



## Why Attendance Matters

Categories : [Children and Families](#), [Education](#), [Youth and Young Adults](#)

### Did You Know That...

Every year, as many as 7.5 million students nationwide are chronically absent, meaning they miss 10 percent or more of the school year for any reason, excused or unexcused. That level of absenteeism predicts poor academic performance as early as kindergarten and is a warning sign that a high school student will drop out.

Chronic absence can be reduced when schools work with families and communities to debunk common myths about attendance, build a culture of going to school or preschool every day and address barriers to getting to class.

Parents and families are essential partners in promoting good attendance because they, ultimately, have the bottom-line responsibility for making sure their children get to school every day. When children are young, they are especially dependent upon adults or older siblings to help them get to school or preschool. Just as parents should focus on how their children are performing academically, they have a responsibility to set expectations for good attendance and to monitor their children's absences, so that missed days don't add up to academic trouble.

To carry out this responsibility, however, parents need to be equipped with the right information so they are not unwittingly falling into traps created by common and pervasive myths about attendance.

[Attendance Works](#) is a partner and resource for the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading, which aims to make sure that all children learn to read well by the end of third grade. Attendance Works is a national and state initiative that promotes better policy and practice around school attendance. Attendance Works promotes tracking chronic absence data for each student beginning in kindergarten, or ideally earlier, and partnering with families and community agencies to intervene when poor attendance is a problem for students or schools.

Attendance Works believes that parent and family engagement is a key component of an effective, comprehensive approach to reducing chronic absence. Parents are essential partners in promoting good attendance because they have the power to:

- Make getting children to school on time every day a top priority
- Alert schools and community agencies to barriers that keep kids from attending class
- Ask for and monitor data on chronic absence
- Demand action to address systemic barriers that may be causing large numbers of students to miss too much school

### For Parents:

How missing school can affect your child's success in school:

- Your children can suffer academically if they miss 10 percent of school days or about 18 days. That can be just one day every two weeks, and that can happen before you know it.
- It doesn't matter if these absences are excused or unexcused. They all represent lost time in the classroom and a lost opportunity to learn.
- Attendance matters as early as kindergarten. Studies show many children who miss too many days in

kindergarten and first grade can struggle academically in later years. They often have trouble mastering reading by the end of third grade.

- Preschool is a great time to start building a habit of good attendance. Studies show that poor attendance in preschool can predict absenteeism in later grades.
- By middle and high school, chronic absence is a leading warning sign that a student will drop out.
- Too many absent students can affect the whole classroom and slow down instruction.

### **How Families Can Make a Difference:**

- Families should avoid extended vacations that require children to miss school. Try to line up vacations with the school's schedule. The same goes for doctor's appointments.
- For younger children, set a regular bedtime and morning routine. Make sure they get 9 to 11 hours of sleep. Lay out clothes and pack backpacks the night before.
- For older children, help set homework and bedtime routines that allow for 8 1/2 to 9 1/2 hours of sleep. Make sure that when the lights go out, so do the cell phones, video games and computers.
- Get to know the teachers and administrators. With younger children, make sure to introduce your child to teachers before school starts and keep in touch with the teachers. For older students, school officials can help you stay on top of academic progress and social contacts to make sure your child is staying on track.
- Above all, set an example for your child. Show him or her that attendance matters to you and that you won't allow an absence unless someone is truly sick. Don't ask older students to help with daycare and household errands.
- Turn to the school for help. Many schools offer services for the whole family.
- Ask your principal to calculate chronic absence rates for the whole school. Even if your child attends regularly, it's important to know how many students in your child's school are missing 10 percent or more of the school year.

### **For Students:**

- School is your first and most important job. You're learning about more than math and reading. You're learning how to show up for school on time every day, so that when you graduate and get a job, you'll know how to show up for work on time every day.
- Students who attend school regularly are more likely to graduate and find good jobs. In fact, a high school graduate makes, on average, a million dollars more than a dropout over a lifetime.
- School only gets harder when you stay home too much. Sometimes it's tempting to stay home because you've got too much work or you don't understand what's going on in class. But missing a day only makes that worse.

### **For Community Members and Educators:**

Improving student attendance is an essential, cost-effective but often overlooked strategy for ensuring our students are on-track to learn and succeed. Nationwide, as many as one out of 10 students is chronically absent, meaning they miss 10 percent or more of school days, or nearly a month. Too often, we don't realize how quickly absences add up: Missing just two days every month can cause a child to miss 10% of the school year and fall behind. Chronic absence is a leading, early warning indicator of academic trouble and later dropout.

The good news is that chronic absence is a problem that can be solved. While addressing some attendance barriers—such as health, poor transportation, and unstable housing—can often require longer-term strategies, everyone can make a difference by helping students and families understand that going to school every day and avoiding absences whenever possible is critical to realizing their hopes and dreams.

The Attendance Works website has everything needed to help improve attendance in your school and community:



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

**For More Information:**

Students and families in school districts in Connecticut can contact their school administrator.

**To Find Resources in Connecticut's Community Resources Database:**

Search by service name: [School Districts](#)

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