

Tried and True Tips for Reaching Families

Is your school having trouble getting contact information for parents or guardians of chronically absent kids? Check out these tried and true tips from teachers, advocates, and school officials from around the country.

Start with the basics:

- Ask students for their home phone number, as well as any relevant cell phone numbers.
- Talk to a chronically absent student's siblings if you can't reach the actual student.
- Look at school forms—accurate phone numbers are often on free and reduced lunch forms.

Seek out the parents:

- For younger children, approach the person who picks up the child.
- Send a formal letter home informing parents of their legal obligation to provide up-to-date emergency numbers and contact information.
- Schedule a home visit to obtain accurate contact information.
- Try school-based attendance outreach workers—in Chicago, for example, these are funded by TANF and can do home visits or talk to community members to find information.

Get creative:

- If an event is coming up that parents are likely to call about, such as school picture day, be sure to alert office workers to ask parents for their contact information.
- Use address information to find and get in touch with families who live near chronically absent kids whose parents you're having a hard time reaching.

Ideas and tips from Sarah Jonas (National Center for Community Schools), Debra Duardo (Los Angeles Unified School District), and Ken Seeley (The Partnership for Families & Children).