

# Chronic Absenteeism

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**Department for Children and Families, Family Services Division**

# Educational Neglect

- A report of educational neglect is considered for acceptance when it is alleged that 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. Through the parent or caretaker's action or inaction, the child regularly fails to attend school.
- Educational neglect is considered for children beginning at **age six** until the completion of the **sixth grade**.

# Educational Neglect Assessments

When a report of educational neglect is accepted, the Family Services Worker (FSW) conducts a, “CHINS B” Assessment. The steps in an assessment include:

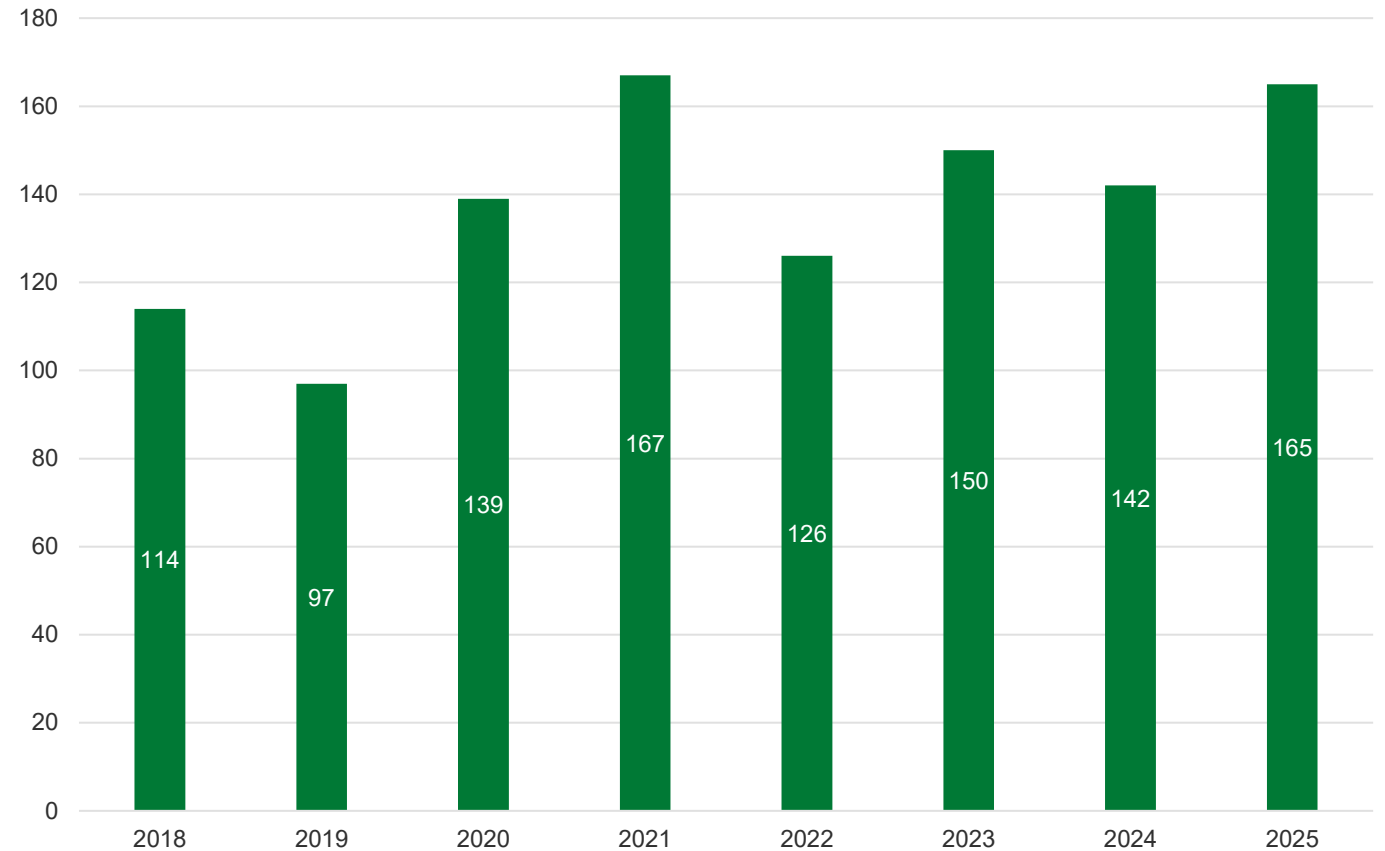
- Contact with the child and household members, the reporter, school staff, and other service providers.
- A visit to the child’s home.
- Collateral fact gathering and interviews as needed.

Additional steps often include:

- A Coordinated Service Planning Meeting (CSP)
- Additional home visits
- Referrals to community providers (Balanced and Restorative Justice (BARJ) Intensive Family Based Services (IFBS) the designated agency (DA), and others.

# Educational Neglect Data

Number of Accepted Intakes for Educational Neglect  
Statewide Totals by Calendar Year 2018-2025



# Truancy

- Per [FSD Policy 60](#), truancy occurs when a child who has completed the sixth grade has accumulated 20 unexcused absences from school as a result of their own action or inaction.
- Truancy applies to youth **from grade 7 to up to age 16** who are registered for school and not attending.
- The Department may also conduct an assessment under the authority of 33 V.S.A. § 5106. The focus of this assessment is on whether a child may be in need of care and supervision. This statute includes assessments for educational neglect.

# When Does DCF-FSD Get Involved for Truancy?

DCF-FSD will conduct a youth assessment when a case is accepted due to CHINS (D) concerns, when a child is between grade 7 and age 16, and under the following circumstances:

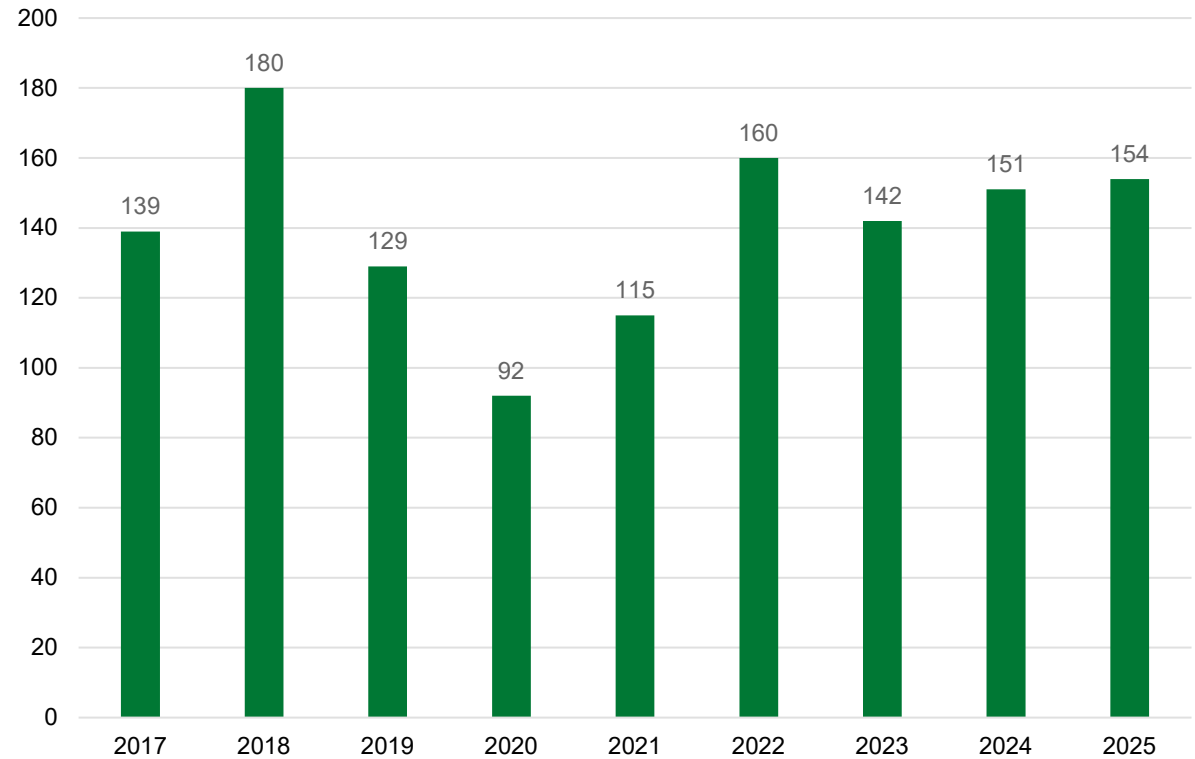
- An Emergency Care Order (ECO) has been issued;
- A Conditional Custody Order (CCO) has been issued; and/or
- Post-Merits finding of truancy with an open court case.

Youth assessment is a collaborative process involving the youth, family members, community supports and DCF.

Strengths and challenges are identified; develop a comprehensive outline of their needs and build upon their protective factors.

# Truancy Data

Number of Truancy Cases in the Family Division



\*A county-by-county breakdown is available upon request.

# Current Challenges

We have found significant variation from school district to school district regarding how absences are counted and defined. Examples include:

- What “excused” vs. “unexcused” mean varies depending on the school.
- Some schools no longer differentiate between excused and unexcused absences. This varies by district.
- Outreach to the family varies (letters after 5, 10, 15, or 20 absences; calling parents rather than letter))
- Some schools employ a home visit as part of their efforts. This varies based on the school's capacity and whether or not they have a designated staff to oversee attendance.
- Some schools unenroll students after 10 consecutive absences when the reason for the absences is deemed insufficient.

# 26-0777 – A Shift to Chronic Absenteeism

- FSD remains statutorily mandated to investigate concerns about "lack of parental capacity," which includes educational neglect.
- FSD supports a consistent statewide approach to categorizing absences as excused or unexcused.
- FSD supports addressing chronic absenteeism and finds that the enactment of district policies to prevent and respond to chronic absenteeism, would be especially helpful for serving children and youth.
- FSD supports expanding the reasons for excused absences and supports the proposal for mandatory data collection.

# Questions?