



## School Attendance Teams: Tips for Effectiveness

**What makes an effective Attendance Team?** Attendance Teams are successful when they involve the right people and maintain a clear sense of purpose and responsibilities. School and district administrators should determine, based upon local conditions, if a new entity needs to be established to monitor attendance data and practice or if the work can be successfully incorporated into the responsibilities of an existing committee.

**Who should participate?** To function effectively, an Attendance Team needs a designated chair person/facilitator and members such as the principal who can understand and analyze attendance data. Ideally, teams should include not only school staff but also representatives from other community agencies who can help with reaching out to students and their parents, as well as offering resources for overcoming barriers to attendance.

**What should they do?** Attendance Teams have a two-fold responsibility: first, they are charged with looking at individual students who are chronically absent and ensuring their needs are met using all available resources; second, they monitor what is happening overall for all students and student sub-groups at a school site. Attendance Teams can carry out both levels of work by clearly defining when they will work at each level. For example, they can divide a meeting into two parts or alternate the meeting focus.

**At the individual student level**, they should:

- Examine every week the list of students with attendance issues to ensure that each student receives appropriate supports.
- Look at other data (grades, test scores, behavioral referrals, health issues, etc.) to develop a full picture of what is happening in a student's life, especially for those with more severe attendance problems.
- Use data on attendance and chronic absence to determine the nature and intensity of supports. Supports can range from a call home or a truancy letter to a more intensive intervention and case management process.
- Review outcomes of prior interventions to determine if supports were effective.

**At the school level**, they should:

- Help communicate the importance of attendance to the entire school staff and clearly spell out how each staff member can work with the Attendance Team and help students who are chronically absent.
- Work with the administration to establish positive expectations for good attendance with students and their families. This includes creating a culture of attendance as well as defining what happens when a student misses school. This may include tiered interventions to provide needed support as well as consequences.
- Examine trend information and unusual attendance trends and patterns every quarter.
- Compile data across individual students and multiple data sources to unpack common barriers to attendance and then forge partnerships to address those challenges.
- Assess the impact of programmatic efforts such as attendance incentives on reducing rates of chronic absence.

### For more information:

See [www.attendanceworks.org](http://www.attendanceworks.org) for more tools and resources to support monitoring and addressing chronic absence. You may also contact associate director, Cecelia Leong at [cecelia@attendanceworks.org](mailto:cecelia@attendanceworks.org).