



Press Release

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National Analysis of Chronic Absence Data Revised to Reflect Local Data Reporting Error

Interactive Map Shows Updated Absence Data at State, District, and School Levels

SAN FRANCISCO, January 9, 2019, San Francisco – In response to an honest error, Attendance Works and the Everyone Graduates Center at Johns Hopkins University School of Education published an updated version of their report about national chronic absence levels. The report, [*Data Matters: Using Chronic Absence to Accelerate Action for Student Success*](#) was updated to reflect significantly revised chronic absence data from a large public school district in Maryland.

The Hamilton Project at the Brookings Institution also updated the report's accompanying [interactive data map](#). Read the [report authors' blog post](#) about addressing the data error.

"As this situation illustrates, making public data accessible to the public helps everyone to know whether chronic absence is a problem so they can take action. But it also improves the quality of the data if errors are identified," says Hedy N. Chang, Executive Director of Attendance Works, a national nonprofit.

The data originally submitted to the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) from Prince George's County, Maryland showed that around 80 percent of all students were chronically absent in the 2015-16 school year. The correct figure is approximately 29 percent.

Because of the large size of the Prince George's County, the error changed national figures for African-American youth. It also had an impact on Maryland's overall ranking, resulting in it having the 10th highest level of chronic absence, instead of the highest level among all 50 states.

“The error reported by Prince George’s County was a genuine mistake, not an attempt to manipulate the statistics,” Chang explains.

Chronic absence data by school and district is already being publicly released by states that have adopted chronic absence as a measure of accountability. The federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires that every state include chronic absence in school report cards.

State education agencies can help prevent data submission errors by providing districts with guidance related to reporting chronic absence data. The guidance can review data definitions, data collection and reporting, and provide suggestions for reviewing data for accuracy prior to submission. If inaccurate data is reported, it is also important to build in opportunities for schools and districts to submit corrections.

“We encourage all stakeholders to examine data for accuracy as well as learn if missing too much school is a major challenge,” note report authors Lauren Bauer of The Hamilton Project, Vaughan Byrnes of the Everyone Graduates Center and Chang.

“Having an accurate sense of which and how many students are chronically absent is essential to targeting action and resources as well as measuring progress over time,” the report authors say.

Data Matters, the most comprehensive analysis to date of data on chronic absence in the nation’s schools, and The Hamilton Project’s interactive data map, were originally released on August 31, 2018. The report includes [state data reports](#) for all 50 states and the District of Columbia to enable anyone interested to see how state data differs from national trends.

Attendance Works defines chronic absence as missing 10 percent of school days for any reason, including suspensions, excused and unexcused absences. In the Data Matters data analysis, however, chronic absence refers to missing 15 or more days each year because this is the data point captured in the OCR’s Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC).

Attendance Works (www.attendanceworks.org) is a national and state initiative that promotes better policy and practice around school attendance.

The mission of the Everyone Graduates Center at the Johns Hopkins University School of Education (www.every1graduates.org) is to develop and disseminate the know-how required to enable all students to graduate from high school prepared for college, career, and civic life.

The Hamilton Project at the Brookings Institution (<http://www.hamiltonproject.org>) offers a strategic vision and produces innovative policy proposals on how to create a growing economy that benefits more Americans.