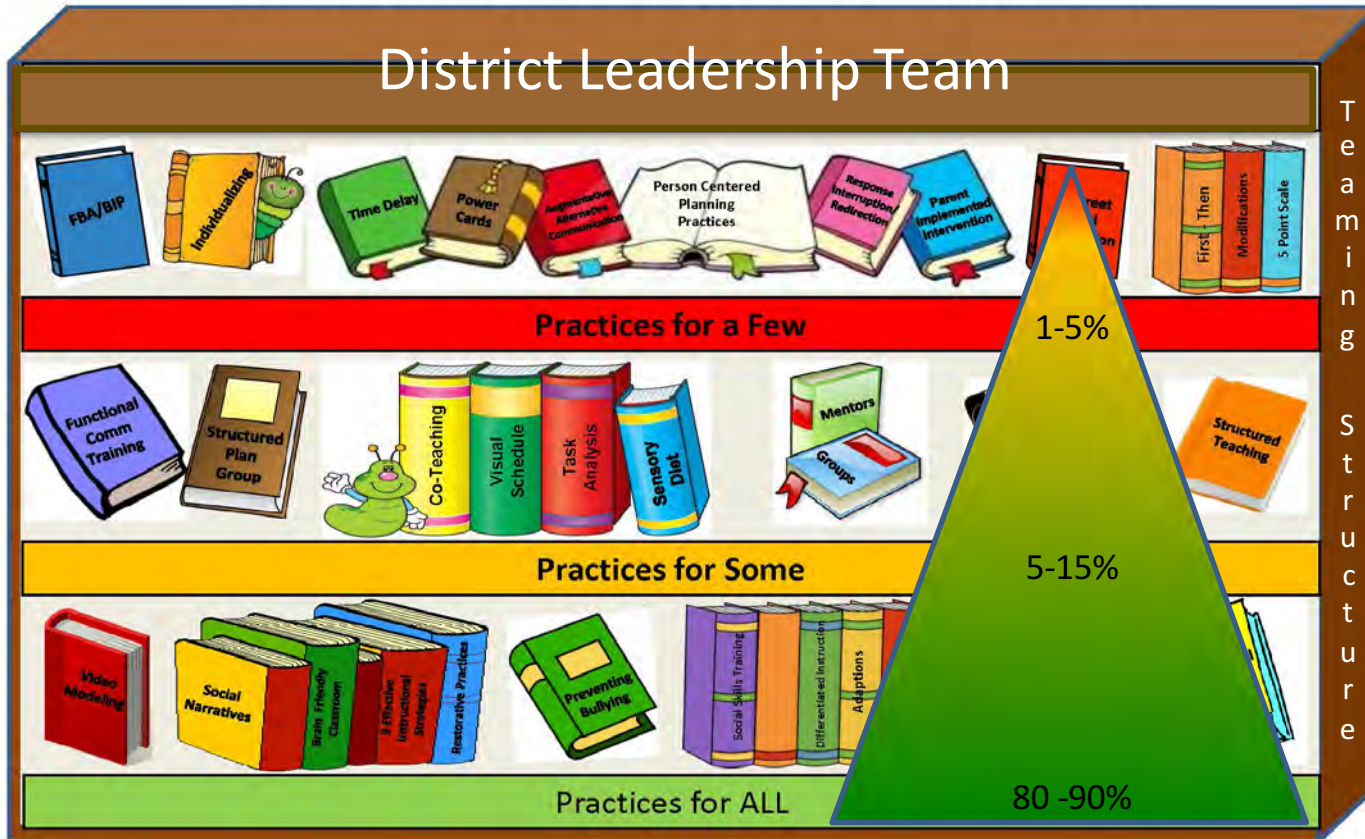
MTSS Definition in Illinois

A Multi-Tiered System of Supports is a framework for continuous improvement that is systemic, prevention focused, and data-informed, providing a coherent continuum of supports responsive to meet the needs of all learners

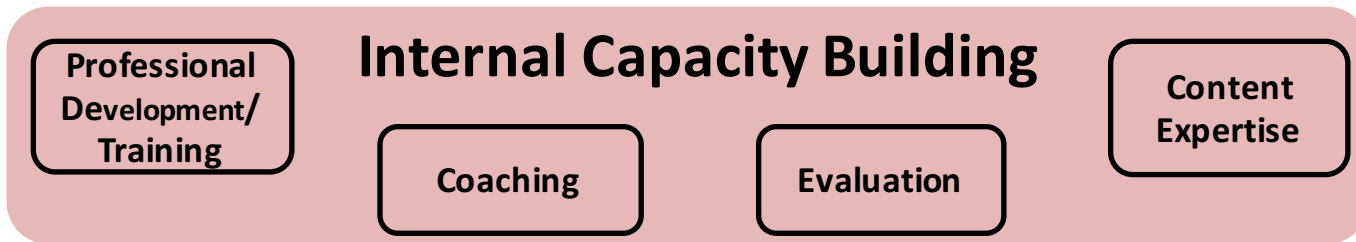
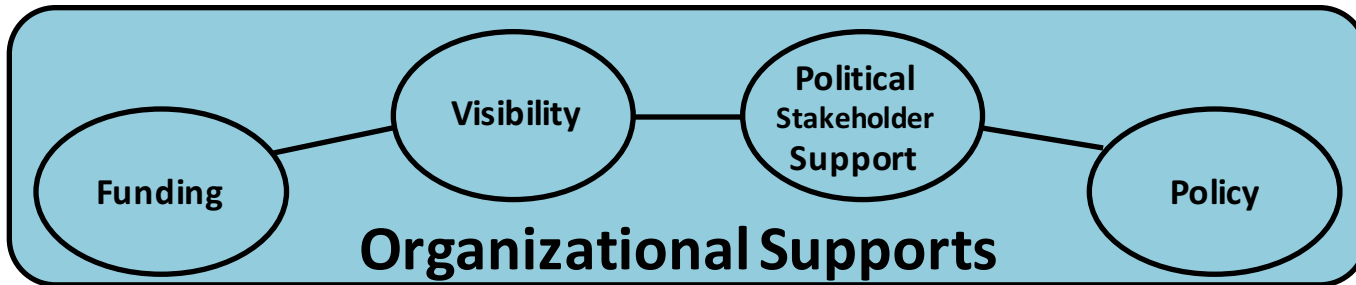


Framework with Supports

Student Intervention Framework (Example)



DISTRICT CAPACITY BUILDING



SCHOOL LEVEL MODEL OF IMPLEMENTATION

Leadership

Data Informed Decisions

Teaming

**Tiered System of Curriculum, Instruction,
Assessment and Learning Supports**

Professional Learning

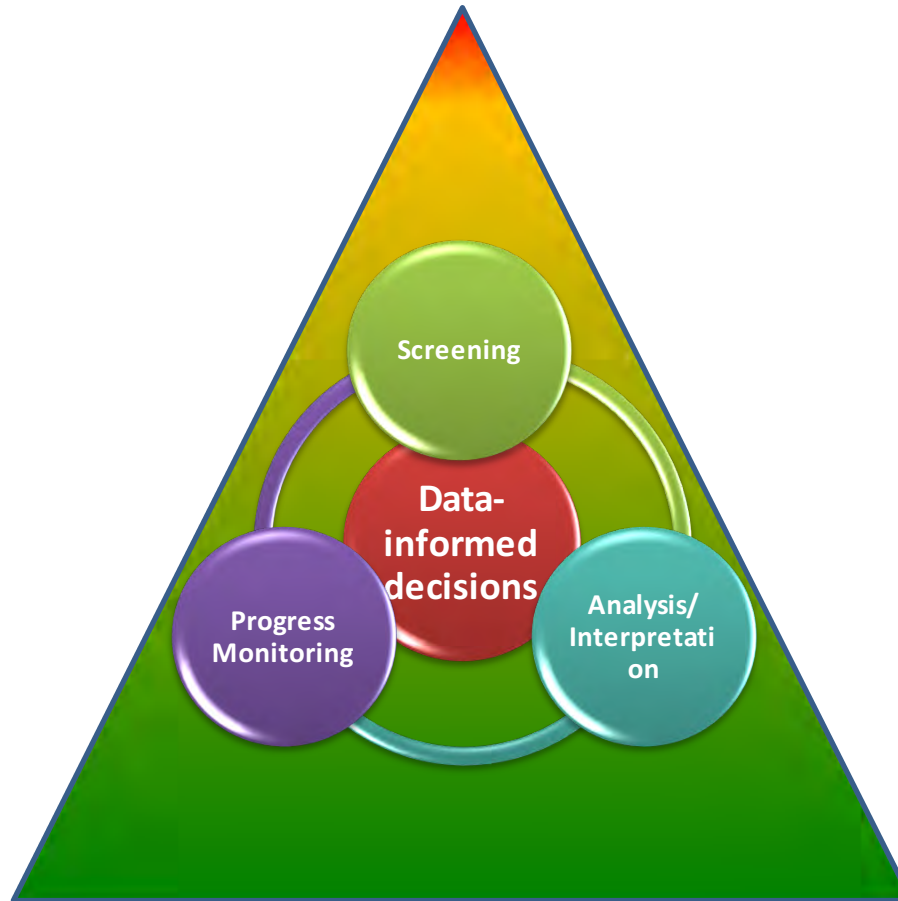
Partnering and Communication

Evaluation

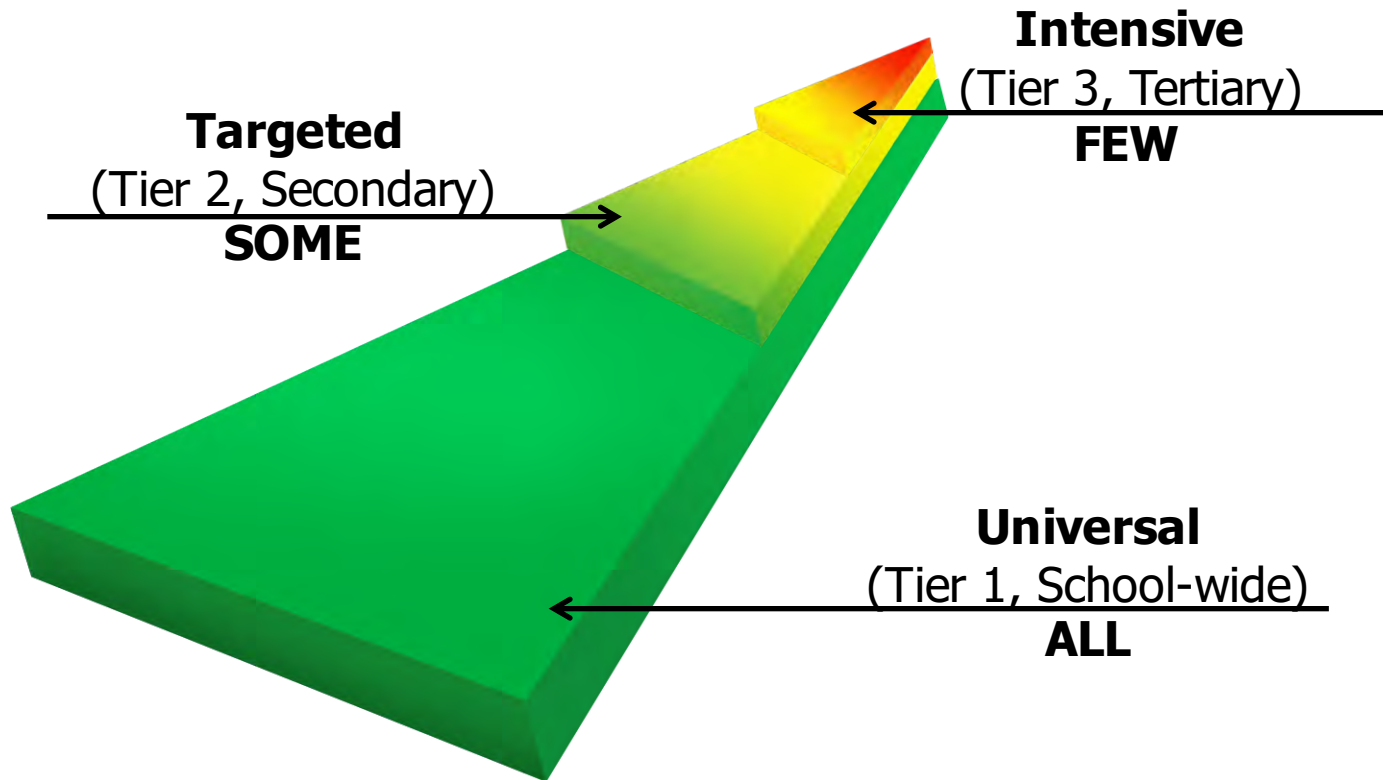
Prevention

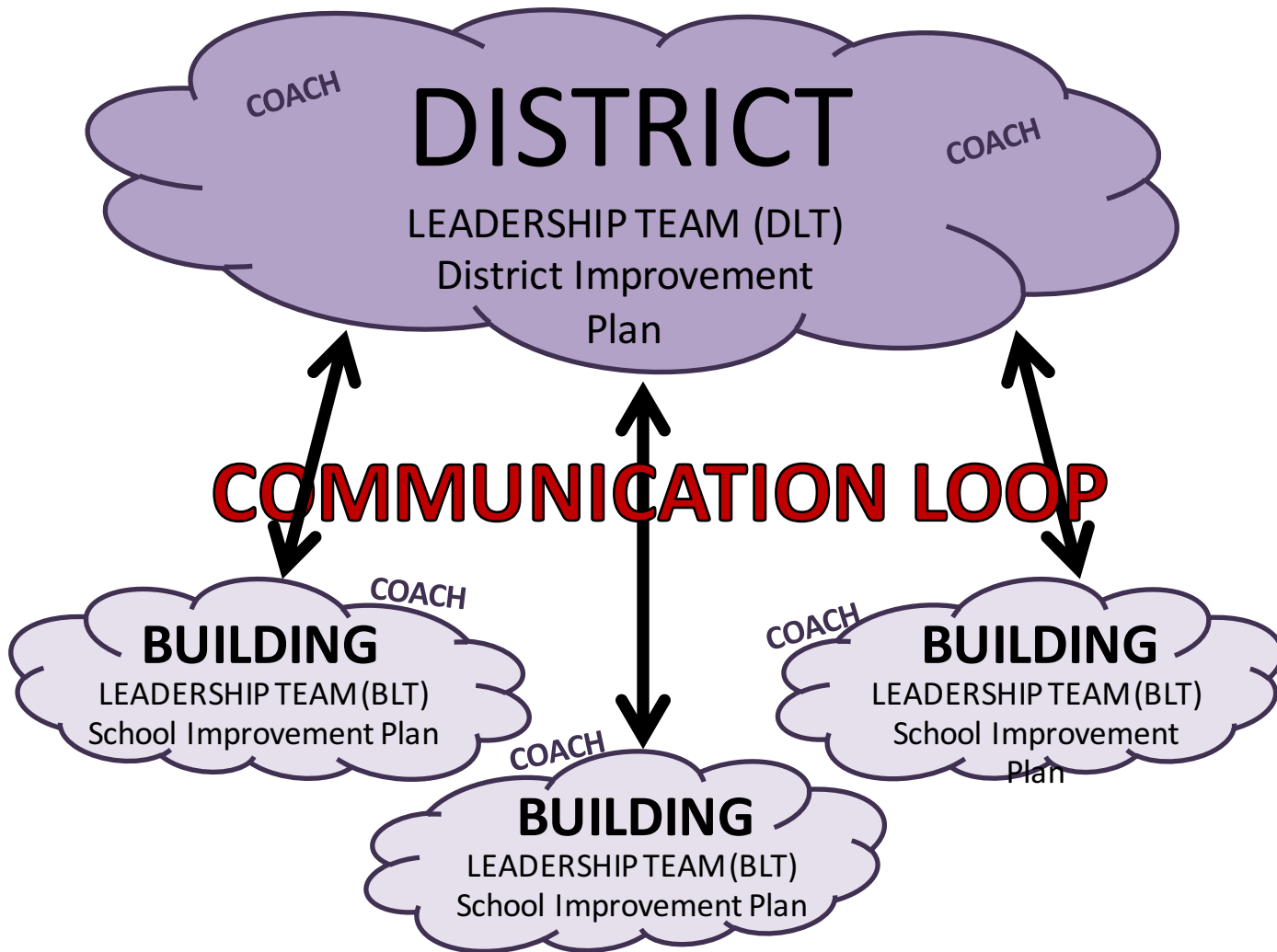


Continuous Improvement



Continuum of Supports





IL MTSS-N Supports



Training

is a purposeful, skill-based, and adult-learning informed process designed to support educators to enhance knowledge, skills, and practices. Trainings are based on specific learning outcomes and delivered through face-to-face and/or online learning experiences.

Coaching

is a process that supports educators to utilize their knowledge and skills developed during training with fidelity. Coaching is based on building relationships and facilitative questioning to help an individual or group take action toward its goals.

Technical assistance

(TA) is a process designed to facilitate the transference of specialized information and skills through consultation, problem-solving and connection to resources. TA works with and supports the training and coaching processes.

The Why, the How, & the What



Training

- Provide rationale for the importance of component and understand critical features.



Coaching

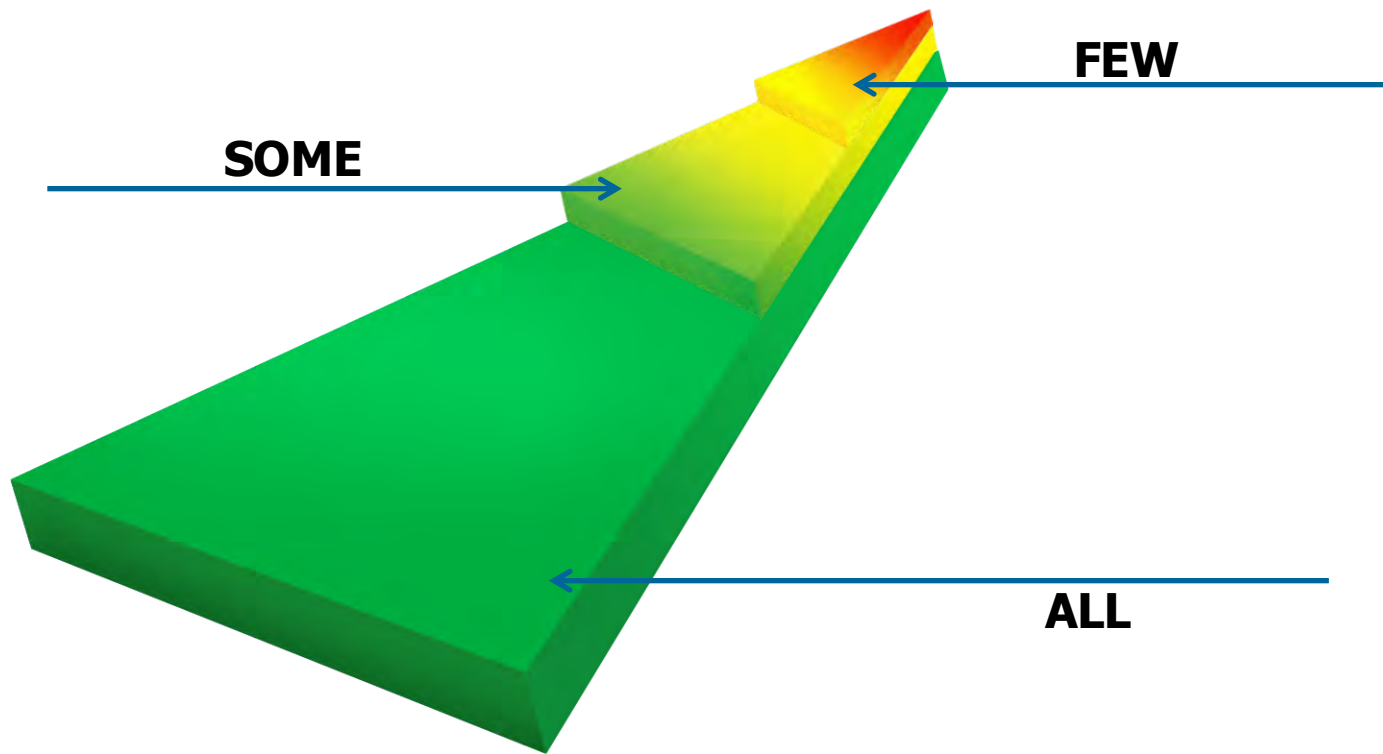
- Facilitate the application (and implementation) of content knowledge and critical features of component/skill in school/district settings.

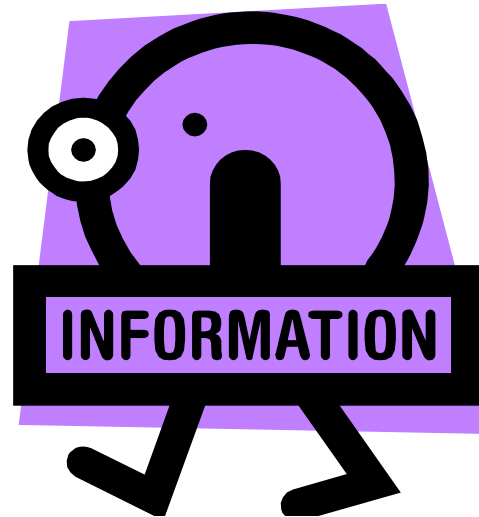


Technical Assistance

- Specific tools, activities, examples or plans to facilitate application and implementation, including coaching questions to ask to facilitate application of knowledge and coaching tips.

Statewide Delivery Model





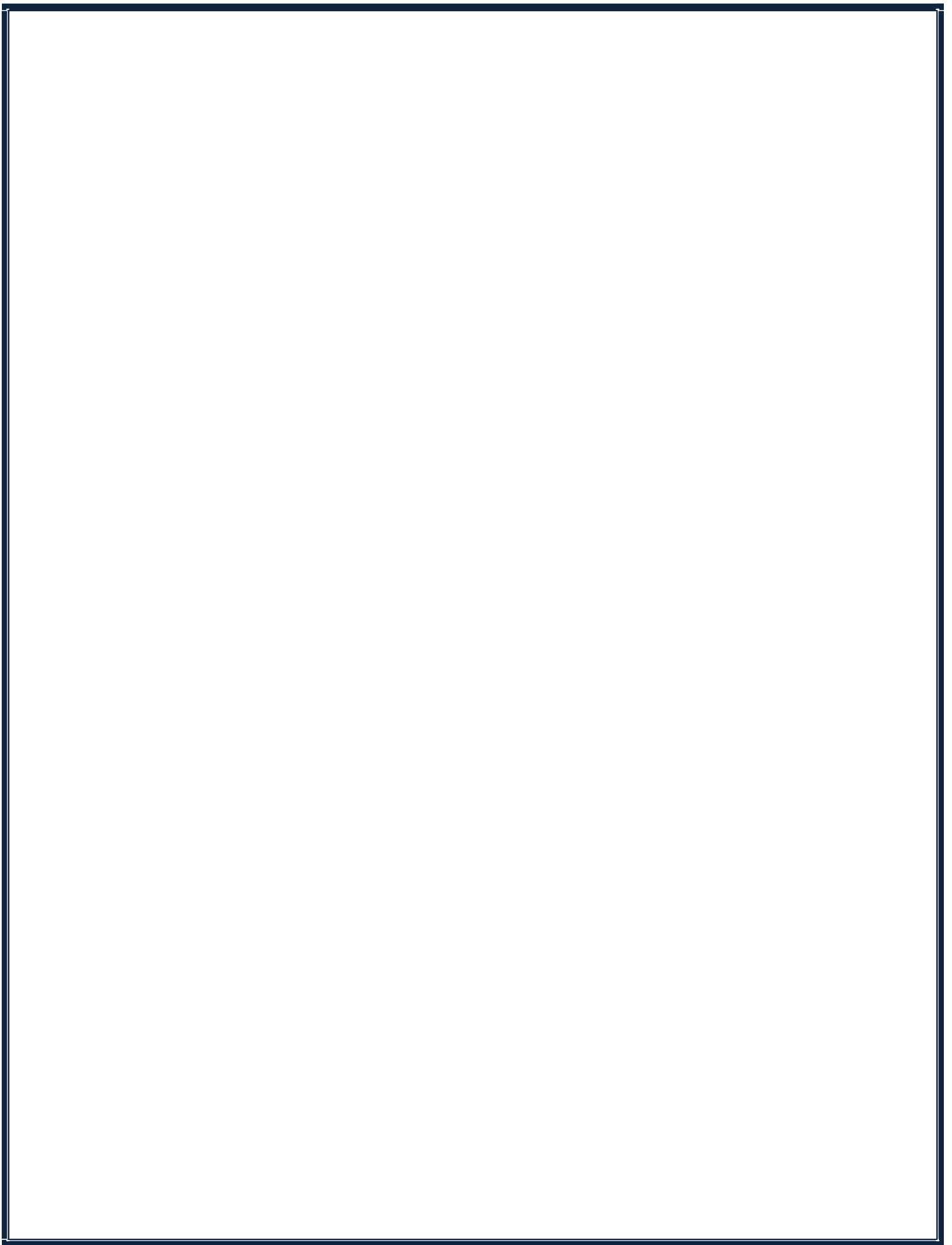
Michele Carmichael mcarmich@isbe.net
Roberta Brown roberta.brown@istac.net
Julie West jwest@roe47.org

APPENDIX G: EVERY STUDENT, EVERY DAY

U.S. Department of Justice
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
U.S. Department of Education

Every Student, Every Day:
*A Community Toolkit to Address and
Eliminate Chronic Absenteeism*





Every Student, Every Day:

A Community Toolkit to Address and Eliminate Chronic Absenteeism

Including information and resources for:

Youth

Parents and Families

Mentors and Volunteers

School District Superintendents and Staff, and School Personnel

Early Learning Providers

Health Care, Public Health & Human Service Agencies & Providers

Public Housing Authorities

Juvenile Justice and Law Enforcement

Homeless Services Providers

Mayors and Local Government

Community, Faith-Based, and Philanthropic Organizations

U.S. Department of Justice
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
U.S. Department of Education

October 2015

This report contains the views and recommendations of various subject matter experts as well as hypertext links, contact addresses, and websites with information created and maintained by other public and private organizations. This information is provided for the user's convenience. The opinions expressed in any of these materials do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of the U.S. Departments of Education, Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, or Justice. The inclusion of this information is not intended to reflect its importance, nor is it intended to endorse any views expressed, or products or services offered. None of the four federal agencies listed here controls or guarantees the accuracy, relevance, timeliness, or completeness of any outside information included in this report.

U.S. Department of Education

Arne Duncan
Secretary

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Sylvia Mathews Burwell
Secretary

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

Julián Castro
Secretary

U.S. Department of Justice

Loretta E. Lynch
Attorney General

October 2015

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This report is available on the Department's website at www.ed.gov/chronicabsenteeism/toolkit.

Availability of Alternate Formats

Requests for documents in alternate formats such as Braille or large print should be submitted to the Alternate Format Center by calling 202-260-0852 or by contacting the 504 coordinator via email at om_eeos@ed.gov.

Notice to Limited English Proficient Persons

If you have difficulty understanding English you may request language assistance services for Department information that is available to the public. These language assistance services are available free of charge. If you need more information about interpretation or translation services, please call 1-800-USA-LEARN (1-800-872-5327) (TTY: 1-800-437-0833), or email us at Ed.Language.Assistance@ed.gov. Or write to at U.S. Department of Education, Information Resource Center, LBJ Education Building, 400 Maryland Ave. SW, Washington, DC 20202.

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There are consequences to inaction. There are consequences to indifference. And they reverberate far beyond the walls of the projects, or the borders of the barrio, or the roads of the reservation. They sap us of our strength as a nation. It means we're not as good as we could be. And over time, it wears us out. Over time, it weakens our nation as a whole.

The good news is, it doesn't have to be this way. We can have the courage to change. We can make a difference. We can remember that these kids are our kids. "For these are all our children," James Baldwin once wrote. "We will all profit by, or pay for, whatever they become."

Remarks by **President Barack Obama** at Launch of the My Brother's Keeper Alliance, May 4, 2015, Lehman College, West Bronx, New York



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

October 7, 2015

Dear Colleague:

A growing and compelling body of research demonstrates that chronic absence from school—typically defined as missing at least 10 percent of school days in a year for any reason, excused or unexcused¹—is a primary cause of low academic achievement and a powerful predictor of which students will eventually drop out of school.² With an estimated five to seven and a half million students chronically absent each year,³ chronic absenteeism is a national problem that seriously undermines our collective efforts to improve education and life outcomes among our youth.

Today, we, the leaders of the U.S. Departments of Education (ED), Health and Human Services (HHS), Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and Justice (DOJ), announce our long-term commitment to building capacity across the Federal government to support States and local communities in the work of addressing and eliminating chronic absenteeism. We also call upon States and local education, health, housing, and justice agencies and organizations, in partnership with community stakeholders, to join forces and commit to creating or enhancing coordinated, cross-sector systems for identifying and supporting students who are, or are at risk of becoming, chronically absent, with the goal of reducing chronic absenteeism by at least 10 percent each year, beginning in the 2015-16 school year.

¹ Therriault, S., Heppen, J., O’Cummings, M., Fryer, L., & Johnson, A. (2010). *Early Warning System Implementation Guide: For Use with the National High School Center’s Early Warning System Tool v2.0*. Washington, DC: American Institutes for Research, National High School Center. Retrieved from <http://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED521686>.

² Balfanz, R., & Byrnes, V. (2012). *The Importance of Being in School: A Report on Absenteeism in the Nation’s Public Schools*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Center for Social Organization of Schools. Available at http://new.every1graduates.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/FINALChronicAbsenteeismReport_May16.pdf.

³ Ibid.

In order to support communities in addressing and eliminating barriers to students' daily attendance at, and meaningful engagement with, school—particularly for students who are low-income, of color, homeless, highly mobile, juvenile justice-involved, and/or who are students with disabilities—we are pleased to announce the release of *Every Student, Every Day: A Community Toolkit to Address and Eliminate Chronic Absenteeism*, which is available at <http://www.ed.gov/chronicabsenteeism/toolkit>. This Toolkit will provide community stakeholders with information and resources to help ensure that all young people are in school every day and benefitting from coordinated systems of support. Further, to achieve our ambitious but attainable goal of reducing chronic absenteeism by at least 10 percent per year, we ask that leaders of State and local education, health, housing, and justice systems work immediately and collaboratively to take the following action steps:

Action Step 1: Generate and act on absenteeism data. Prioritize the development of early warning prevention and intervention systems that identify students who are, or are at risk of becoming, chronically absent before they miss enough school that it is nearly impossible for them to catch up. Data from such systems should be shared—in a manner consistent with applicable State law and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)—between school districts and other key public and private organizations to ensure coordinated systems of support for students who are chronically absent.⁴

Action Step 2: Create and deploy positive messages and measures. Focus on developing positive messages for youth and families as well as implementing supportive engagement strategies. For instance, these strategies may include mentoring, counseling, and creating safe and supportive school climates through approaches such as Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports⁵ to improve students' attendance at, connection to, and success in school. Punitive messages and measures are often ineffective and can lead to disproportionate suspensions and expulsions from school and inappropriate referrals of students and families to law enforcement.⁶

Action Step 3: Focus communities on addressing chronic absenteeism. Launch local initiatives to raise public awareness about the causes and effects of chronic absenteeism, including awareness among families and youth. Prioritize training within communities and across sectors to conduct root-cause analyses of

⁴ For information on data-sharing consistent with FERPA, please refer to guidance provided by ED's Family Policy Compliance Office at <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/doc/ferpa-and-community-based-orgs.pdf>.

⁵ For more information on implementing positive behavior interventions and supports (PBIS), please visit ED's PBIS Technical Assistance Center at www.pbis.org.

⁶ Morgan, E., Salomon, N., Plotkin, M., Cohen, R. (2014). *The School Discipline Consensus Report: Strategies from the Field to Keep Students Engaged in School and Out of the Juvenile Justice System*. New York: Council of State Governments Justice Center. Available at <http://csgjusticecenter.org/youth/school-discipline-consensus-report/>.

local absenteeism trends. Implement research and evidence-based strategies and programs—such as *Check & Connect*⁷—that effectively engage and support students who are, or are at risk of becoming, chronically absent.

Action Step 4: Ensure responsibility across sectors. Regularly communicate that chronic absenteeism is a problem that affects the whole community, not just those students who are chronically absent and their families. Drive and evaluate cross-sector performance, at least in part, based on that principle. Education, health, housing, and justice system leaders should work together to ensure shared accountability within and across sectors to successfully address the local, underlying causes of chronic absenteeism.

As a nation, we must acknowledge that frequent absences from school can be devastating to a child’s future. For example, children who are chronically absent in preschool, kindergarten, and first grade are much less likely to read at grade level by the third grade.⁸ Students who cannot read at grade level by the end of third grade are four times more likely than proficient readers to drop out of high school.⁹ By high school, irregular attendance is a better predictor of school dropout than test scores. A study of public school students in Utah found that a student who is chronically absent in even a single school year between the eighth and twelfth grades is over seven times more likely to drop out of school than a student who is not chronically absent.¹⁰ Students who are homeless and those who reside in public housing are also particularly at risk of being chronically absent from school.¹¹

Research further demonstrates that completing high school is not only a strong predictor of adult success but also of adult physical and mental health outcomes and involvement with the criminal justice system. Students who do not graduate from high school have

⁷ For more information on research findings of *Check & Connect* implementation, please see <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/interventionreport.aspx?sid=78>.

⁸ Ehrlich, S., Gwynne, J. A., Pareja, A. S., and Allensworth, E. M. (2013). *Preschool Attendance in Chicago Public Schools: Relationships with Learning Outcomes and Reasons for Absences*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Reform. Available at <https://ccsr.uchicago.edu/publications/preschool-attendance-chicago-public-schools-relationships-learning-outcomes-and-reasons>.

⁹ Hernandez, D. (2011). *Double Jeopardy: How Third-Grade Reading Skills and Poverty Influence High School Graduation*. Baltimore: The Annie E. Casey Foundation, p. 6. Available at www.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/AECF-DoubleJeopardy-2012-Full.pdf.

¹⁰ Utah Education Policy Center at the University of Utah. (2012). *Research Brief: Chronic Absenteeism*. Available at <http://www.utahdataalliance.org/downloads/ChronicAbsenteeismResearchBrief.pdf>.

¹¹ Nauer, K. et al. (2014). *A Better Picture of Poverty: What Chronic Absenteeism and Risk Load Reveal About NYC’s Lowest-Income Elementary Schools*. New York: Center for New York City Affairs, The Milano School of International Affairs, Management, and Urban Policy. Available at www.centernyc.org/betterpictureofpoverty/.

worse health and greater health risks as adults than their peers who graduate.¹² They also have more frequent, negative contact with law enforcement,¹³ contributing to a cycle of poverty, poor health, homelessness, and incarceration. These data strongly suggest that the long-term consequence of chronic absenteeism is a population that is less educated, less healthy, underemployed, less financially stable, and more disenfranchised.

We recognize that attendance tracking systems in many school districts across the country are not required or designed to measure chronic absenteeism among local youth. In fact, efforts to improve average daily attendance often mask the extent of a school's chronic absenteeism problem and fail to address its underlying causes.¹⁴ Adding to the challenge, educators, families, and youth are not sufficiently aware of the frequency and negative impact of chronic absence from school.¹⁵ In many school districts and communities, the focus is on "unexcused" absences or truancy at the middle and high school level, even though research shows that chronic absence in the early grades is also a major problem, whether excused or unexcused.¹⁶ Common interventions are often punitive in nature and blame is frequently placed on students and their families. Ultimately, such responses have the deleterious, if unintended, effect of making school less, not more, engaging for students and families, and these practices undermine efforts to assist our most struggling schools and students.¹⁷

In spring 2016, ED will release the 2013-14 Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC), including the first-ever school-level data on all students across the nation who missed at least 15 days of school for any reason, which translates into approximately 8.5 percent of a typical school year. We anticipate that the CRDC will shed new light on the scope of the chronic absenteeism problem, including where it is most prevalent and whom it most

¹² Cutler, D. M., Lleras-Muney, A. (2006). *Education and Health: Evaluating Theories and Evidence*. National Bureau of Economic Research, NBER Working Paper No. 12352. Retrieved at www.econ.ucla.edu/alleras/research/books/Education_and_Health_July_2006.pdf.

¹³ Page, A., Petteruti, A., Walsh, N., Ziedenberg, J. (2007). *Education and Public Safety*. Washington, DC: Justice Policy Center. Retrieved at www.justicepolicy.org/images/upload/07-08_rep_educationandpublicsafety_ps-ac.pdf.

¹⁴ Bruner, C., Discher, A., Chang, H. (2011). *Chronic Elementary Absenteeism: A Problem Hidden in Plain Sight*. Attendance Works and Child & Family Policy Center. Available at <http://www.attendanceworks.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2010/04/ChronicAbsence.pdf>.

¹⁵ Balfanz, R., & Byrnes, V. (2012), p. 6.

¹⁶ Applied Survey Research. (2011). *Attendance in Early Elementary Grades: Associations with Student Characteristics, School Readiness, and Third Grade Outcomes*. Report prepared for Attendance Works. Available at <http://www.attendanceworks.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2010/04/ASR-Mini-Report-Attendance-Readiness-and-Third-Grade-Outcomes-7-8-11.pdf>.

¹⁷ Black, A. T., Seder, R. C., & Kekahio, W. (2014). *Review of research on student nonenrollment and chronic absenteeism: A report for the Pacific Region* (REL 2015-054). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Regional Educational Laboratory Pacific. Retrieved from <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs>.

affects, and further catalyze efforts to engage students who are, or are at risk of becoming, chronically absent.

However, we can and must do more now to address the negative and disparate outcomes experienced by students who are chronically absent. By acting early and effectively in a coordinated, cross-sector manner—from the Federal government to every school and community in the country—we can dramatically improve the academic and life outcomes of millions of young people who have been disengaged from a daily, supportive school experience. The health and well-being of our nation demands that we do no less.

Sincerely,

Loretta Lynch
Attorney General
of the United States

Sylvia Burwell
Secretary of Health
and Human Services

Julián Castro
Secretary of Housing
and Urban Development

Arne Duncan
Secretary of Education

Every Student, Every Day:

A Community Toolkit to Address and Eliminate Chronic Absenteeism

Chronic absenteeism—or missing at least 10 percent of school days in a school year for any reason, excused or unexcused—is a primary cause of low academic achievement and a powerful predictor of those students who may eventually drop out of school. An estimated five to seven and a half million students miss 18 or more days of school each year, or nearly an entire month or more of school, which puts them at significant risk of falling behind academically and failing to graduate from high school. Because they miss so much school, millions of young people miss out on opportunities in post-secondary education and good careers.

But we can change that.

Did You Know?

A student is chronically absent if he or she misses as few as **two days** of school a month.

**2 DAYS PER MONTH x 9 MONTHS =
CHRONIC ABSENCE**

The U.S. Departments of Education (ED), Health and Human Services (HHS), Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and Justice (DOJ) have developed this toolkit to support coordinated community action that addresses the underlying causes of local chronic absenteeism affecting millions of children in our Nation's public schools each year. We believe—and research and best practices confirm—that when a diverse coalition of local stakeholders work together to engage students who are chronically absent, youth and family outcomes of entire communities can be dramatically improved. In short, we believe chronic absenteeism in communities is a solvable problem.

Models of coordinated community action to address and eliminate chronic absenteeism exist across the country, and each model is different; different communities make different choices about how to use time and resources. But one element of promising efforts to reengage chronically absent students tends to stand out: *coordination and collaboration among a diverse collection of local stakeholders is central to the work.* Representatives of education, health, housing, and justice-

related agencies and organizations are at the table, alongside youth, families, local government, and community, faith-based, and philanthropic organizations. This collaborative approach can enable whole communities to acquire the resources and develop the networks they need to provide well-informed and effective guidance, motivation, and support to students who are, or are at risk of becoming, chronically absent from school and their families.

It is time to encourage coordinated community action across our country in order to ensure that we support every student, every day to attend and be successful in school and, ultimately, in life.

Purpose of this Toolkit

Many of the education, health, housing, and justice-related challenges some of our young people face can be effectively addressed when people and organizations within a community join forces, set aggressive yet achievable goals, and work together to provide all children, particularly our most disadvantaged, with the encouragement and support they need when they need it.

This Toolkit offers information, suggested action steps, and lists of existing tools and resources—including evidence-based resources—for individuals, leaders, and systems to begin or enhance the work of effective, coordinated community action to address and eliminate chronic absenteeism, including actions steps for:

- Youth
- Parents and Families
- Mentors and Volunteers
- School District Superintendents and Staff, and School Personnel
- Early Learning Providers
- Health Care, Public Health & Human Service Agencies & Providers
- Public Housing Authorities
- Juvenile Justice and Law Enforcement
- Homeless Services Providers
- Mayors and Local Government
- Community, Faith-Based, and Philanthropic Organizations

Know the Facts about Chronic Absenteeism

It is important to know the facts about chronic absenteeism in order to effectively address and eliminate it. Everyone should understand what chronic absenteeism is, whom it affects, and why we must work in a deeply coordinated and collaborative fashion to support students who are, or are at risk of becoming, chronically absent from school.

When engaging with someone on this issue, we suggest sharing the following important statistics about chronic absenteeism in the United States.

Did You Know?

An estimated **5 to 7.5 million students** are chronically absent from school each year.

Chronic absenteeism:

- Is a primary cause of lower academic achievement, even when the absences are “excused” or understandable.¹⁸
- Is a powerful predictor of those students who may eventually drop out of school.¹⁹ A study of public school students in Utah found that a student who is chronically absent in any year between the eighth and twelfth grades is over seven times more likely to drop out of school than a student who was not chronically absent.²⁰
- Affects an estimated five to seven and a half million students each year.²¹
- Can even affect students in preschool, kindergarten, and first grade, who are then much less likely to read at grade level by the end of third grade.²²
- Is caused by a variety of issues, including chronic health conditions, housing instability, involvement with the juvenile justice system, and unsafe conditions in school, among many others.²³
- Is particularly prevalent among students who are low-income, students of color, students with disabilities, students who are highly mobile, and/or

¹⁸ Gottfried, M. A. (2009). Excused Versus Unexcused: How Student Absences in Elementary School Affect Academic Achievement. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 31(4), 215–229.

¹⁹ Balfanz, R., & Byrnes, V. (2012). *The Importance of Being in School: A Report on Absenteeism in the Nation’s Public Schools*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Center for Social Organization of Schools. Available at http://new.every1graduates.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/FINALChronicAbsenteeismReport_May16.pdf. and Alexander, K., Entwisle, D., & Kabbani, N. (2001). The dropout process in life course perspective: Early risk factors at home and school. *The Teachers College Record*, 103(5), 760-822.

²⁰ Utah Education Policy Center at the University of Utah. (2012). *Research Brief: Chronic Absenteeism*. Available at www.utahdataalliance.org/downloads/ChronicAbsenteeismResearchBrief.pdf. <http://www.utahdataalliance.org/downloads/ChronicAbsenteeismResearchBrief.pdf>

²¹ Balfanz, R., & Byrnes, V. (2012), p. 17.

²² Ehrlich, S., Gwynne, J. A., Pareja, A. S., and Allensworth, E. M. (2013). *Preschool Attendance in Chicago Public Schools: Relationships with Learning Outcomes and Reasons for Absences*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Reform. Available at <https://ccsr.uchicago.edu/publications/preschool-attendance-chicago-public-schools-relationships-learning-outcomes-and-reasons>.

²³ Balfanz, R., & Byrnes, V. (2012), p. 30.

- juvenile justice-involved youth—in other words, those who already tend to face significant challenges and for whom school is particularly beneficial.²⁴
- Is particularly prevalent among those students who are homeless or reside in public housing.²⁵
 - May lead to substance abuse. When students are skipping school, many of them become engaged in risky behavior such as substance abuse and delinquency.²⁶
 - Affects other students, too. Not only are frequent absences harmful to the absentee, but they also have a negative effect on the achievement of other students in the classroom.²⁷
 - Can negatively influence future adult health outcomes. Indeed, the mortality rate of high school dropouts is over two times greater than that for adults with some college education.²⁸
 - Can increase likelihood of involvement with the criminal justice system.²⁹
 - Is not measured by most states or school districts in this country, which leaves many educators and communities without information they need to identify students who could use additional support to maintain regular attendance.³⁰

Community-Wide Action Steps to Address and Eliminate Chronic Absenteeism

²⁴ Balfanz, R., & Byrnes, V. (2012). *The Importance of Being in School: A Report on Absenteeism in the Nation's Public Schools*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Center for Social Organization of Schools. Available at http://new.every1graduates.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/FINALChronicAbsenteeismReport_May16.pdf.

²⁵ Nauer, K. et al. (2014). *A Better Picture of Poverty: What Chronic Absenteeism and Risk Load Reveal About NYC's Lowest-Income Elementary Schools*. New York: Center for New York City Affairs, The Milano School of International Affairs, Management, and Urban Policy. Available at www.centernyc.org/betterpictureofpoverty/. Available at <http://www.centernyc.org/betterpictureofpoverty/>

²⁶ Henry, K. L., & Thornberry, T. P. (2010). Truancy and Escalation of Substance Use During Adolescence. *Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs*, 71(1): 115–124, and Henry, K.L. & Huizinga, D. H. (2007). Truancy's Effect on the Onset of Drug Use among Urban Adolescents Placed at Risk. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 40 (4), 358.e9–358.e17.4.

²⁷ Gottfried, M. A. (2011). Absent peers in elementary years: The negative classroom effects of unexcused absences on standardized testing outcomes. *Teachers College Record*, 113(8).

²⁸ Cutler, D. M., Lleras-Muney, A. (2006). *Education and Health: Evaluating Theories and Evidence*. National Bureau of Economic Research, NBER Working Paper No. 12352. Retrieved at www.econ.ucla.edu/alleras/research/books/Education_and_Health_July_2006.pdf.

²⁹ Page, A., , Petteruti, A., Walsh, N., Ziedenberg, J. (2007). *Education and Public Safety*. Washington, DC: Justice Policy Center. Retrieved at www.justicepolicy.org/images/upload/07-08_rep_educationandpublicsafety_ps-ac.pdf.

³⁰ Bruner, C., Discher, A., Chang, H. (2011). *Chronic Elementary Absenteeism: A Problem Hidden in Plain Sight*. Attendance Works and Child & Family Policy Center. Available at www.attendanceworks.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2010/04/ChronicAbsence.pdf. Available at <http://www.attendanceworks.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2010/04/ChronicAbsence.pdf>

Research and experience demonstrate that several actions can help mobilize the kind of awareness, commitment to action, and community-based coalitions that are necessary to ensure that every student who is, or is at risk of becoming, chronically absent from school receives the necessary support to maintain regular school attendance. The following suggested **community-wide actions** can help lay the foundation for progress within and across schools and communities. Education, health, housing, and justice-system leaders, including school, community, nonprofit, and philanthropic leaders, should work together to make meaningful progress on each action step.

Action Step 1: Generate and act on absenteeism data.

- ✓ **Prioritize** the development of early warning prevention and intervention systems.
- ✓ **Identify** both the students who are, or are at risk of becoming, chronically absent from school as well as the underlying causes of absenteeism.
- ✓ **Increase** every student’s access to support services to address absenteeism *before* any student misses so much school that it is nearly impossible to catch up.
- ✓ **Explore** and enter into partnerships—consistent with applicable Federal and State laws, including the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)—between school districts and other important public and private organizations, such as public housing authorities and public health agencies, to increase and improve coordinated supports and interventions to address and eliminate chronic absenteeism.

Action Step 2: Create and deploy positive messages and measures.

- ✓ **Implement** positive and supportive engagement strategies—like mentoring, counseling, and positive behavioral interventions and supports³¹—to improve students’ attendance at, connection to, and success in, school.
- ✓ **Refrain** from punitive messages and measures—for example, blaming or threatening students and families with punishment—which are often ineffective and can lead to disproportionate suspensions and expulsions

³¹ For more information on implementing positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS), please visit ED’s PBIS Technical Assistance Center at www.pbis.org.

from school and inappropriate referrals of students and families to law enforcement.³²

Action Step 3: Focus communities on addressing chronic absenteeism.

- ✓ **Raise** awareness about the causes and effects of and potential solutions to chronic absenteeism, especially among youth and families.
- ✓ **Prioritize** trainings for school staff and affiliated community partners to conduct root cause analyses of absenteeism trends among students.
- ✓ **Support** the development of effective strategies to eliminate chronic absenteeism and use research and evidence-based tools and programs that work to engage and support student success.

Action Step 4: Ensure responsibility across sectors.

- ✓ **Communicate** that chronic absenteeism is a problem that affects the entire community.
- ✓ **Drive** and **evaluate** cross-sector system performance, at least in part, on progress toward eliminating chronic absenteeism.
- ✓ **Work together** as a community so that everyone feels responsible for successfully addressing underlying causes of chronic absenteeism.

In every community in America, there are young people with incredible drive and talent, and they just don't have the same kinds of chances that somebody like me had. They're just as talented as me, just as smart. They don't get a chance. And because everyone has a part to play in this process, we brought everybody together. We brought business leaders and faith leaders, mayors, philanthropists, educators, entrepreneurs, athletes, musicians, actors—all united around the simple idea of giving all our young people the tools they need to achieve their full potential.

Remarks by President Barack Obama at Launch of the My Brother's Keeper Alliance, May 04, Lehman College, West Bronx, New York

³² Morgan, E., Salomon, N., Plotkin, M., Cohen, R. (2014). *The School Discipline Consensus Report: Strategies from the Field to Keep Students Engaged in School and Out of the Juvenile Justice System*. New York: Council of State Governments Justice Center. Available at <http://csgjusticecenter.org/youth/school-discipline-consensus-report/>.

Implementing Coordinated Supports for Students at Risk for Chronic Absenteeism

It is important to generate the necessary enthusiasm and support to implement solutions that can successfully support students who are, or are at risk of becoming, chronically absent. Engaging a diverse collection of stakeholders—including the education, health, housing, and justice sectors, as well as youth, families, community organizations, child welfare agencies, and local government—could be a particularly useful strategy to promote and sustain community action. Because community needs differ from place to place, decisions about which approaches and programs to adopt should be informed by multiple stakeholders following an analysis of local data on chronic absenteeism. Once local needs are known, communities can deploy the right supports to the right students at the right time.³³

Across the country, community stakeholders have joined forces to implement comprehensive systems of support that work to support students' regular school attendance and thereby improve critical academic and youth life outcomes. Educators, system leaders, and concerned citizens everywhere can learn from the results of these approaches. They are demonstrating the power of coordinated community action in building a stronger future for all our kids. The task now is for every community to begin or continue the work of understanding the extent of any chronic absenteeism problem it may have and then work in a collaborative, coordinated fashion to provide students with necessary supports so they stay on-track for success in school and in life.

For more information on community-based efforts to eliminate chronic absenteeism across the country, visit:

- **Attendance Works** at <http://www.attendanceworks.org/what-works/>
- **Everyone Graduates Center** at Johns Hopkins University at: <http://new.every1graduates.org/tools-and-models/>
- **School Turnaround AmeriCorps Program** at <http://www.nationalservice.gov/special-initiatives/task-force-expanding-national-service/school-turnaround-ameri-corps>
- **The Campaign for Grade-level Reading** at <http://gradelevelreading.net/our-work/chronic-absence>.

³³ Maynard, B. R., McCrea, K., T., Pigott, T. D., & Kelly, M. S. (2013). Indicated truancy interventions for chronic truant students: A Campbell Systematic Review. *Research on Social Work Practice*, 23(1), 5-21. <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED535217.pdf>.

Developing Meaningful Partnerships to Address and Eliminate Chronic Absenteeism

Many schools and school districts across the country regularly partner and collaborate with outside organizations to provide supports and services that can help address the underlying causes of students' chronic absenteeism, in addition to other challenges. Students who are, or are at risk of becoming, chronically absent may benefit from supports and services best provided by third-party providers or agencies (e.g. public health agencies, homeless service providers, nonprofit youth-serving organizations) in collaboration with their local school or school district.

Such partnerships between schools and third-party organizations could entail the sharing of students' personal information and related data. It should be noted that student-level data sharing between schools and community partners must be consistent with applicable Federal and State laws concerning privacy and the sharing of student-level data, especially including the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). ED's Family Policy Compliance Office (FPCO), the office that administers FERPA, can provide support and information on how schools and school districts can engage in such activities with third-party providers and other agencies in compliance with Federal law. For more information and practical resource guides, please visit: <http://familypolicy.ed.gov/> and <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpcoc/doc/ferpa-and-community-based-orgs.pdf>

Community Action Guides: Taking Coordinated Action to Address and Eliminate Chronic Absenteeism

The following **Community Actions Guides** are designed to support coordinated, community-wide action on behalf of students who are, or are at risk of becoming, chronically absent from school. Each Guide includes important information about chronic absenteeism, suggested actions steps, and a list of resources that stakeholders may be able to use when working with youth in their communities.

Let's get started.

Every Student, Every Day:

A National Initiative to Address and Eliminate Chronic Absenteeism

Community Action Guide to Eliminate Chronic Absenteeism for **YOUTH**

Why Chronic Absenteeism Matters for Youth

As a young person, you are in a unique position to help your friends, classmates, and family understand a simple but important fact: *every day absent from school matters*.

Even though it may seem okay to miss a day of school every once in a while, these absences can add up and can take a toll on your future success. Missing too many days of school can make it hard for you to stay on track in your classes, which could put your high school graduation at risk. You may also miss out on all of the exciting opportunities to learn and pursue your interests that you might only be able to get at school.

Did You Know?

- Chronic absenteeism means missing 10% or more of school days in a year.
- 5 to 7.5 million students are chronically absent each year.
- Students who are chronically absent are less likely to succeed academically and more likely to drop out of school.
- Attending school every day increases your chances of success in school and in life.

The good news is that it is possible to change things for the better and have the greatest chance of success. Even if you are not chronically absent from school, as a young person, you have the power to take action and help eliminate chronic absenteeism in your community. You can help your friends, classmates, and family become informed and motivated to do something about it.

Did You Know?

A student is chronically absent if he or she misses as few as **two days** of school a month.

2 DAYS PER MONTH x 9 MONTHS = CHRONIC ABSENCE

Take Action to Help Eliminate Chronic Absenteeism

You Should:

1. Help your friends and classmates understand what *chronic absenteeism* is—missing more than 10 percent (18 days) of school days in a year.
2. Attend school every day, encourage your friends to attend school every day and remind them that every absence from school matters.
3. Talk with your school principal and teachers about the kind of support that you and/or students in your school need to attend and be successful at school every day.
4. Be active in your community to support projects to help eliminate chronic absenteeism and support other young people in schools.

Resources to Support Youth to Address and Eliminate Chronic Absenteeism

- Brought to you by USA.gov, **Kids.gov** is the official kids' portal for the U.S. government. We link kids, parents and teachers to U.S. government information and services on the web from government agencies, schools, and educational organizations, all geared to the learning level and interest of kids. See more at: www.kids.usa.gov/index.shtml.
- Learn more about President Obama's **My Brother's Keeper Initiative**, which works to provide supports to students who are at risk of falling off-track and not being successful in school so that they think more broadly about their future. See more at: www.whitehouse.gov/my-brothers-keeper
- **Youth.gov**. Learn more about the strategies, tools, and resources for youth, families, schools, youth-serving organizations, and community partnerships related to a variety of cross-cutting topics that affect youth. See more at: <http://youth.gov> and <http://engage.youth.gov/>.
- **StopBullying.gov** provides information from various government agencies on what bullying is, what cyberbullying is, who is at risk, and how you can prevent and respond to bullying. See more at: www.StopBullying.gov.
- **Resources for Homeless Youth**: This page is a one-stop spot for helping youth find housing. This page lists all HUD homeless programs and initiatives that can be used by youth and youth serving providers to help prevent and end youth homelessness, as well as resources, publications, and relevant links to other agencies and organizations. Additionally, this page provides an explanation of how HUD programs currently serve homeless youth and how HUD works together with other agencies to combat homelessness. See more at: www.hudexchange.info/homelessness-assistance/resources-for-homeless-youth/
- For more information on **preventing youth violence**, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Division of Violence Prevention for more information and resources to support youth violence prevention activities in your community. See more at: <http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/youthviolence/index.html>.
- **Additional Resources from the Family and Youth Services Bureau can be found here:** <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/fysb/programs/runaway-homeless-youth/about>.

Every Student, Every Day:

A National Initiative to Address and Eliminate Chronic Absenteeism

Community Action Guide to Eliminate Chronic Absenteeism for

PARENTS AND FAMILIES

Why Chronic Absenteeism Matters for Parents and Families

Your child's daily, on-time attendance in school is critical to his or her success in school and in life. It's understandable that some challenges to your child's school attendance are unavoidable, such as an illness or a family emergency. However, it's important to understand the impact of absences from school, especially if they become frequent. *Chronic absenteeism*, typically defined as missing 10 percent (18 days) or more of a school year – as few as a couple of days per month – can cause your child to fall behind in school. Absences can add up and impact your child's reading, writing, and math skills, which will have a negative effect on his or her future.

Did You Know?

- Chronic absenteeism means missing 10% or more of school days in a year.
- 5 to 7.5 million students are chronically absent each year.
- Students who are chronically absent are less likely to succeed academically and more likely to drop out of school.
- Attending school everyday increases a child's chances of success in school and in life.

While chronic absenteeism can be especially harmful to children in preschool and kindergarten, you also should know that any student who is chronically absent at any grade level is less likely to graduate high school or go on to succeed in college.

Families are their children's first, most important, and longest lasting teachers, advocates, and nurturers. Take the following action steps so that your children can develop a more positive attitude toward school, stay in school longer, have better attendance, and an overall rewarding school experience.

Did You Know?

A student is chronically absent if he or she misses as few as two days of school a month.

2 DAYS A MONTH x 9 MONTHS = CHRONIC ABSENCE

Take Action to Help Eliminate Chronic Absenteeism

Parents and Families Should:

1. Make getting to school on time everyday a high priority in your family.
2. Talk with your child about the important of school attendance from an early age and the negative effects of too many absences.
3. When necessary, create a safe space for your child to share what's keeping them from participating in school on a regular basis.
4. Have a back-up plan for getting your child to school when there are difficulties with transportation, family illness, or other challenges.
5. Schedule doctor and other appointments for after-school hours whenever possible.
6. Monitor students' school attendance to make sure your child is in class every day.
7. Contact your child's school to discuss supports and services that can help your child maintain regular school attendance.

Resources to Support Parents and Families to Address and Eliminate Chronic Absenteeism

- **Attendance Works** is a national nonprofit organization that works to raise awareness about chronic absenteeism, provides resources and handouts for parents and families. See more at: <http://www.attendanceworks.org/tools/for-parents/>.
- Raising the next generation is a shared responsibility. When families, communities and schools work together, students are more successful and the entire community benefits. Visit the **U.S. Department of Education's Family & Community Engagement Webpage** for more information at: <http://www.ed.gov/family-and-community-engagement>.
- The **US Department of Education** provides links and resources to support parents and families to encourage their children to attend and succeed in school every day. See more at: <http://www2.ed.gov/parents/landing.jhtml>.
- **Youth.gov**. Learn more about the information, strategies, tools, and resources for youth, families, schools, youth-serving organizations, and community partnerships related to a variety of cross-cutting topics that affect youth. See more at: <http://youth.gov> and <http://engage.youth.gov/>.
- **StopBullying.gov** provides information from various government agencies on [what bullying is](#), [what cyberbullying is](#), [who is at risk](#), and how you can [prevent](#) and [respond to bullying](#). See more at: www.StopBullying.gov.

- **Resources for Homeless Youth:** This page is a one-stop spot for youth, and those who help youth, to find housing. This page lists all HUD homeless programs and initiatives that can be used by youth and youth serving providers to help prevent and end youth homelessness, as well as resources, publications, and relevant links to other agencies and organizations. Additionally, this page provides an explanation of how HUD programs currently serve homeless youth and how HUD works together with other agencies to combat homelessness. See more at: www.hudexchange.info/homelessness-assistance/resources-for-homeless-youth/
- For more information on **preventing youth violence**, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Division of Violence Prevention for more information and resources to support youth violence prevention activities in your community. See more at: <http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/youthviolence/index.html>.
- Visit the Centers for Disease control and Prevention's **Division of Adolescent and School Health** for more information and resources for parents and families, teachers and other school staff, and school districts and administrators to implement to increase the extent to which students feel connected to school at http://www.cdc.gov/healthyouth/health_and_academics/index.htm.
- **Additional Resources from the Family and Youth Services Bureau can be found here:** <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/fysb/programs/runaway-homeless-youth/about>.

Every Student, Every Day:

A National Initiative to Address and Eliminate Chronic Absenteeism

Community Action Guide to Eliminate Chronic Absenteeism for

MENTORS AND VOLUNTEERS

Why Chronic Absenteeism Matters for Mentors and Volunteers

As a mentor, you know that high-quality, sustained mentoring can support young people in their efforts to stay on track in school, engage in positive behaviors, and avoid participating in negative activities that could put opportunities for academic or life success at risk. As a mentor or youth-serving volunteer, you are in a unique position to positively influence the life of a young person, especially if that young person is, or is at risk of becoming, chronically absent from school. In short, what you do as a mentor or volunteer is life-changing and can be life-saving for a young person.

Did You Know?

- Chronic absenteeism means missing 10% or more of school days in a year.
- 5 to 7.5 million students are chronically absent each year.
- Students who are chronically absent are less likely to succeed academically and more likely to drop out of school.
- Attending school everyday increases a child's chances of success in school and in life.

When students are in school every day, they are much more likely to engage in positive behaviors, stay on track academically, and graduate from high school. By helping your mentee or the young people you work with know how important daily attendance is—and that every absence from school matters—you can help eliminate chronic absenteeism in your community.

Below are actions steps that you can take to support young people and eliminate chronic absenteeism. Thank you for your service.

Did You Know?

A student is chronically absent if he or she misses as few as two days of school a month.

2 DAYS A MONTH x 9 MONTHS = CHRONIC ABSENCE

Take Action to Help Eliminate Chronic Absenteeism

Mentors and Volunteers Should:

1. Learn the facts about chronic absenteeism, its causes and effects, and why every absence from school matters in the life of a young person.
2. Check every day, or as much as possible, to see if the young people you work with are in school, and talk about the importance of being in school every day and what it means for their future.
3. As necessary, create a safe space for mentees to share what's keeping them from participating in school on a regular basis.
4. Help inform the places where you volunteer to understand what chronic absenteeism is and explore the role they can play in eliminating chronic absenteeism within their community.

Resources to Support Mentors and Volunteers to Address and Eliminate Chronic Absenteeism

National Mentoring Resource Center

The National Mentoring Resource Center serves as a comprehensive and reliable resource for mentoring tools, program and training materials, and information. In addition to accessing online resources, mentoring programs can apply for no-cost training and technical assistance to support them in more deeply incorporating evidence-based practices, ultimately leading to greater positive outcomes for youth. For more information, please visit <http://www.nationalmentoringresourcecenter.org/>.

Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), US Department of Justice

OJJDP provides access to free resources for mentors, families, and communities to support high-quality mentoring for all youth. This comprehensive online resource provides mentoring tools and information, program and training materials, and technical assistance to help local programs and practitioners improve the quality and effectiveness of their mentoring efforts. See more at: <http://www.ojjdp.gov/programs/mentoring.html>.

Institute for Youth Success at Education Northwest

With a mission to empower youth organizations to improve outcomes and reduce social costs, the Institute for Youth Success provides relevant, evidence-based information on topics ranging from recruitment to program management and offers services that create efficiencies and make youth-development programs stronger. For more information, please visit <http://educationnorthwest.org/institute-for-youth-success>.

MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership

MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership (MENTOR) is the unifying champion for expanding quality youth mentoring relationships in the United States. For nearly 25 years, MENTOR has served the mentoring field by providing a public voice, developing and delivering resources to mentoring programs nationwide and promoting quality for mentoring through standards, cutting-edge research and state of the art tools. For more information and resources on mentoring, please visit: <http://www.mentoring.org/>.

Attendance Works

Attendance Works, a national nonprofit organization that works to raise awareness about chronic absenteeism, provides resources and handouts for a cross-section of stakeholders to understand and take action to eliminate chronic absenteeism, including for mentors. See more at: <http://www.attendanceworks.org/tools/for-leveraging-volunteers/>.

AARP Foundation Experience Corps

AARP Foundation Experience Corps, a national leader in engaging older adult tutors to improve K-3 student literacy in disadvantaged schools, has joined forces with AARP, the nation's largest organization for Americans who are 50 years of age and older. As part of AARP Foundation, Experience Corps will have the opportunity to vastly increase its potential to tap into the experience and passion of older Americans to ensure that every child has a chance to succeed in school and in life. For more information, please visit <http://www.aarp.org/experience-corps/>.

Every Student, Every Day:

A National Initiative to Address and Eliminate Chronic Absenteeism

Community Action Guide to Eliminate Chronic Absenteeism for

SCHOOL DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENTS AND STAFF, AND SCHOOL PERSONNEL

Why Chronic Absenteeism Matters for School District Superintendents and School Personnel

The research on chronic absenteeism is clear: Chronic absenteeism is a primary cause of low academic achievement and a powerful predictor of those students who may eventually drop out of school. An estimated five to seven and a half million students are chronically absent each year. But too often, sole reliance on average daily attendance figures masks the high numbers of students who may be chronically absent and in danger of falling behind. Much of the work you do to improve public education and student outcomes each year can be seriously undermined by chronic absenteeism among your students, which makes it imperative that we work urgently to ensure that every student is supported so that they can be in school every day.

Did You Know?

- Chronic absenteeism means missing 10% or more of school days in a year.
- 5 to 7.5 million students are chronically absent each year.
- Students who are chronically absent are less likely to succeed academically and more likely to drop out of school.
- Chronic absenteeism affects students who benefit from school the most, especially students who are low-income, students of color, homeless children, students with disabilities, students who are highly mobile, and/or juvenile justice-involved youth.

As superintendents, administrators, classroom educators, and school-based personnel, you are in a unique position to identify struggling students and then mobilize systems of support for students who are, or are at risk of becoming, chronically absent from school. In addition, you can review and revise discipline policies to ensure that chronically absent students are supported and reengaged in school, rather than further excluded from class through punitive disciplinary policies. By providing engaging and relevant instruction, opportunities for enrichment and extra support, and safe, supportive learning

environments, you can help ensure not only all students' daily attendance, but also regular engagement and communication with families that can build trusting relationships that can help ensure students are in school every day.

To eliminate chronic absenteeism, schools must first track daily attendance figures for students, and then enable district staff, classroom educators, school administrators, and other school-based staff to work in a coordinated and collaborative fashion to support students who are missing too many days of school. Every member of a school's staff should be encouraged to play an active role in engaging students and ensuring that they are supported to attend and succeed in school every day. The action steps below are crafted for different groups of professionals in schools—who will play different roles in this work, but who also should work collaboratively to achieve maximum impact

Take Action to Help Eliminate Chronic Absenteeism

School District Superintendents and District Staff Should:

1. Understand the research about chronic absenteeism, which students are most often affected and how it affects them. Ensure awareness of these facts among district personnel.
2. Invest in sustainable early warning prevention and intervention systems and procedures that support schools in tracking daily attendance and identifying students who are, or are at-risk of becoming, chronically absent, and intervene *before* they miss too much school.
3. Direct your student support team to work with schools to provide necessary services that address the underlying causes of chronic absenteeism to ensure students' daily attendance in school.
4. Mobilize efforts at the district and school levels to partner with third-party providers and agencies—in a manner consistent with applicable State law and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)—that can provide additional support services to students who are chronically absent and to their families (for more information, please see <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/doc/ferpa-and-community-based-orgs.pdf>).
5. Engage in and lead community-wide, cross-sector efforts to eliminate chronic absenteeism among students within the community by addressing its underlying causes.
6. Regularly communicate with your staff, students, and their families about the importance of daily attendance and the availability of any support services that can help keep students in school and on track to success.

Did You Know?

A student is chronically absent if he or she misses as few as two days of school a month.

2 DAYS A MONTH x 9 MONTHS = CHRONIC ABSENCE

Take Action to Help Eliminate Chronic Absenteeism

Preschool-12th Grade Educators and School Staff Should:

1. Understand the research about chronic absenteeism, which students are most often affected and how it affects them. Ensure awareness among school personnel.
2. Use data from early warning prevention and intervention systems to track daily attendance and identify students who are, or are at-risk of becoming, chronically absent and intervene *before* they miss too much school.
3. Revise discipline policies to remove punitive consequences such as suspension and expulsion for chronically absent students, and implement supports for such students.
4. Engage third-party providers and agencies—in a manner consistent with applicable State law and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)—that can provide additional support services to students who are chronically absent and to their families (for more information, please see <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/doc/ferpa-and-community-based-orgs.pdf>).
5. Support and engage in community-wide, cross-sector efforts to eliminate chronic absenteeism among students within the community by addressing its underlying causes.
6. Regularly communicate to all staff, students, and their families about the importance of daily attendance and the availability of any support services that can help keep students in school and on track to success.
7. Acknowledge students and families that demonstrate improved attendance, and use that occasion as an opportunity to reinforce the importance of daily school attendance.

Resources to Support Educators to Address and Eliminate Chronic Absenteeism

Information and Resources

Attendance Works

Attendance Works, a national nonprofit organization that works to raise awareness about chronic absenteeism, provides resources and handouts for a cross-section of stakeholders to understand and take action to eliminate chronic absenteeism, including resources for school districts and educators. See more at: <http://www.attendanceworks.org>.

ED and DOJ School Discipline Guidance Package

This package of resources explains how schools can administer school discipline free of race discrimination, offers guiding principles for improving school climate and discipline practices, provides a directory of federal school climate and discipline resources, and includes a compendium of school discipline laws and regulations. See more at: <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/school-discipline/fedefforts.html#guidance>.

ED and HHS Policy Statement on Expulsion and Suspension Practices in Early Learning Settings

Includes recommendations from federal agencies to support families, early childhood programs, and states in preventing and severely limiting expulsion and suspension practices in early childhood settings. See more at:

<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ecd/child-health-development/reducing-suspension-and-expulsion-practices>

Everyone Graduates Center at Johns Hopkins University

The Everyone Graduates Center seeks to identify the barriers that stand in the way of all students graduating from high school prepared for adult success, to develop strategic solutions to overcome the barriers, and to build local capacity to implement and sustain them. See more at: <http://www.every1graduates.org/>.

Family & Youth Services Bureau: Resources for Runaway and Homeless Youth

For information and resources from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to support the success and health of runaway and homeless youth, please visit

<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/fysb/programs/runaway-homeless-youth/about>.

HUD Resources for Homeless Youth

This page is a one-stop spot for youth, and those who help youth, to find housing. This page lists all HUD homeless programs and initiatives that can be used by youth and youth serving providers to help prevent and end youth homelessness, as well as resources, publications, and relevant links to other agencies and organizations. Additionally, this page provides an explanation of how HUD programs currently serve homeless youth and how HUD works together with other agencies to combat this problem. See more at:

www.hudexchange.info/homelessness-assistance/resources-for-homeless-youth/

National Center for Safe Supportive Learning Environments (NCSSLE)

NCSSLE is funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Safe and Healthy Students to help address issues related to the implementation and sustainability of safe and supportive learning environments for all students. NCSSLE's website includes information

about the Center's training and technical assistance, products and tools, and latest research findings. We welcome you to explore and discover, ask questions, and share your perspective. For more information, please visit: <http://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/>.

National Center on School Engagement

NCSE collaborates with school districts, law enforcement agencies, courts, and state and federal agencies to support youth and their families to be engaged at school. We pay special attention to truancy, dropout, and bullying prevention. See more at: <http://schoolengagement.org/>.

National Dropout Prevention Center/Network

Since inception, the National Dropout Prevention Center/Network has worked to improve opportunities for all young people to fully develop the academic, social, work, and healthy life skills needed to graduate from high school and lead productive lives. By promoting awareness of successful programs and policies related to dropout prevention, the work of the Network and its members has made an impact on education from the local to the national level. See more at: <http://dropoutprevention.org/>.

U.S. Department of Education's Family Policy Compliance Office (FPCO)

FPCO administers FERPA and can provide support and information on how schools and school districts can engage in such activities with third-party providers and other agencies in compliance with Federal law. For more information and practical resource guides, please visit: <http://familypolicy.ed.gov/> and <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpcoc/doc/ferpa-and-community-based-orgs.pdf>.

Programs to Help Address and Eliminate Chronic Absenteeism

AARP Foundation Experience Corps

AARP Foundation Experience Corps, a national leader in engaging older adult tutors to improve K-3 student literacy in disadvantaged schools, has joined forces with AARP, the nation's largest organization for Americans who are 50 years of age and older. As part of AARP Foundation, Experience Corps will have the opportunity to vastly increase its potential to tap into the experience and passion of older Americans to ensure that every child has a chance to succeed in school and in life. For more information, please visit <http://www.aarp.org/experience-corps/>.

Check & Connect

Check & Connect is an evidence-based, comprehensive intervention designed to enhance student engagement at school and with learning for marginalized, disengaged students in grades K-12, through relationship building, problem solving and capacity building, and persistence. A goal of *Check & Connect* is to foster school completion with academic and social competence. See more at: <http://checkandconnect.umn.edu/>.

Institute for Youth Success at Education Northwest

With a mission to empower youth organizations to improve outcomes and reduce social costs, the Institute for Youth Success provides relevant, evidence-based information on topics ranging from recruitment to program management and offers services that create efficiencies and make youth-development programs stronger. For more information, please visit <http://educationnorthwest.org/institute-for-youth-success>.

School Turnaround AmeriCorps

The School Turnaround AmeriCorps program supports the placement of a dedicated cadre of AmeriCorps members from the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) in persistently underachieving schools across the country. These AmeriCorps members will be serving in schools implementing school turnaround interventions as required by Department of Education's (ED) School Improvement Grant (SIG) program or as required through Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) flexibility. AmeriCorps members will help keep students on track to graduate by working to increase student academic achievement, attendance and high school graduation rates; improve college and career readiness; and provide college enrollment assistance and advisement. For more information, please visit: <http://www.nationalservice.gov/special-initiatives/task-force-expanding-national-service/school-turnaround-amicorps>.

The Campaign for Grade-Level Reading

The Campaign is a collaborative effort by foundations, nonprofit partners, business leaders, government agencies, states and communities across the nation to ensure that more children in low-income families succeed in school and graduate prepared for college, a career, and active citizenship. The Campaign focuses on an important predictor of school success and high school graduation—grade-level reading by the end of third grade—as well as addressing chronic absenteeism among youth. For more information, please visit: <http://gradelevelreading.net/about-us>.

Early Warning System Implementation Resources

A Practitioner's Guide to Implementing Early Warning Systems

Developed by ED's Northwest Regional Education Lab and the Institute for Education Sciences, this guide summarizes what is known about early warning system implementation and describes how states, districts, and schools can draw on the research to inform their work locally. To download this guide free of charge, please see: http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/northwest/pdf/rel_2015056.pdf.

National High School Center Early Warning System Tools and Resources

The National High School Center was supported by a grant from the U.S. Department of Education that ended March 31st, 2013. However, the website and its free resources remain available. This includes resources to support local school districts and schools in understanding more about the purpose and use of early warning systems to identify and better support students at risk of dropping out of school. For more information, please visit: <http://www.betterhighschools.org/>.

Mentoring Resources

MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership

MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership (MENTOR) is the unifying champion for expanding quality youth mentoring relationships in the United States. For nearly 25 years, MENTOR has served the mentoring field by providing a public voice, developing and delivering resources to mentoring programs nationwide, and promoting quality for mentoring through standards, cutting-edge research and state of the art tools. For more information and resources on mentoring, please visit: <http://www.mentoring.org/>.

National Mentoring Resource Center

The U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention is proud to partner with *MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership* to bring this resource to the youth mentoring field. The National Mentoring Resource Center serves as a comprehensive and reliable resource for mentoring tools, program and training materials, and information. In addition to accessing online resources, mentoring programs can apply for no-cost training and technical assistance to support them in more deeply incorporating evidence-based practices, ultimately leading to greater positive outcomes for youth. For more information, please visit <http://www.nationalmentoringresourcecenter.org/>.

Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), US Department of Justice

OJJDP provides access to free resources for mentors, families, and communities to support high-quality mentoring for all youth. This comprehensive online resource provides mentoring tools and information, program and training materials, and technical assistance to help local programs and practitioners improve the quality and effectiveness of their mentoring efforts. See more at: <http://www.ojjdp.gov/programs/mentoring.html>.

Every Student, Every Day:

A National Initiative to Address and Eliminate Chronic Absenteeism

Community Action Guide to Eliminate Chronic Absenteeism for

EARLY LEARNING PROVIDERS

Why Chronic Absenteeism Matters for Early Learning

Advances in neuroscience and cognitive science research demonstrate that the early years are a critical period in children's learning and development, and set the foundation for higher level thinking skills later in life. The benefits of high-quality early education for young children are wide-ranging and can contribute to academic achievement and stronger social-emotional and health outcomes for young children. Children who attend high-quality preschool programs are more likely to enter school healthy and ready to learn, and are less likely to be retained in their grade or to become involved with the criminal justice system. Chronic absenteeism—or missing at least 10 percent or more of school days in a year—negatively affects all students, particularly young children. Whether because of poor child and/or parent health, lack of transportation or child-care support, family-related issues, or suspensions or expulsions—chronic absenteeism can have a devastating effect on a child's education and future. Children with lower preschool attendance are less ready for kindergarten, and those who are chronically absent in both kindergarten and first grade are much less likely to be reading at grade-level by the end third grade. If not reading on grade-level by the end of third grade, a child is four times more likely to drop out of high school.

Did You Know?

- Chronic absenteeism means missing 10% or more of school days in a year.
- 5 to 7.5 million students are chronically absent each year.
- Students who are chronically absent are less likely to succeed academically and more likely to drop out of school.
- Chronic absenteeism affects students who benefit from school the most, especially students who are low-income, students of color, homeless children, students with disabilities, students who are highly mobile, and/or juvenile justice-involved youth.

Meaningful, supportive conversations about attendance between families and program staff are critical. Schools should work with families to identify the root causes of frequent absences from school (i.e., health, transportation, or employment issues) and then connect families to social supports and services in the community that can help address those

issues. Moreover, early learning educators and program staff can help to reduce or eliminate a pattern of absenteeism by acknowledging and promoting the importance of consistent attendance and forming community partnerships to address and eliminate chronic absenteeism. You can help eliminate chronic absenteeism among young children by taking the following action steps.

Take Action to Help Eliminate Chronic Absenteeism

Early Learning Providers should:

1. Communicate with parents and students that attendance matters and that good preschool through third grade attendance contributes to later school success.
2. Monitor the attendance patterns of individual students to identify children and families who may need support.
3. Acknowledge children and families who demonstrate good or improved attendance.
4. Create partnerships with community organizations to ensure that families have the supports they need to ensure good attendance, such as healthcare, reliable transportation, child care, and stable housing.

Resources to Support Communities and Early Learning Providers to Address and Eliminate Chronic Absenteeism

- [*Health Services to Promote Attendance*](#) This tip sheet from the National Center on Health (NCH) discusses the impact of health on chronic absenteeism.
- [*September is Attendance Awareness Month*](#) is a web page promoting the nationwide recognition of the importance of attendance on development, learning, and academic achievement.
- [*Civil Rights Data Collection: Early Childhood Education Snapshot*](#) provides data on preschool access and discipline, as well as kindergarten retention.
- [*ED and HHS Policy Statement on Expulsion and Suspension Practices in Early Learning Settings*](#) includes recommendations from federal agencies to support families, early childhood programs, and states in preventing and severely limiting expulsion and suspension practices in early childhood settings.
<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ecd/child-health-development/reducing-suspension-and-expulsion-practices>
- [*ED and DOJ School Discipline Guidance Package*](#) (Jan. 2014), which explains how schools can administer school discipline free of race discrimination, offers guiding principles for improving school climate and discipline practices, provides a directory of federal school climate and discipline resources, and includes a compendium of school discipline laws and regulations.
<http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/school-discipline/fedefforts.html#guidance>
- **Resources from the Administration for Children and Families**
[\(https://www.acf.hhs.gov/\)](https://www.acf.hhs.gov/)
 - **Action Plan for Attendance**

<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/operations/docs/sample-action-plan.pdf>

- **Interactive Homelessness Lessons- Enrollment and Attendance**
<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/family/family/Homelessness/hmls/enrollment/attendance.html>
- **Asthma Resource Starter Kit**
<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/health/safety-injury-prevention/envirom-protection-efforts/asthma-toolkit.html>
- **Well Child Health Care and Importance for Young Children**
http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/health/physical-health/ongoing-source/health_lea_00215_070605.html
http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/health/physical-health/ongoing-source/health_lea_00757_110905.html
- **Health Services to Promote Attendance**
<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/health/school-readiness/strategies/promoting-attendance.html>

- ***AARP Foundation Experience Corps***

AARP Foundation Experience Corps, a national leader in engaging older adult tutors to improve K-3 student literacy in disadvantaged schools, has joined forces with AARP, the nation's largest organization for Americans who are 50 years of age and over. As part of AARP Foundation, Experience Corps will have the opportunity to vastly increase its potential to tap into the experience and passion of older Americans to ensure that every child has a chance to succeed in school and in life. For more information, please visit <http://www.aarp.org/experience-corps/>.

Every Student, Every Day:

A National Initiative to Address and Eliminate Chronic Absenteeism

Community Action Guide to Eliminate Chronic Absenteeism for

HEALTH CARE, PUBLIC HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICE AGENCIES AND PROVIDERS

Why Chronic Absenteeism Matters for Health Care, Public Health, and Human Service Agencies and Providers

Chronic absenteeism can lead to poor educational and life outcomes for children, and it can also be an indicator of underlying social, health, or economic challenges facing children, youth, and their families and communities.

Research indicates that among the many common causes of chronic absenteeism include respiratory illness (e.g. asthma), dental pain, hunger, abuse and neglect, unstable housing and family economic insecurity, punitive school discipline practices, fear of bullying, and mental health needs of children, youth, and their families, such as depression.

Did You Know?

- Chronic absenteeism means missing 10% or more of school days in a year.
- 5 to 7.5 million students are chronically absent each year.
- Students who are chronically absent are less likely to succeed academically and more likely to drop out of school.
- Chronic absenteeism affects students who benefit from school the most, especially students who are low-income, students of color, homeless children, students with disabilities, students who are highly mobile, and/or juvenile justice-involved youth.

School-based health centers and school-based health services, such as those provided by school nurses, can have a positive influence on school attendance. Moreover, all schools can improve student health and health outcomes by promoting hand washing; supporting asthma and dental interventions; better addressing child and family behavioral and mental health needs; engaging parents and families to assist with housing and other family financial needs; and connecting children and families to other necessary health and social service interventions.

Health care, public health, and human service agencies and providers play a critical role in the well-being of children and can help improve school attendance, especially among the most at-risk children, by establishing effective partnerships with school districts and schools so that children get the support they need when they need it. The following action steps can help such health agencies and providers support community-wide efforts to address and eliminate chronic absenteeism.

Take Action to Help Eliminate Chronic Absenteeism

Health Care and Public Health Agencies and Providers Should:

1. Understand the relationship between chronic absenteeism and unmet health and behavioral health needs of children and youth in the local community that affect students' daily school attendance.
2. Ask about school and school attendance in a positive way at every health care visit. Encourage families to develop strategies that allow children to attend school on a regular basis. Work in partnership with school staff to support attendance of your patient-students.
3. Partner with local school districts and schools to support school health improvement plans to improve access to necessary and preventative health and behavioral health services for children and youth.
4. Promote school-based mental health and behavioral health services that support children's unique social emotional needs.
5. Ensure that physical and mental health needs of children and youth are reflected in local nonprofit hospital community needs assessments as per the Affordable Care Act community benefit provision (for more information, visit https://www.nlm.nih.gov/hsrinfo/community_benefit.html).
6. Learn from successful public health and health provider collaborations with school districts to inform local partnerships and action plans.

Take Action to Help Eliminate Chronic Absenteeism

Human Service Agencies and Providers Should:

1. Invest in infant and early childhood mental health services that can identify early young children who are at high risk of chronic absenteeism in preschool and school settings.
2. Promote school-based mental health and behavioral health services that support children’s unique social emotional needs.
3. Partner with schools to engage parents and support parents in their children’s education and connect parents with family resources to promote family economic stability, housing stability, and positive social emotional development of children.
4. Homeless-serving agencies can partner with McKinney-Vento liaisons at schools to identify homeless youth and support their continued engagement in school.

Federal Resources to Support Health Care, Public Health & Human Service Agencies and Providers to Address and Eliminate Chronic Absenteeism

Operating Division/Staff Division Key

- ACF – Administration for Children and Families
- CDC – Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- HRSA – Health Resources and Services Administration
- OASH – Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health
 - OAH – Office of Adolescent Health
 - ODPHP – Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion
- SAMHSA – Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

| Operating Division / Staff Division | Resource | Description | Website |
|-------------------------------------|---|--|---|
| ACF | <i>Health Services to Promote Attendance Tip Sheet</i> | This tip sheet from the National Center on Health (NCH) discusses the impact of health on chronic absenteeism. | http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/health/school-readiness/strategies/promoting-attendance.html |
| ED | <i>ED OCR Civil Rights Data Collection: Early</i> | ED OCR Civil Rights Data Collection: Early Childhood Education Snapshot provides data on preschool access | http://ocrdata.ed.gov/Downloads/CRDC- |

| Operating Division / Staff Division | Resource | Description | Website |
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| | Childhood Education Snapshot | and discipline, as well as kindergarten retention. | Early-Childhood-Education-Snapshot.pdf |
| ACF | ED and HHS Policy Statement on Expulsion and Suspension Practices in Early Learning Settings | Includes recommendations from federal agencies to support families, early childhood programs, and states in preventing and severely limiting expulsion and suspension practices in early childhood settings. | http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/school-discipline/policy-statement-ece-expulsions-suspensions.pdf |
| ACF | Asthma Resource Starter Kit | The contents may be used to raise awareness about asthma and environmental triggers, to help families manage or eliminate environmental triggers in their homes, and to reduce children's exposure to indoor asthma triggers in Head Start and child care facilities. | http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/health/safety-injury-prevention/environmental-protection-efforts/asthma-toolkit.html |
| ACF | Well Child Health Care and Importance for Young Children | This learning tool for health and other program staff presents key concepts related to well-child health care in Head Start programs. | http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/health/physical-health/ongoing-source/health_lea_002_15_070605.html |
| CDC | School Connectedness: Strategies for Increasing Protective Factors Among Youth | Protective factors include personal characteristics such as a positive view of one's future; life conditions such as frequent parental presence in the home at key times (e.g., after school, at dinner time); and behaviors such as active participation in school activities. This publication defines and describes the components of school connectedness and identifies specific actions that schools can take to increase school connectedness. | School Connectedness: Strategies for Increasing Protective Factors Among Youth - http://www.cdc.gov/healthyouth/protective/pdf/connectedness.pdf Fostering school connectedness : |

| Operating Division / Staff Division | Resource | Description | Website |
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| | | | <p>improving student health and academic achievement : information for school districts and school administrators - http://stacks.cdc.gov/view/cdc/21067</p> <p>Fostering school connectedness : improving student health and academic achievement : information for teachers and other school staff - http://stacks.cdc.gov/view/cdc/21066</p> <p>Helping your child feel connected to school : information for parents and families - http://stacks.cdc.gov/view/cdc/21065</p> <p>Promoting parent engagement in schools to prevent HIV and other STDs among teens : information for state and local education agencies - http://stacks.cdc.gov/view/cdc/32925</p> |
| CDC | <i>Whole School, Whole Community, Whole</i> | The WSCC is a unified and collaborative approach designed to improve learning and health in our nation's | http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/wsc/index |

| Operating Division / Staff Division | Resource | Description | Website |
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| | <i>Child Model (WSCC)</i> | schools. This model serves as the foundation for the health and education sectors along with families and communities to improve each child’s cognitive, physical, social, and emotional development. | x.htm |
| CDC | <i>School Health Index: A Self-Assessment and Planning Guide (SHI)</i> | The SHI is an online self-assessment and planning tool that schools can use to improve their health and safety policies and programs by identifying their strengths and weaknesses and developing an action plan for improvement. | http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/shi/index.htm |
| CDC | <i>Health and Academic Achievement</i> | Public health and education professionals can use the tools on this page to communicate the link between healthy eating, physical activity, and improved academic achievement to engage stakeholders in supporting healthy school environments. | http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/health_and_academics/pdf/health-academic-achievement.pdf |
| CDC | <i>Putting Local School Wellness Policies into Action: Stories from School Districts and Schools</i> | A local school wellness policy is a written document that guides a local educational agency or school district’s efforts to create supportive school nutrition and physical activity environments. This compilation of 11 stories provides examples of steps and strategies used to implement wellness policies. | http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/npao/pdf/SchoolWellnessInAction.pdf |
| CDC | <i>Comprehensive School Physical Activity Program (CSPAP)</i> | A Comprehensive School Physical Activity Program (CSPAP) is a multi-component approach by which school districts and schools use all opportunities for students to be physically active, meet the nationally-recommended 60 minutes of physical activity each day, and develop the knowledge, skills, and confidence to be physically active for a lifetime. This page contains an implementation guide for school districts and schools as well as supporting materials. | http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/physicalactivity/cspap.htm |
| CDC | <i>School Health Guidelines to Promote Healthy Eating and</i> | CDC synthesized research and best practices related to promoting healthy eating and physical activity in schools, culminating in nine guidelines accompanied by a set of implementation strategies developed to help | http://www.cdc.gov/mwr/pdf/rr/rr6005.pdf |

| Operating Division / Staff Division | Resource | Description | Website |
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| | <i>Physical Activity</i> | schools work towards achieving each recommendation. | |
| CDC | <i>Parent Engagement: Strategies for Involving Parents in School Health</i> | This strategy guide can help schools evaluate their efforts to increase parent engagement in school health to learn which actions have the greatest impact. | http://www.cdc.gov/healthyouth/protective/pdf/parent_engagement_strategies.pdf |
| HRSA | <i>Bullying Prevention Initiative</i> | Children who are bullied are more likely to miss, skip, or drop out of school. In 2012, HRSA released a Bullying Prevention Training Module and Community Action Toolkit designed to help local community leaders understand best practices in stopping bullying and supporting youth, as well as empowering them to facilitate multidisciplinary action planning in prevention on the local level. | www.StopBullying.gov/training |
| HRSA | <i>Bright Futures: Guidelines for Health Supervision of Infants, Children, and Adolescents</i> | Bright Futures: Guidelines for Health Supervision of Infants, Children, and Adolescents emphasizes the importance of school for children and adolescents starting at the age 5 preventive services visit. | https://brightfutures.ap.org/Pages/default.aspx |
| | <i>Healthy People 2020's Adolescent Health</i> | Healthy People provides science-based, 10-year national objectives for improving the health of all Americans. The adolescent health topic area contains several objectives addressing academic achievement, including on-time high school graduation (a Leading Health Indicator), reading and math proficiency, and reducing school absenteeism due to illness and injury. | http://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/topics-objectives/topic/Adolescent-Health |
| OASH/OAH | <i>OAH website</i> | The OAH website provides a wealth of information on adolescent health topics, evidence-based programs, and resources and publications, including data resources and national and state facts. | http://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/ |
| OASH/OAH | <i>Adolescent Health: Think, Act, Grow (TAG)</i> | Adolescent Health: Think, Act, Grow (TAG) is a national call to action to improve adolescent health in the United States. The TAG section of the OAH website provides current information about American adolescents, a Playbook that outlines five essentials for adolescent | http://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/tag/ |

| Operating Division / Staff Division | Resource | Description | Website |
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| | | health and identifies specific action steps and resources for youth-serving individuals and organizations, families and teens. | |
| OASH/OAH | <i>Teen Pregnancy Prevention Resource Center</i> | The TPP Resource Center serves as a repository of resources for professionals working to prevent teen pregnancy. The Resource Center includes “training areas” focused on choosing an evidence-based program; recruitment, retention, and engagement; implementation; engaging vulnerable populations; strategic communication; sustainability; and evaluation as well as “resources by topic” including resources on the link between teen pregnancy and mental health, violence, and substance abuse; adolescent development; staff development; and healthy relationships. | http://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/oah-initiatives/teen_pregnancy/ |
| OASH/OAH | <i>OAH Pregnancy Assistance Fund (PAF) Resource and Training Center Website</i> | To facilitate easy access to targeted information including webinars, e-learning modules, current teen pregnancy information, and other resources to support expectant and parenting teens. (Note: In addition to preventing teen pregnancy, providing critical supports to students who are expectant or parenting, is also a key strategy to help reduce chronic absenteeism. The PAF program is the only grant program specifically focused on supporting expectant and parenting teens with the services they need to help them stay in high school and continue with further education.) | http://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/oah-initiatives/paf |
| OASH/OAH | <i>The National Resource Center for HIV/AIDS Prevention among Adolescents</i> | The Office of Adolescent Health (OAH) supports The National Resource Center for HIV/AIDS Prevention among Adolescents (Center). The Center supports adolescent service providers by providing web-based resources, evidence-based program information, and links to training and technical assistance to help prevent HIV/AIDS among adolescents, in particular adolescents | http://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/oah-initiatives/national-resource-center.html |

| Operating Division / Staff Division | Resource | Description | Website |
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| | | from minority and high-risk populations. | |
| OASH/ODPHP | <i>Reframing school dropout as a public health issue</i> | This article summarizes knowledge on the health benefits of high school graduation and discuss the pathways by which graduating from high school contributes to good health. Strategies for reducing school dropout rates are examined, and in addition, the article provides recommended actions health professionals can take to reframe the school dropout rate as a public health issue. | http://www.cdc.gov/pd/issues/2007/oct/pdf/07_0063.pdf |
| OASH/ODPHP | <i>Prolonged school non-attendance in adolescence: a practical approach</i> | This research finds that by using a specific framework, an understanding of the factors contributing to a young person's school non-attendance can be developed. Interventions leading to a successful return to school have the potential to lower the risk of associated long-term adverse health outcomes. | http://adc.bmj.com/content/early/2014/06/09/archdischild-2013-304595 |
| OASH/ODPHP | <i>The school environment and adolescent well-being: Beyond academics</i> | This brief is designed to be of particular interest to school principals, district staff, and others who are responsible for all aspects of school functioning. It is also useful to those focusing on a narrower range of school functions (e.g., academics, health and safety, civic development) who want a better sense of how their concerns fit into the larger environment. | http://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/resources/school-environment-and-adolescent-well-being-beyond-academics |
| SAMHS A | <i>KnowBullying: Put the power to prevent bullying in your hand</i> | Empowers parents, caregivers, and educators with the tools they need to start the conversation with their children about bullying. KnowBullying, a 2014 recipient of the Bronze Award in the Mobile category from the Web Health Awards, describes strategies to prevent bullying and explains how to recognize warning signs that a child is bullying, witnessing bullying, or being bullied. Includes a section for educators. | http://store.samhsa.gov/product/KnowBullying-Put-the-power-to-prevent-bullying-in-your-hand/PEP14-KNOWBULLYAPP |
| SAMHS A | <i>Preventing Suicide: A Toolkit for High Schools</i> | Assists high schools and school districts in designing and implementing strategies to prevent suicide and promote behavioral health. Includes tools to implement a multi-faceted suicide prevention program that responds to the | http://store.samhsa.gov/product/Preventing-Suicide-A-Toolkit-for-High-Schools/SMA12- |

| Operating Division / Staff Division | Resource | Description | Website |
|-------------------------------------|---|---|---|
| | | needs and cultures of students. | 4669 |
| SAMHS A | <i>Talk. They Hear You</i> | The <i>Talk. They Hear You</i> campaign includes easy ways to incorporate support for teachers and staff to address underage drinking into an already busy school day, including Help Students Get a Good Start (PDF 622 KB) . | http://www.samhsa.gov/underage-drinking/partner-resources/materials-school |
| SAMHS A | <i>Talk. They Hear You. Underage Drinking Prevention Campaign DVD – Shopping</i> | Provides parents of children ages 9 to 15 with the tools and information they need to start talking with their children early about the dangers of alcohol. Includes a suite of materials that helps reinforce the underage drinking prevention campaign's messages. | http://store.samhsa.gov/product/SMA13-4755-SHOPPING |
| SAMHS A | <i>Talk. They Hear You. Mobile App</i> | Helps parents and caregivers learn the do's and don'ts about talking to their children about the dangers of underage drinking. Allows parents to practice bringing up the topic of alcohol, learn questions to ask, and adjust their approach with help from coaches. | http://store.samhsa.gov/product/SAMHSA-Talk-They-Hear-You-Mobile-App/PEP15-TALKAPP |
| SAMHS A | <i>The Safe Schools/Healthy Students Initiative: A Legacy of Success</i> | By focusing on five key areas, Safe Schools/Healthy Students communities use data to decide what their students and families need and then develop initiatives and programs to satisfy those needs. | http://store.samhsa.gov/shin/content/SMA13-4798/SMA13-4798.pdf |

Every Student, Every Day:

A National Initiative to Address and Eliminate Chronic Absenteeism

Community Action Guide to Eliminate Chronic Absenteeism for **PUBLIC HOUSING AUTHORITIES**

Why Chronic Absenteeism Matters to Public Housing Authorities (PHAs)

Chronic absenteeism is closely correlated with both students' poverty and their neighborhoods, including available housing options. A 2014 study of absenteeism in New York City elementary schools demonstrates this relationship: according to the study, schools with public housing in their attendance zones and more students in temporary housing experienced higher rates of chronic absenteeism (see more at: <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/53ee4f0be4b015b9c3690d84/t/547ccfe4b03f842b275001/1417465839022/Better+Picture+of+Poverty+PA+FINAL.pdf>).

Did You Know?

- Chronic absenteeism means missing 10% or more of school days in a year.
- 5 to 7.5 million students are chronically absent each year.
- Students who are chronically absent are less likely to succeed academically and more likely to drop out of school.
- Chronic absenteeism affects students who benefit from school the most, especially students who are low-income, students of color, homeless children, students with disabilities, students who are highly mobile, and/or juvenile justice-involved youth.

We know that housing challenges are a major cause of chronic absenteeism. Addressing the challenges outlined below is often at the core of PHAs' missions:

- ***Substandard housing conditions.*** Poor housing conditions such as moisture, mold, lack of heat, lead paint, overcrowding, or pest infestations can affect children's physical and psychological health. In turn, these health consequences keep students home from school. Asthma, for example, is a leading cause of absenteeism and often results from substandard housing conditions.
- ***Homelessness.*** Some evidence indicates that homeless students are more likely to be absent from school than children with stable housing.
- ***Frequent moves.*** Low-income families are more likely to move than the average family. When students move frequently, they can struggle to integrate into their

new schools and receive the services they need. As a result, students who move frequently tend to experience worse outcomes in school, particularly when the move is in reaction to turbulence within their family. Student mobility can lead to absenteeism, which in turn affects student achievement.

PHAs can play a critical role in ensuring that all children are supported to be in school every day. In partnership with school districts and schools, PHAs can help educators and communities provide support and services to students who are, or are at risk of becoming, chronically absent from school. Consider taking the following actions steps.

Take Action to Help Eliminate Chronic Absenteeism

Public Housing Authorities are encouraged to:

1. Partner with local school districts and schools to track attendance of PHA residents.*
2. Create access for children and families to supports and resources they need to mitigate issues causing absenteeism.
3. Seek resources and funding to create incentives to encourage school attendance.
4. Promote attendance through back-to-school events, outreach programs, and informational materials such as flyers and posters throughout the year.

*NOTE: Tenant consent may be required for certain data.

Resources to Support Public Housing Authorities to Address and Eliminate Chronic Absenteeism

Attendance Works

Attendance Works, a national nonprofit organization that works to raise awareness about chronic absenteeism, provides resources and handouts for a cross-section of stakeholders to understand and take action to eliminate chronic absenteeism, including resources for housing authorities. See more at: <http://www.attendanceworks.org/housing-authorities/>

Tacoma Housing Authority

An innovative partnership between the Tacoma Housing Authority, the Tacoma Public School District and McCarver Elementary School, and parents to stabilize the school's population. Learn more at: <http://www.tacomahousing.net/content/mccarver-elementary-school-housing-program>

Housing and School Partnerships to Address Student Mobility

The Urban Institute has compiled recommendations on how housing and school organizations can work together to reduce the negative effects of student mobility, including absenteeism.

Learn more at: <http://www.urban.org/research/publication/housing-and-schools-working-together-reduce-negative-effects-student-mobility/view/full-report>

National Center for Safe Routes to School--Walking School Bus Online Training Program

Many parents cite safety as a primary concern as children walk to and from school. Public Housing Authorities like San Francisco have begun Walking Bus Programs to help ensure students arrive safely. The National Center for Safe Routes to School has launched an online training that provides strategies and tips for planning a Walking School Bus program. Learn more at:

<http://www.saferoutesinfo.org/about-us/newsroom/national-center-launches-walking-school-bus-online-training>

HUD Office of Housing Counseling/HUD Approved Housing Counseling Agencies

HUD sponsors housing counseling agencies throughout the country that can provide advice on buying a home, renting, defaults, foreclosures, and credit issues. This page allows you to select a list of agencies for each state below. You may search more specifically for a reverse mortgage counselor or if you are facing foreclosure, search for a foreclosure avoidance counselor. Find this useful tool at: <http://www.hud.gov/offices/hsg/sfh/hcc/hcs.cfm>

U.S. Department of Education's Family Policy Compliance Office (FPCO)

FPCO administers FERPA and can provide support and information on how schools and school districts can engage in such activities with third-party providers and other agencies in compliance with Federal law. For more information and practical resource guides, please visit: <http://familypolicy.ed.gov/> and

<http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpc/doc/ferpa-and-community-based-orgs.pdf>.

Every Student, Every Day:

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Community Action Guide to Eliminate Chronic Absenteeism for

JUVENILE JUSTICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

Why Chronic Absenteeism Matters for Juvenile Justice and Law Enforcement

Chronic school absenteeism arises from complex and diverse causes, including student struggles with anxiety and depression, poor performance in school and schools' failure to meet students' educational needs, poverty-based family difficulties and obligations, concern and fear from victimization and harassment, and transitions to new schools. In addition, students who are suspended or subject to other school disciplinary interventions—a disproportionately large percentage of whom are youth of color, students with disabilities, and youth who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender—are at a significantly higher risk of falling behind academically and becoming chronically absent from school.

Did You Know?

- Chronic absenteeism means missing 10% or more of school days in a year.
- 5 to 7.5 million students are chronically absent each year.
- Students who are chronically absent are less likely to succeed academically and more likely to drop out of school.
- Chronic absenteeism affects students who benefit from school the most, especially students who are low-income, students of color, homeless children, students with disabilities, students who are highly mobile, and/or juvenile justice-involved youth.

Policymakers should carefully weigh the costs and benefits of invoking the power of the judiciary to enforce school attendance laws. Research has shown that court-based truancy interventions are no better at improving truancy outcomes than interventions based in schools and community organizations (for more information, visit: http://www.campbellcollaboration.org/news/Truancy_programs_improve_attendance.php). Indeed, school and community-based positive reengagement strategies for chronically absent youth can often effectively improve student attendance and achievement. On the other hand, court intervention can inflict on youth the trauma of incarceration, further stigmatization, a police and court record that provides an entryway into the school-to-prison pipeline, and court attendance obligations that further prevent the child from attending school. Parents and families can also be negatively impacted by the burden of court fees, costs, fines, and penalties that they are unable to pay.

Courts, law enforcement agencies, and schools should work closely with families and other community partners to develop strategies that address the root causes of chronic absenteeism without resorting to expulsion, suspension and court referral. School completion and diversion away from juvenile justice system involvement must be the primary goals of school and community programs designed to address chronic absenteeism, truancy and school safety and discipline challenges.

Take Action to Help Eliminate Chronic Absenteeism

Juvenile Justice and Law Enforcement Should:

1. Understand the relationship between chronic absenteeism and youth involvement in the juvenile justice system.
2. Reform truancy court systems to avoid, where possible, court-based truancy interventions, and instead rely on school and community-based interventions for struggling students.
3. Partner with local school districts to understand the local, underlying causes of chronic absenteeism.
4. Implement positive reengagement strategies for chronically absent youth in collaboration with courts and local school districts.
5. Learn from juvenile justice and law enforcement collaborations with school districts to inform local partnerships and action plans.

Juvenile justice and law enforcement system leaders and personnel should consider taking the following action steps to help address and eliminate chronic absenteeism.

***When Kids Go to Court:
The Requirements of Due Process***

Courts must follow fundamentally fair procedures that may include some or all of the following due process protection:

- The right to appointed counsel if the child cannot afford to hire one;
- The right to notice of the specific allegations delivered in language and a manner that is appropriate for the age and developmental stage of the child;
- The right to have sufficient time to investigate, gather evidence, and prepare a defense;
- The right to cross examine witnesses;
- The right to remain silent and to consult with an attorney before being questioned;
- The right to harness the power of the court to require that individuals appear as witnesses on the child's behalf;
- The right to a trial and, if the trial is to be waived, the right for that waiver to be knowing, intelligent, and voluntary with an understanding of the available options and their consequences, carried out in a manner that is appropriate for the age and developmental stage of the child.

Federal Constitutional and Statutory Requirements for Court-Based Chronic Absenteeism Interventions

Should a jurisdiction include court-based interventions as a strategy to combat truancy and chronic absenteeism, court actions at every stage – intake, fact-finding, adjudication, disposition, probation and other forms of supervision – must be consistent with the requirements of the United States Constitution and federal law. At each decision point along a case's progress through the court system, judges and other court personnel must take care to ensure fundamental fairness and to base judgments and orders on objective, verifiable criteria so as to avoid biased decision making, whether subconscious or overt. The two primary constitutional sources for court procedural requirements are the Due Process Clause's requirement that courts provide procedures necessary to ensure fundamental fairness and the Equal Protection Clause's prohibition against biased processes and decision making.

When Kids Go to Court: Federal Law

- Americans with Disabilities Act

Courts must provide meaningful access to children with disabilities by making reasonable modifications to policies, practices and procedures so as to avoid discrimination, unless the modifications would result in a fundamental alteration of the court's services, programs or activities. Meaningful access includes the right to be heard, to observe, and to participate meaningfully in judicial proceedings.

- Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964

Recipients of federal funds may not have policies and practices that impose an unjustified discriminatory effect on the basis of race, color, or national origin; and they must provide meaningful language access to limited English proficient children and families/guardians.

Due Process

In defining the procedures necessary for due process, courts balance the severity of the state intrusion, the risks to the child of an erroneous court decision, and the costs to the state of additional procedural safeguards. A court's disposition of truancy cases can create risks to children and their families that include imposition of fines, required community service, and court-ordered mental health, family, or substance abuse counseling. To ensure fairness in the face of these risks, courts will often need to provide children with a wide range of due process protections. When the potential state intrusion is most severe – threatening a child with the risk of incarceration – the child's interest in full and fair procedures is at its strongest and courts must provide the full panoply of due process protections.

Equal Protection

The Equal Protection Clause prohibits a state from conduct that would “deny any person within its jurisdiction equal protection of the laws” and therefore prohibits courts from treating similarly situated children differently, including on the basis of the child's race or sex. Although proof of discriminatory intent or purpose is required to show a violation of the Equal Protection Clause, this intent or purpose can be inferred when court actions show a clear pattern, unexplainable on grounds other than the child's constitutionally protected status. Equal Protection concerns can arise in any number of the decision points common to the juvenile justice system, including decisions about diversion, pretrial detention, filing of formal charges, adjudication, disposition and disposition modification or revocation proceedings.

Federal Law

Federal law prohibits race, color, national origin, sex, disability, and age discrimination by entities that receive federal financial assistance. The prohibition against national origin discrimination requires that courts covered by the law ensure that language minority youth with limited English proficiency have meaningful access to proceedings and court processes. Federal law also requires that courts provide meaningful access to all children with disabilities, including those children with learning, cognitive, emotional, behavioral, or physical disabilities.

Federal Resources to Support Juvenile Justice and Law Enforcement to Address and Eliminate Chronic Absenteeism

To stem the school-to-prison pipeline and advance the use of positive discipline and learning policies and practices in schools nationwide, the U.S. Departments of Justice and Education launched the [Supportive School Discipline Initiative](#) (SSDI). One of the central focuses of the SSDI is on partnerships between education, police, and court officials that is dedicated to preventing youth arrests or referrals to the juvenile justice system for minor school-based offenses. For example, this [Supportive School Discipline Webinar Series](#) event explored how schools and police agencies can work collaboratively to improve school safety, while minimizing the use of arrest and ensuring that law enforcement officials are not responsible for enforcing minor school discipline offenses. Additionally, the webinar highlighted a decision-making tool, included in the School Discipline Consensus Report. The National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ) has created a National Resource Center for School Justice Partnership. This online resource is designed to support school discipline reform and disseminates information on evidence-based programming, school referrals to the justice system, the collateral consequences of school push-out and zero tolerance policies, and innovative tools and strategies to support positive school discipline practices. The resource center functions as a portal for juvenile courts, schools & educators, law enforcement agencies, and behavioral health providers and supports school discipline reform efforts at the local level. It can be assessed at: www.schooljusticepartnership.org.

Additional Resources:

Legal Resources

- *In re Gault*, 387 U.S. 1, 36 (1967)
- *Mathews v. Eldridge*, 424 U.S. 319 (1976)
- *Lau v. Nichols*, 414 U.S. 563 (1974)
- *Tennessee v. Lane*, 541 U.S. 509, 528 (2004)
- U.S. Constitution, amendment XIV § 1 (Due Process Clause, Equal Protection Clause)
- Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42 U.S.C. § 2000d.

- Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act, Part A, 42 U.S.C. 12131 – 12134 and implementing regulations at 38 C.F.R. Part 35 (prohibiting discrimination on the basis of disability by entities of state and local government).
- Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (“JJDP Act”), 42 U.S.C. § 5601 *et seq.*

Federal Agency Resources

- U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division, Special Litigation Section work protecting the rights of juveniles <http://www.justice.gov/crt/rights-juveniles>
- U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention <http://www.ojjdp.gov/>
- U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division’s website containing information and technical assistance on the Americans with Disabilities Act www.ada.gov
- Federal interagency clearinghouse website regarding limited English proficiency and language services www.lep.gov
- U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division, Federal Coordination and Compliance Section <http://www.justice.gov/crt/federal-coordination-and-compliance-section>
- U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division, Educational Opportunities Section <http://www.justice.gov/crt/educational-opportunities-section>
- U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division, Title VI Legal Manual, available at <http://www.justice.gov/crt/title-vi-legal-manual-0#2>.
- Language Access Guidance Letter to State Courts from Assistant Attorney General Thomas E. Perez (August 16, 2010), available at http://www.lep.gov/final_courts_ltr_081610.pdf
- Guidance to Federal Financial Assistance Recipients Regarding Title VI Prohibition Against National Origin Discrimination Affecting Limited English Proficient Persons, 67 Fed. Reg. 41455 (June 18, 2002), available at <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2002-06-18/pdf/02-15207.pdf>
- **U.S. Department of Education’s Family Policy Compliance Office (FPCO)**
FPCO administers FERPA and can provide support and information on how schools and school districts can engage in such activities with third-party providers and other agencies in compliance with Federal law. For more information and practical resource guides, please visit: <http://familypolicy.ed.gov/> and <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpcoc/doc/ferpa-and-community-based-orgs.pdf>.

Other Resources

- National Juvenile Defender Center, National Juvenile Defense Standards, available at <http://njdc.info/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/NationalJuvenileDefenseStandards2013.pdf>
- Sydney McKinney, Truancy: A Research Brief, available at <http://www.ncjfcj.org/sites/default/files/status%20offense%20reform%20center%20research%20brief%202013%20Truancy%20Final.pdf>

- Tool Kit for Creating Your Own Truancy Reduction, prepared by National Center for School Engagement, available at <http://www.ncjfcj.org/sites/default/files/truancytoolkit.pdf>
- [The Council of State Governments \(CSG\) The School Discipline Consensus Report](#)
- [School Justice Collaborative Program: Keeping Kids in School and Out of Court OJJDP FY14](#)
- [IACP National Summit Report, Law Enforcement's Leadership Role in Juvenile Justice Reform: Actionable Recommendations for Practice & Policy](#)
- [IACP's Youth Focused Policing Agency Self-Assessment Tool](#)
[IACP Youth Focused Policing Resource Center](#)
<http://csgjusticecenter.org/youth/school-discipline-consensus-report>

Every Student, Every Day:

A National Initiative to Address and Eliminate Chronic Absenteeism

Community Action Guide to Eliminate Chronic Absenteeism for

HOMELESS SERVICE PROVIDERS

Why Chronic Absenteeism Matters for Homeless Service Providers

The correlation between school attendance and academic achievement is strong; simply put, students need to attend school every day to succeed. By contrast, chronic absenteeism, commonly defined as a student missing 10 percent or more of a school year, is associated with lower academic achievement, standardized test scores, and graduation rates. Of particular concern for educators and service providers working with homeless children and youth, students living in poverty benefit the most from being in school and yet are more likely than their higher-income peers to be chronically absent. Add to this the many challenges specific to homelessness—residential instability, poor living conditions, and loss of community and sense of security, to name a few—and the need for homeless students to attend school every day becomes even more pressing. Schools and communities must work together to develop policies and practices that support daily school attendance for all students, but particularly for those most at risk of chronic absenteeism and school failure. Homeless service providers can help eliminate chronic absenteeism among homeless youth by taking the following action steps.

Did You Know?

- Chronic absenteeism means missing 10% or more of school days in a year.
- 5 to 7.5 million students are chronically absent each year.
- Students who are chronically absent are less likely to succeed academically and more likely to drop out of school.
- Chronic absenteeism affects students who benefit from school the most, especially students who are low-income, students of color, homeless children, students with disabilities, students who are highly mobile, and/or juvenile justice-involved youth.

Take Action to Help Eliminate Chronic Absenteeism

Homeless service providers should:

1. Learn about chronic absenteeism and how it affects the education and life outcomes of homeless children and youth.
2. Determine who the local liaison for homeless children and youth is in your community by contacting the local school district or the State Coordinator for Homeless Education in your State. Please visit the National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE) for State coordinator contact information at www.serve.org/nche/downloads/sccontact.pdf
3. Establish contact with the local liaison for the school district in their area, who can help identify homeless students who are chronically absent from school.
4. Discuss and act on possibilities for school district/service provider collaboration to support school attendance for homeless children and youth.

Resources to Support Homeless Service Providers to Address and Eliminate Chronic Absenteeism

The U.S. Department of Education (ED) administers the federal Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) Program, authorized under Title VII-B of the McKinney Vento Homeless Assistance Act (McKinney-Vento), and most recently reauthorized by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. As outlined in the statute's statement of policy [42 U.S.C. § 11431], one of the goals of the EHCY Program is to assist State educational agencies (SEAs) and local educational agencies (LEAs) in implementing policies and practices that remove barriers to the school enrollment, attendance, and success of children and youth experiencing homelessness. The following rights and services required under McKinney-Vento may be particularly effective in supporting regular school attendance for homeless students:

- ***Immediate enrollment:*** McKinney-Vento eligible students have the right to enroll in school immediately, even if lacking documentation normally required for enrollment [42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(3)(C)]. For more information regarding the school enrollment requirements under McKinney-Vento, consult the following resources available through the National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE):
 - Issue briefs, available at www.serve.org/nche/briefs.php:
 - *Enrolling Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness in School*
 - *Immediate Enrollment Under McKinney-Vento: How Local Liaisons Can Keep Homeless Students Safe*
 - *Immediate Enrollment Under McKinney-Vento: How Schools Can Keep Homeless Students Safe*
 - *Prompt and Proper Placement: Enrolling Students without Records*
 - *When Legal Guardians Are Not Present: Enrolling Students on Their Own*
 - *Enrollment: Ready Reference for School* enrollment foldout, available at www.serve.org/nche/pr/enroll_foldout.php

- **School placement and transportation:** Under McKinney-Vento, LEAs must make school placement determinations on the basis of the “best interest” of the homeless student. Using this standard, an LEA must (1) continue the homeless student’s education in the school of origin (i.e., the school the student attended when permanently housed or the school in which the child or youth was last enrolled) or (2) enroll the student in any public school that non-homeless students who live in the area in which the student is actually living are eligible to attend [42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(3)(A)]. In determining a student’s best interest, an LEA must, to the extent feasible, keep a homeless student in the school of origin, unless doing so is contrary to the wishes of the student’s parent or guardian [42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(3)(B)(i)]. If a student continues to attend the school of origin, the LEA must provide or arrange for the student’s transportation to and from school, if requested [42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(1)(J)]. For more information on school placement and transportation under McKinney-Vento, consult the following NCHE briefs, available at www.serve.org/nche/briefs.php:
 - *School Selection*
 - *Guiding the Discussion on School Selection*
 - *Transporting Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness*

In addition to statutory requirements under McKinney-Vento, school districts receive funding that may be targeted specifically to support school attendance for homeless children and youth, including:

- **McKinney-Vento subgrant funding:** SEAs award McKinney-Vento subgrants to LEAs competitively on the basis of an LEA’s needs with respect to their homeless youth and the quality of their applications. For a complete list of authorized uses of McKinney-Vento subgrant funds, visit <http://center.serve.org/nche/legis/mv-auth-act.php>
- **Title I, Part A funding:** Title I, Part A (Title I) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), as amended, provides financial assistance to LEAs and schools with high numbers or percentages of children from low-income families to help ensure that all children meet challenging state academic standards. For more information on supporting homeless children and youth under Title I, see question G-11 of ED’s Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program, Non-Regulatory Guidance (September 2009) at www.ed.gov/policy/gen/leg/recovery/guidance/titlei-reform.pdf and ED’s August 15, 2015 Dear Colleague Letter at www.ed.gov/programs/homeless/homelesscoord0815.pdf.

In addition to its own agency efforts, ED collaborates with other federal agencies to support school attendance for homeless students. Under the leadership of the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH), ED partners with 18 other federal agencies to work to prevent and end homelessness within the United States. For more information, consult the following NCHE briefs, available at www.serve.org/nche/briefs.php:

- *Access to Food for Homeless and Highly Mobile Students*
- *Housing and Education Collaborations to Serve Homeless Children, Youth, and Families*
- *Supporting School Success for Homeless Children of Veterans and Active Duty Military Members*
- *Youth Homelessness and Juvenile Justice*

HUD Resources for Homeless Youth: This page is a one-stop spot for youth, and those who help youth, to find housing. This page lists all HUD homeless programs and initiatives that can be used by youth and youth serving providers to help prevent and end youth homelessness, as well as resources, publications, and relevant links to other agencies and organizations. Additionally, this page provides an explanation of how HUD programs currently serve homeless youth and how HUD works together with other agencies to combat this problem. See more at: www.hudexchange.info/homelessness-assistance/resources-for-homeless-youth/

Family & Youth Services Bureau: Resources for Runaway and Homeless Youth

For information and resources from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to support the success and health of runaway and homeless youth, please visit <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/fysb/programs/runaway-homeless-youth/about>.

HUD Office of Housing Counseling/HUD Approved Housing Counseling Agencies

HUD sponsors housing counseling agencies throughout the country that can provide advice on buying a home, renting, defaults, foreclosures, and credit issues. This page allows you to select a list of agencies for each state below. You may search more specifically for a reverse mortgage counselor or if you are facing foreclosure, search for a foreclosure avoidance counselor. Find this useful tool at: <http://www.hud.gov/offices/hsg/sfh/hcc/hcs.cfm>

U.S. Department of Education's Family Policy Compliance Office (FPCO)

FPCO administers FERPA and can provide support and information on how schools and school districts can engage in such activities with third-party providers and other agencies in compliance with Federal law. For more information and practical resource guides, please visit: <http://familypolicy.ed.gov/> and <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpc/doc/ferpa-and-community-based-orgs.pdf>.

Every Student, Every Day:

A National Initiative to Address and Eliminate Chronic Absenteeism

Community Action Guide to Eliminate Chronic Absenteeism for **MAYORS AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

Why Chronic Absenteeism Matters for Mayors and Local Government

Mayors and local government officials are uniquely positioned to help eliminate chronic absenteeism in their communities by using their convening power to bring groups of people and organizations together to engage youth who are, or are at risk of becoming, chronically absent from school. As the leaders and decision-makers who control and influence important programs and large initiatives, what you do to provide access to resources for youth can have a significant impact on the ability of many young people to engage in their educations and attend school every day. Further, you can help the public not only understand what chronic absenteeism is but also how it affects the local quality of life, especially among youth and their families, and the responsibility that all people have to identify young people who are disengaged from school and provide them with the love, motivation, and support to help them get back on track.

Did You Know?

- Chronic absenteeism means missing 10% or more of school days in a year.
- 5 to 7.5 million students are chronically absent each year.
- Students who are chronically absent are less likely to succeed academically and more likely to drop out of school.
- Chronic absenteeism affects students who benefit from school the most, especially students who are low-income, students of color, homeless children, students with disabilities, students who are highly mobile, and/or juvenile justice-involved youth.

The best solutions to chronic absenteeism will be identified, implemented, and sustained locally. Your leadership in building a constituency to eliminate chronic absenteeism in your community is essential to the work of local schools as well as health, public housing, and justice agencies and other youth-serving organizations, including child welfare agencies.

The action steps suggested below can help support your office's efforts to engage the local community to support youth and eliminate chronic absenteeism.

Take Action to Help Eliminate Chronic Absenteeism

Mayors and Local Government Should:

1. Learn about what chronic absenteeism is and invest in the systems and structures (e.g. early warning prevention and intervention systems) that can identify youth who are chronically absent from school.
2. Convene and sustain a local taskforce with representatives from different constituencies and organizations—including education, health, public housing, and justice agencies as well as youth, families, faith and community representatives, and child welfare agencies—that can research the root causes of chronic absenteeism among local youth and recommend research and evidence-based solutions for those youth.
3. Support efforts by school district and schools to partner with a broad range of third-party providers and agencies—in a manner consistent with applicable State law and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)—that can provide additional support services to students who are chronically absent and their families.
4. Explore opportunities to provide mentoring and other important support services for local youth to promote daily school attendance and to help deal with personal or family challenges that become barriers to daily attendance and school success.

Resources to Support Mayors and Local Governments to Address and Eliminate Chronic Absenteeism

Attendance Works

Attendance Works, a national nonprofit organization that works to raise awareness about chronic absenteeism, provides resources and handouts for a cross-section of stakeholders to understand and take action to eliminate chronic absenteeism, including resources for city leaders. See more at: <http://www.attendanceworks.org/tools/tools-for-city-leaders/>.

The Campaign for Grade-Level Reading

The Campaign is a collaborative effort by foundations, nonprofit partners, business leaders, government agencies, states and communities across the nation to ensure that more children in low-income families succeed in school and graduate prepared for college, a career, and active citizenship. The Campaign focuses on an important predictor of school success and high school graduation—grade-level reading by the end of third grade—as well as addressing chronic absenteeism among youth. For more information, please visit: <http://gradelevelreading.net/about-us>.

National Mentoring Resource Center

The U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention is proud to partner with *MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership* to bring this resource to the youth mentoring field. The National Mentoring Resource Center serves as a comprehensive and reliable resource for mentoring tools,

program and training materials, and information. In addition to accessing online resources, mentoring programs can apply for no-cost training and technical assistance to support them in more deeply incorporating evidence-based practices, ultimately leading to greater positive outcomes for youth. For more information, please visit <http://www.nationalmentoringresourcecenter.org/>.

Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), US Department of Justice
OJJDP provides access to free resources for mentors, families, and communities to support high-quality mentoring for all youth. This comprehensive online resource provides mentoring tools and information, program and training materials, and technical assistance to help local programs and practitioners improve the quality and effectiveness of their mentoring efforts. See more at: <http://www.ojjdp.gov/programs/mentoring.html>.

Institute for Youth Success at Education Northwest

With a mission to empower youth organizations to improve outcomes and reduce social costs, the Institute for Youth Success (IYS) supports more than 190 youth programs, including camps, sports, STEM, leadership, afterschool, independent living, and mentoring programs. In addition to providing professional development to volunteers and staff of youth programs, IYS provides relevant, evidence-based information on topics ranging from recruitment to program management and offers services that create efficiencies and make youth-development programs stronger. For more information, please visit <http://educationnorthwest.org/institute-for-youth-success>.

MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership

MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership (MENTOR) is the unifying champion for expanding quality youth mentoring relationships in the United States. For nearly 25 years, MENTOR has served the mentoring field by providing a public voice, developing and delivering resources to mentoring programs nationwide and promoting quality for mentoring through standards, cutting-edge research and state of the art tools. For more information and resources on mentoring, please visit: <http://www.mentoring.org/>.

AARP Foundation Experience Corps

AARP Foundation Experience Corps, a national leader in engaging older adult tutors to improve K-3 student literacy in disadvantaged schools, has joined forces with AARP, the nation's largest organization for 50+ Americans. As part of AARP Foundation, Experience Corps will have the opportunity to vastly increase its potential to tap into the experience and passion of older Americans to ensure that every child has a chance to succeed in school and in life. For more information, please visit <http://www.aarp.org/experience-corps/>.

U.S. Department of Education's Family Policy Compliance Office (FPCO)

FPCO administers FERPA and can provide support and information on how schools and school districts can engage in such activities with third-party providers and other agencies in compliance with Federal law. For more information and practical resource guides, please visit: <http://familypolicy.ed.gov/> and <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpc/doc/ferpa-and-community-based-orgs.pdf>.

Every Student, Every Day:

A National Initiative to Address and Eliminate Chronic Absenteeism

Community Action Guide to Eliminate Chronic Absenteeism for

COMMUNITY, FAITH-BASED, AND PHILANTHROPIC ORGANIZATIONS

Why Chronic Absenteeism Matters for Community, Faith-based, and Philanthropic Organizations

As a member of a community, faith-based, or philanthropic organization working with schools, you can be a strong and helpful voice to raise awareness about and support the implementation of solutions to chronic absenteeism in local communities. Community, faith-based, and philanthropic organizations have a long history of supporting and working with schools and school districts to provide supports and services to students that are better provided by those organizations inside or outside of school. It is critical to leverage that long history of collaboration with schools to help address the underlying causes of and eliminate the chronic absenteeism experienced by an estimated five to seven and a half million young people across the country.

Did You Know?

- Chronic absenteeism means missing 10% or more of school days in a year.
- 5 to 7.5 million students are chronically absent each year.
- Students who are chronically absent are less likely to succeed academically and more likely to drop out of school.
- Chronic absenteeism affects students who benefit from school the most, especially students who are low-income, students of color, homeless children, students with disabilities, students who are highly mobile, and/or juvenile justice-involved youth.

Depending on the mission and goals of your organization, there are many roles you can play in supporting schools and school districts in eliminating chronic absenteeism. Your organization can offer services directly to schools or even support another outside organization that works directly with students. While there are many ways to help eliminate chronic absenteeism, it is most important that there is broad understanding about the impact of chronic absenteeism, its underlying causes, and then to align organizational goals and services with effective, research and evidence-based approaches to eliminating chronic absenteeism within a community.

In order to support schools and school districts in eliminating chronic absenteeism, community, faith-based, and philanthropic organizations can take the following action steps:

Take Action to Help Eliminate Chronic Absenteeism

Community, Faith-based, and Philanthropic Organizations Should:

1. Learn about what chronic absenteeism is and promote efforts to raise awareness among local stakeholders, especially youth and families.
2. Organize your congregation or community to take action within your own community to support students and families in achieving 100% daily attendance.
3. Encourage the local community to convene a taskforce with representatives from different constituencies and organizations—including education, health, public housing, and justice agencies as well as youth, families, faith, community, and child welfare agency representatives—that can research the root causes of chronic absenteeism among local youth and recommend research and evidence-based solutions for those youth.
4. Partner with schools and school districts and your organizations—in a manner consistent with applicable State law and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)—in order to provide additional support services to students who are chronically absent and their families.

Resources to Support Community and Philanthropic Organizations to Address and Eliminate Chronic Absenteeism

Center for Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships

The Center is part of the White House Office of Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships, which works to form partnerships between government at all levels and nonprofit organizations, both secular and faith-based, to more effectively serve Americans in need. The office advances this work through Centers and staff at 13 federal agencies across the administration. Our primary goals are to:

- Engage community-based organizations, both secular and faith-based, in building a culture of high expectations and support for education.
- Develop and support initiatives within the federal government to help maximize the education contributions of community-based organizations, including faith and interfaith organizations.
- Strengthen partnerships between community-based organizations and schools to help improve the nation's lowest-achieving schools.

See more at: <http://www.ed.gov/edblogs/fbnp/>.

U.S. Department of Education's Family Policy Compliance Office (FPCO)

FPCO administers FERPA and can provide support and information on how schools and school districts can engage in such activities with third-party providers and other agencies in compliance with Federal law. For more information and practical resource guides, please

visit: <http://familypolicy.ed.gov/> and
<http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/doc/ferpa-and-community-based-orgs.pdf>.

Attendance Works

Attendance Works, a national nonprofit organization that works to raise awareness about chronic absenteeism, provides resources and handouts for a cross-section of stakeholders to understand and take action to eliminate chronic absenteeism, including resources for faith-based and community organizations. See more at:

<http://www.attendanceworks.org/tools/>.

The Campaign for Grade-Level Reading

The Campaign is a collaborative effort by foundations, nonprofit partners, business leaders, government agencies, states and communities across the nation to ensure that more children in low-income families succeed in school and graduate prepared for college, a career, and active citizenship. The Campaign focuses on an important predictor of school success and high school graduation—grade-level reading by the end of third grade—as well as addressing chronic absenteeism among youth. For more information, please visit:

<http://gradelevelreading.net/about-us>

