



Chronic Absenteeism

A national perspective





WHO WE ARE.

The essential, indispensable member of any team addressing education policy.



WHAT WE DO.

We believe in the power of learning from experience, and we know informed policymakers create better education policy.



HOW WE DO IT.



Research



Report



Convene



Counsel



Today's Chronic Absenteeism

- Doubled from pre-COVID pandemic levels
- Nearly 14.7 million kids were chronically absent in the 2021-22 school year
- Data from the 2022-23 school year showed improvements
- New and incomplete data from last year is positive



Effects of Missing School



- Difficulty reading by third grade
- Low achievement
- Falling off the path to graduate



Chronic Absenteeism is not Uniform

Absences are higher student groups

- Grade level
 - kindergarten
 - high school
- Students from low-income families
- Students from communities of color
- Students with disabilities
- Students who are English language learners



Definition of Chronic Absenteeism

- Typically defined as any student missing 10% or more of school days.
- Some states use number of days missed.
- Most state definitions include ANY absence:
 - Excused
 - Unexcused
 - Suspensions



Truancy vs. Chronically Absent

Truancy

- Counts only unexcused absences
- Stresses compliance with school rules
- Relies on legal and administrative solutions

Chronic Absence

- Counts all absences
- Emphasizes the impact of missed days
- Uses community-based, positive strategies



Beyond the Definition of Chronic Absenteeism



- Definitions of a day of school
- Excused vs unexcused absences



What is a school day?

- State- or local-level decision.
- Most common state definition of a day of attendance is typically $\frac{1}{2}$ of a day.
- Almost 15 states allow the attendance policy to be made at the local level.



Excused vs. Unexcused



State policies vary:

- Excused and unexcused in regulation
- Particular absences counted as present, for example, school events or 4-H



Tracking Excused Absences

- Data to inform
- Allows students to make up work and provides continued engagement
- The latest legislative sessions saw several bills regarding excused absences:
 - Religious reasons
 - Mental and behavioral health
 - Civic engagement
 - Work-based Learning



Reporting Chronic Absenteeism

- Required through EdFacts
- Required by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)
- 36 states use Chronic Absenteeism as a measure of School Quality and Student Success (SQSS) for federal school accountability



Shifting Perspectives

State policies are shifting with a focus on:

- Consequences of lost learning time
- Identifying barriers to attendance
- Prevention strategies
- Data collection



Connecticut



Learner Engagement and Attendance Program (LEAP)(2021)

- 15 Districts
- Identify underlying issues
- Home visits to build relationships
- State dashboard
- Early results show attendance improvement



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New Mexico



Attendance for Success Act (2019)

- Purpose is to prevent absences
- Requires local Attendance Improvement Plans
- Requires Early Warning System
- Four-tiered intervention protocol
- Community data dashboard



Rhode Island



Attendance Matters RI (2023)

- Data Dashboard
- LEA support
- Public outreach campaign
- Community engagement





Q & A





**EDUCATION
COMMISSION**
OF THE STATES

Your education policy team.

THANK YOU

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