

Chittenden County Chronic Absenteeism Work Group (CCAWG)

School Attendance Procedure Recommendations

Suggested district and school-based procedures to activate early intervention and support for students who are presenting with barriers to school attendance.

School Engagement Lens Statement/Guiding Principles

Our commitment is to build meaningful relationships with students, families, educators, and community partners. We recognize that trust, understanding, and open communication are essential in addressing the root causes of absenteeism. Through collaborative problem-solving and shared responsibility, we seek to identify barriers to attendance and co-create solutions that support each student's individual needs.

We believe:

- Absenteeism is a complex challenge. It requires a collaborative, cross-system approach, where responsibility and effort are shared. No single system can hold all the answers, and while it may be instinctive to rely solely on familiar frameworks, transformative progress depends on stepping beyond traditional boundaries.
- We must analyze data quickly, communicate effectively, promote cultural change, address root causes, and remove logistical barriers.
- Every student deserves the opportunity to thrive academically, socially, and emotionally, and that consistent school attendance is foundational to this success.
- It is essential to start early, both at a young age and in the school year, to engage kids and families.
- When a youth is not attending school or engaging in learning it is for varied and complex reasons. We are committed to understanding the challenges and seek solutions at the community, systems, school, classroom, family and individual levels.
- Systems (community, school, classroom) level efforts must acknowledge and address the bias embedded within those systems and seek to transform the school to a place where all students are able to engage and thrive.
- At the individual level, our approach is student-centered, recognizing that each student's journey is unique and influenced by various personal, familial, and community factors. We understand that chronic absenteeism is not merely a symptom but a complex, multi-layered issue that requires a compassionate and holistic approach.
- That this effort cannot be left to families and school systems alone. Our full community must engage.



Resources:

- [Map of School Based Attendance Supports](#)
- [Student Attendance Roles and Responsibility](#)

District Level Recommendations:

- Establish a District Chronic Absenteeism Leadership Team (or Position) with the following priorities:
 - Establish and articulate school engagement guiding principles
 - Establish common procedures and definitions for recording and coding absences
 - Review data both district wide and by school
 - Set attendance improvement goals for the district and each school
 - Clarify roles and responsibilities for student attendance tracking
 - Identify, define and implement needed systems changes to achieve results “every system is designed to perfectly get the results it gets”
 - Support implementation efforts at the school level through:
 - Dissemination of policies and information internally within the district and externally with community partners, student and families
 - Training around school engagement, chronic absenteeism, principles, and policies at all levels
 - Technical support for school level attendance teams
 - Final determination for external activating Tier 3 Interventions including Police involved well child checks, DCF reporting and truancy affidavits to the State’s Attorney’s Office
 - Creating and maintaining system for data tracking/monitoring
 - Attendance
 - DCF reporting
 - External referrals
 - Affidavit to State’s Attorney’s Office

School Level Recommendations:

- Establish a School Attendance Team that Includes: School administrator, school counselors, school nurses, school service clinicians, other student well-being professionals and others as needed.
- School Attendance Teams would meet weekly or bi-weekly and have the following priorities:
 - Establish and maintain Multi-Tiered System Implementation for school engagement through implementation of the proactive attendance procedures including
 - data review
 - systems enhancement

- training and support to school staff
- Suggested Attendance Team annual calendar [Attendance Team Calendar](#)
- Suggested Attendance Team bi-weekly meeting agenda [Sample Agenda](#)
- Suggested Attendance Team data/activity tracker [Attendance Outreach Tracker](#)

Tier 1: Universal Supports:

- Regularly communicate the importance of school attendance for all children and families through social media, school newsletters and in meetings; Impact of attendance on whole child widely understood
- Routines, rituals and celebrations related to attendance and engagement; Use existing PBIS or behavior reinforcement system, establish incentives for improved attendance
- Enhance school culture; ensure that all families and students feel welcome in the school. Recognize that cultural bias deeply impacts school engagement. Assess for and address bias embedded in systems and relationships
- Record and monitor student attendance regularly
- Review data for trends, anticipate periods of low attendance and proactively identify solutions
- Train staff on philosophy, policy and proactive communication
- Personalized positive communication to families when students are absent
- Attendance data (to include explained and unexplained absences) communicated with all families monthly
- Connection to a caring adult in the school
- Collaboration with community partners

Tier 2: Early Warning System/Individual student interventions:

- This level of intervention is recommended for:
 - Any student that has missed 10% of the school year (for example: 2 days in September, 4 days by October, 6 days by November, etc.)
 - Any student who was absent for more than 20% of the previous school year
- Successful engagement with families is crucial to improving attendance - teams should consider factors such as trust and relationship-building in each interaction with a caregiver and student.
 - For each identified student, the attendance team should establish a trusted adult to take the lead. Important questions to consider:
 - What is the concern regarding this student's attendance?
 - Who has a relationship with this student and family?
 - Who will discuss this student with the classroom teacher?
 - Who will reach out to the family or caregiver?
 - Who will connect with the student about the attendance challenge?
 - When will this team follow up?
- All communication and efforts tracked and monitored
- Trusted lead adult connects with caregiver and student
- Additional Potential Interventions:

- Hold Collaborative Attendance Meeting with the family [Proposed Agenda](#)
- Home visit
- Common community and school barriers identified and addressed
- Explore options for flexible pathways
- Consider schedule and transition impacts on attendance; make needed adjustments
- Increase opportunities for success and relationship building for student and family
- Small group interventions and supports for students
- Restorative alternatives to discipline and suspension
- An *attendance letter* may be provided to the family after an in-person conversation, OR mailed to the family after several unsuccessful attempts at contact

Tier 3: Intensive Supports:

- This level is recommended for:
 - Any student who has missed **20% or more of the current school year**
 - Students whose attendance has not improved with Tier 2 supports
 - Families or Caregivers who have not been responsive to Tier 2 supports
- Continue contact with trusted lead adult
- Continue tracking all efforts
- Monthly team meeting (with student and family if possible) to review attendance data, address needs and modify plans
- Actively collaborate with Primary Care Physician and any other involved community partners
- Additional Potential Interventions:
 - Coordinated Services Planning meeting/Act 264
 - Collaborative Attendance Meeting
 - Child Protection Family Support Planning Team Meeting with Kid Safe Collaborative
 - Care Conference with the student's primary care doctor
 - Howard Center (Access and Intake), Compass, BARJ or other community or mental health referral
 - Howard Center School Services Clinician referral
 - Communication with the School Truancy officer
 - IEP or 504 meeting
 - Home and or community visits
- If challenges persist despite best efforts with appropriate above interventions the following externally activating Tier 3 Supports could be considered. The District level team/director should be included in determination. Options:
 - **School Resource Officer/Police accompanied Well Child Check:** Considered when student has not been seen in person for a period of time, the student and/or caregiver is not responding to any outreach, or there some other information indicating a safety concern
 - **DCF Report:** A DCF report may be considered when:
 - **Educational Neglect:** Educational neglect occurs when a parent or person responsible for a child's care knowingly fails to enroll a child in school or to

provide education in accordance with 16 V.S.A. § 1121. The child regularly fails to attend school through the parent or caretaker's action or inaction. Educational neglect will be considered for children beginning at age six until the completion of the sixth grade, where the expectation is that the parent or caretaker is responsible for getting the child to school and the parent or caretaker's behavior has contributed to the child's lack of attendance. Exceptions to this age/grade consideration apply if circumstances of the child or youth, such as intellectual or developmental disabilities, exclude them from being held responsible for getting themselves to school.

- **Child in Need of Care or Supervision (CHINS):** A child who: • is without or beyond the control of his or her parent, guardian, or custodian (33 V.S.A. § 5102 (3) (C)); OR • is habitually and without justification truant from compulsory school attendance (33 V.S.A. § 5102 (3) (D)).
- DCF Policy 50 provides the definition of educational neglect, Policy 60 guides how educational neglect is assessed
- **Truancy Court:** A referral to the State's Attorney may be considered when all other options have been exhausted

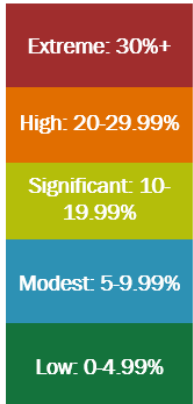
Training Recommendations: (Training and slide decks will be developed for all audiences below. The trainings would be combination of processing/problem solving in addition to information on the above guiding principles and policy, school engagement data, and relevant skills):

- District Chronic Absenteeism Leadership Team
 - Reflection on guiding principles and prevalence
 - Review/develop policy
 - Review district/school assessment tools
 - Support planning and next steps
- School Based Attendance Teams
 - Reflect on guiding principles and prevalence
 - Review policy
 - Set guidelines and working norms for team
 - Review timeline, agenda and tracking tool
 - Review strategies for teacher and school staff engagement, support and skill building
 - Skill building around caregiver engagement
- Administrative folks who make caregiver phone calls
 - [Caregiver Phone Contact Training with scripts](#)
- School Staff (Teachers and others) - Trusted Adults
 - Reflect on guiding principles and prevalence
 - Review policy & role of being Trusted Adult
 - Strategies for welcoming students back to class
 - Skill building around caregiver engagement
- Caregivers
- Students

Note: These recommendations are based on policy suggestions found on attendanceworks.org and in Attendance Playbook by Phyllis Jordan and Future Ed (May, 2023)



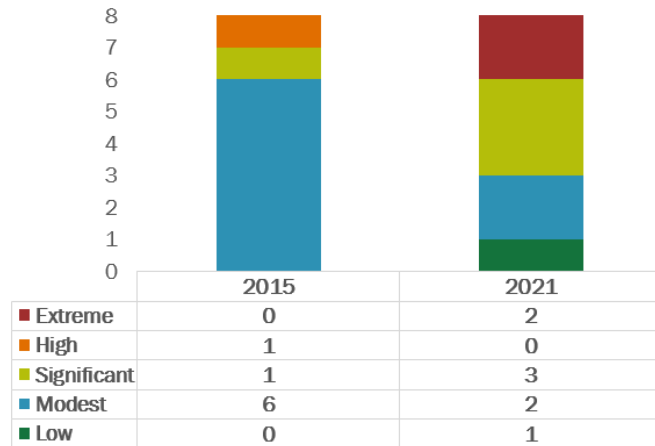
Categorization by percentage of student body who are chronically absent



Vermont Department of Health

Source: 2023 VT Education Dashboard, AOE

Change in Levels of Chronic Absenteeism, Chittenden County School Districts 2015-2021



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