



Attendance Works' Network to Advance State Attendance Policy and Practice



November 2022

www.attendanceworks.org

Introductions & Icebreaker

In Chat Box Share:

- Your name
- Organization or District
- The image that most closely reflects your feelings about the opening of school this year.

#1



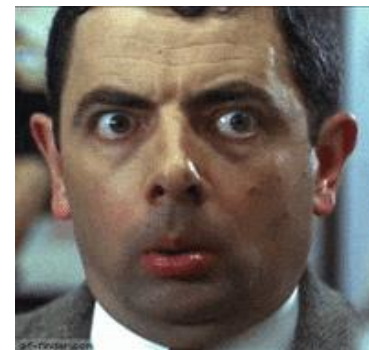
#2



#3



#4



Agenda

I. Introductions & Welcome (5 min)

II. Examining the Landscape of Excused Mental Health Absences for K-12 Students (25 min including Q&A)

❖ *Megan Gildin and Megan Sambolt, Student Engagement and Attendance Center (SEAC) operated by Insight Policy Research and AIR*

III. State Guidance on Mental Health Days (30 min including Q&A)

❖ *Krissy Johnson and Bridget Underdahl, Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction*

❖ *Alex Javna, Virginia Department of Education*

IV. Chronic Absence and School Accountability (20 min)

❖ *Round robin discussion on how SEAS are equipping/supporting districts and schools to address chronic absenteeism*

V. Evaluation & Topics for Future Meetings (5 min)

Using Mental Health Days to Address Student Mental Health and Chronic Absenteeism

NASAPP Meeting
November 9–10, 2022

Disclaimer

This session is conducted by Insight Policy Research and American Institutes for Research under Contract GS-10F-0136X with the U.S. Department of Education. The contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the Department of Education or endorsement by the federal government. This presentation is intended for informational purposes and to give a sense of the landscape on this topic and not to advocate for or against.

Introductions



Megan Sambolt

Principal Researcher

Megan Gildin

Technical Assistance Consultant

Warm Welcome

Share in the chat or come off mute:

What is one practice or policy in your workplace that helps support staff mental health or well-being?

Agenda



Student mental health day policies overview



State DOE guidance on mental health days



Exploring guidance for implementation and future planning



Questions and answers

Brief Overview



Using Mental Health Days to Address Student Mental Health and Chronic Absenteeism

November 2022

Author
Meghan Glavin, Ed.M.
American Institutes for Research

insight
POLICY RESEARCH

Student
Engagement and
Attendance
Center

AIR

- ▶ Student mental health needs and the benefits and challenges of mental health days
- ▶ Mental health day policies across the United States
- ▶ Guidance for implementing mental health day policies
- ▶ Features from state legislation

Student Mental Health Needs

- ▶ Depression, anxiety, and other mental health issues
- ▶ Persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness
- ▶ At risk for suicides
- ▶ Exacerbate existing inequities



Benefits of Mental Health Days



“We really need excused mental health days. There have been plenty of times I’ve needed one or a friend needed one, but stress is our normal and you just push through.”

—Sara F., rising junior, Paul Laurence Dunbar High School, Lexington, Kentucky



Gewertz, C. (2021). Students speak out: 'We need mental health days.' *Education Week*. Retrieved August 2, 2022, from <https://www.edweek.org/leadership/students-speak-out-we-need-mental-health-days/2021/06>

Benefits of Mental Health Days

Mental health days may—

- Create a more positive school climate
- Reduce the stigma of mental health
- Help keep students out of the state truancy system
- Provide data that help identify students needing additional supports



Challenges of Mental Health Days

Mental health days—

- May misrepresent absenteeism
- May make it more difficult to connect students with resources and supports
- Require education on how to effectively use a mental health day
- Are **not** a solution for managing the depth of mental health issues students face



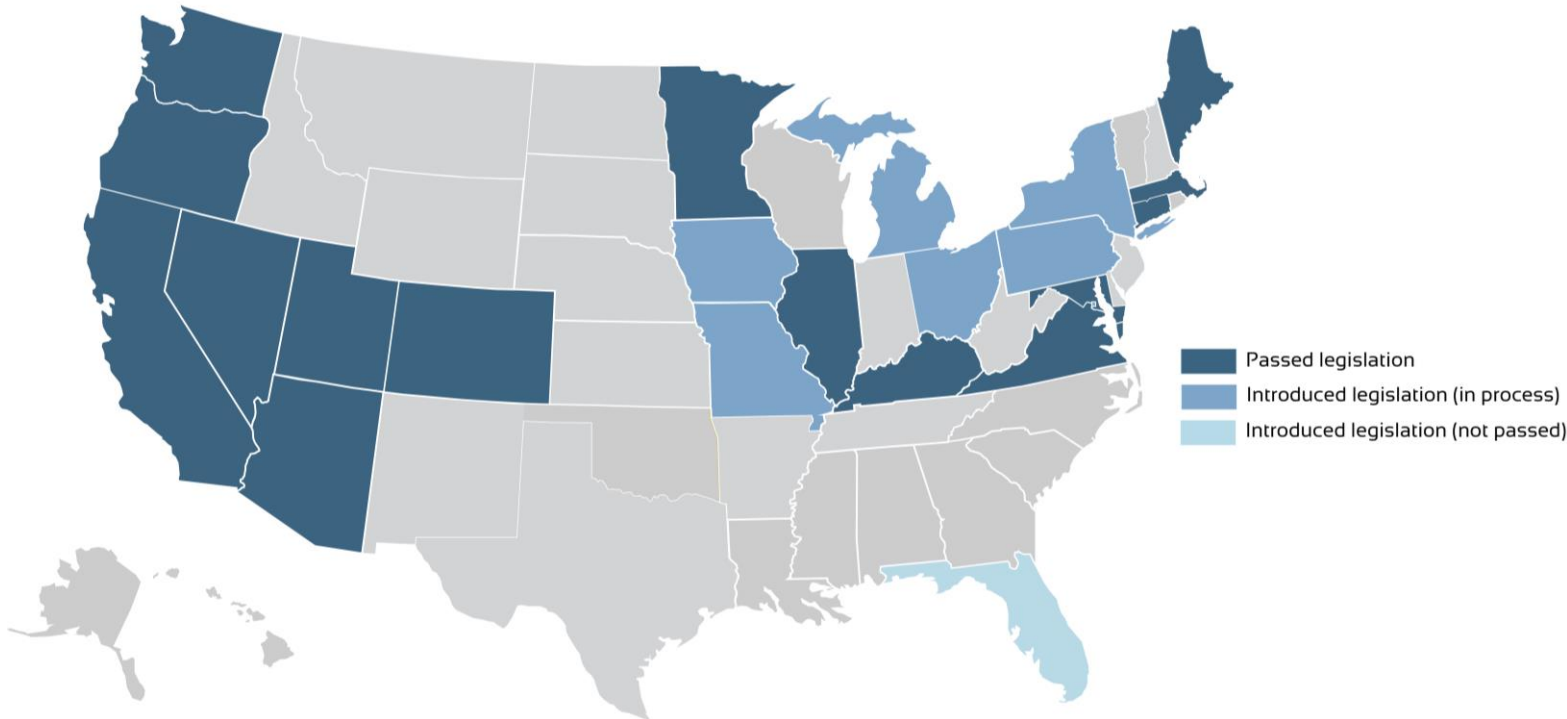
What Do You Think?

Share in the chat or come off mute:

What do you see as additional benefits or challenges?

Current Policies Across the United States

Current U.S. State Legislation on Mental Health



Key Policy Features

- Expands definitions of excused absences to include absence for mental and behavioral health needs
- Requires state educational agencies (SEAs) to provide guidance to districts and schools on implementation
- Focuses on implications for related policies, such as chronic absenteeism and truancy

Questions and Answers



Upcoming Opportunities

- Learning Series: Finding Students

Megan Sambolt, msambolt@air.org

Megan Gildin, mgildin@air.org

Taneco Reid, SEACenter@insightpolicyresearch.com



GUIDELINES FOR GRANTING EXCUSED ABSENCES DUE TO MENTAL OR BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

Alex Javna, Student Services Specialist
November 2022



VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

8VAC-20-730-10

"Excused absence" means an absence of an entire assigned instructional school day with a reason acceptable to the school administration that is provided by the parent. If circumstances permit, the parent should provide the school administration with the reason for the nonattendance prior to the absence. Examples of an excused absence may include, but are not limited to, the following reasons: funeral, illness (including mental health and substance abuse illnesses), injury, legal obligations, medical procedures, suspensions, religious observances, and military obligation. Suspended students continue to remain under the provisions of compulsory school attendance as described in § 22.1-254 of the Code of Virginia. An absence from school attendance resulting from a suspension shall be recorded in compliance with [8VAC20-730-30](#) for the period of the suspension.

2020 VIRGINIA GENERAL

ASSEMBLY

HB 308 Students; DOE to establish guideline for excused absence due to mental and behavioral health.

Introduced by: [Patrick A. Hope](#) | [all patrons](#) ... [notes](#) | [add to my profiles](#)

SUMMARY AS PASSED: (all summaries)

Public elementary and secondary school students; excused absences; mental and behavioral health. Requires the Department of Education to establish and distribute to each school board no later than December 31, 2020, guidelines for the granting of excused absences to students who are absent from school due to mental or behavioral health and requires any student who is absent from school due to his mental or behavioral health to be granted an excused absence, subject to such guidelines.

GUIDELINES (JUNE 2020)

As per [8VAC20-730-10](#), a reason for an excused absence could include mental or behavioral health. Mental health is the emotional, psychological, and social well-being of a person. Mental health issues may include, but are not limited to, disorders such as mood disorders, anxiety disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder, and psychotic disorders. Behavioral health encompasses mental health and relates to habits that have an impact on the overall mental and physical health. Behavioral health issues may include, but are not limited to, examples such as substance abuse, eating disorders, and addiction disorders.

GUIDELINES (JUNE 2020)

The process for determining that an absence is related to a mental or behavioral health is determined at the local level. School divisions shall establish local policies and guidelines as they relate to determining whether an absence is due to mental or behavioral health. For example, excused absences may be granted for mental illness, recovery, or appointments relating to diagnoses or treatment of mental or behavioral health issues. Additional criteria may be established, such as certification from a mental or medical health professional, for absences due to illness in excess of a certain number of days. School divisions should consult with their local school board attorney in developing the details of local policies. When an absence meets local policies due to a behavioral or mental health issue, the absence shall be granted as excused.

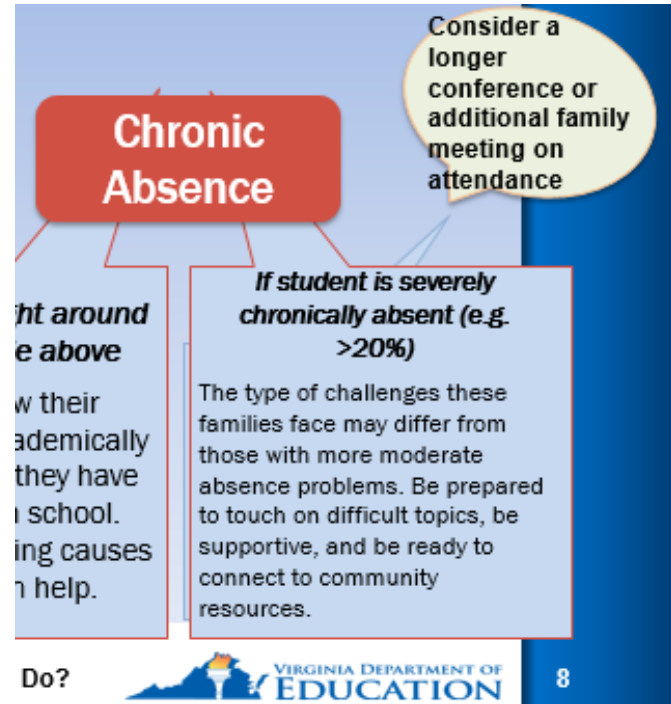
Supporting the Implementation of Policy Guidance

TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE RESOURCES

Module Topics

Select a title to jump to the module video and materials.

- [Introduction](#)
- [Module 1: Understanding Chronic Absenteeism](#)
- [Module 2: Frameworks for Reducing Chronic Absence](#)
- [Module 3: Establishing School Attendance Teams](#)
- [Module 4: Using Data to Drive Action](#)
- [Module 5: Messaging Attendance](#)
- [Module 6: Integrating Attendance In Parent Engagement](#)
- [Module 7: Leveraging Parent-Teacher Conferences](#)
- [Module 8: Recognizing Good and Improved Attendance](#)
- [Module 9: Providing Personalized Early Outreach](#)
- [Module 10: Identifying Barriers](#)
- [Module 11: Creating Opportunities for Peer Learning](#)
- [Module 12: Engaging Community Partners](#)



TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE RESOURCES



Module 1: Understanding Chronic Absenteeism

After watching this module, you will know more about the impact of chronic absenteeism on students...[View More](#)



Module 2: Addressing Chronic Absenteeism

This module will help you to understand how reducing chronic absenteeism fits into the state of Virginia...[View More](#)



Module 3: Using Actionable Data to Address Chronic Absenteeism

After watching this module, you will understand what types of data will help inform school practice...[View More](#)

Addressing the Underlying Mental Health Challenges

§ 22.1-253.13:2

2020

H. Each local school board shall employ, at a minimum, the following full-time equivalent positions for any school that reports fall membership, according to student enrollment:

4. School counselors, one full-time equivalent position per 325 students in grades kindergarten through 12.

2021

O. Each school board shall provide at least three specialized student support positions per 1,000 students. For purposes of this subsection, specialized student support positions include school social workers, school psychologists, school nurses, licensed behavior analysts, licensed assistant behavior analysts, and other licensed health and behavioral positions, which may either be employed by the school board or provided through contracted services.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION GRANTS

2019 Virginia Partnership for School Mental Health Grant

The grant aims to increase the number of qualified school mental health (SMH) professionals employed by high need local education agencies (LEAs). To do this, the Partnership is developing an infrastructure to support graduate student training in the provision of evidence-based school mental health interventions and teaming while also building capacity of current SMH professionals to provide evidence-based services and supervise trainees.

2020 Virginia School Mental Health Providers Recruitment and Retention Grant

The VDOE is utilizing this grant by creating the [VA Career and Learning Center](#). The website supports efforts to recruit and retain school mental health professionals through professional development modules, guidance on licensing requirements, and information on school-based mental health careers. It also serves as a repository for available SMHP positions in the Commonwealth. Partnered school divisions receive grant funds to implement recruitment and retention strategies for school-based mental health professionals.

Virginia Career and Learning Center for School Mental Health Professionals

Make a difference in your career and your students' lives.

The Virginia Career and Learning Center for School Mental Health Professionals offers professional development and career opportunities for school counselors, school social workers, school psychologists, and other licensed school mental health professionals in Virginia's Public Schools.



Moving from SURVIVING to THRIVING



WHO SHOULD ATTEND?

Administrators, school leaders, division leaders, school counselors, school social workers, school psychologists and other specialized student support personnel.

CONFERENCE INFORMATION

- Free virtual conference.
- Q/A opportunities during breakout sessions.
- Certificates of attendance will be awarded for both the preconference and conference sessions.
- While not required, attendees are encouraged to attend both the preconference and conference.
- Zoom information and breakout session summaries will be sent to those who have registered the week before the conference.
- Registration closes on June 12, 2022.



[REGISTRATION FORM](#)

2022 MENTAL HEALTH IN SCHOOLS CONFERENCE



CONFERENCE THEME:

Moving from
Surviving to Thriving

August 1 & 2, 2022

[Marriott at City Center](#)

Newport News, Virginia

Attendees will hear about innovative, evidence based, and/or data-driven tier 2 and 3 strategies that meet students' needs so they can THRIVE!

Please visit the
[MHIS Registration Link](#)
for more information and to
register for this FREE
conference.

Registration closes on
July 15, 2022 5:00pm



CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM COLLABORATIVE LEARNING COHORT

TRAUMA-SENSITIVE STRATEGIES FOR REDUCING CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM

November 1, 2022



COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

VIRGINIA COMMUNITY SCHOOL FRAMEWORK

News & Announcements

Community Schools Grant Application

The Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) is providing a funding opportunity for Virginia school divisions to support the development and implementation of community schools.

- [Community Schools Development and Implementation Grant](#) (PDF) - Superintendent's Memo #257-22, October 28, 2022
- [Community Schools Application for Funding Instructions](#) (Word)
 - [Application Cover Page and Checklist](#) (Word)
 - [Community Schools Exploration Team](#) (Word)
 - [Statement of Need](#) (Word)
 - [Goal Aligned Work Plan](#) (Word)
 - [Detailed Budget](#) (Word)
- Optional Application Resource: [Self-Reflection Activity](#) (Word)

To apply for funding under this opportunity, school divisions are required to submit the completed application no later than December 9, 2022. Applications must be submitted electronically by email to Alexandra.Javna@doe.virginia.gov.

THANK YOU!

alexandra.javna@doe.virginia.gov



VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Mental Health Excused Absences: Overview

Rule Change & Guidance
Washington State



Washington Office of Superintendent of
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

House Bill 1834 (2021-22)

OSPI was required to:

- Categorize, in rule, a student absence from school due to a mental health reason, as an excused absence due to illness, health condition, or medical appointment
- Develop the rule, and guidance to implement the rule, in consultation with a student advisory group and the GATE Advisory
- Have the rule in place for the 2022-23 school year

OSPI Rule Authority - Chapter 392-401 WAC



Defines absence from in-person and remote instruction (synchronous & asynchronous)



Defines reasons absences should be excused



Requires daily attendance taking & defines data reporting requirements



Requires districts to use an MTSS as a framework for addressing absences including



Adopted Rule Language (WAC 392-401-020) Effective August 1, 2022

Absences due to the following reasons must be excused:

(a) Physical health or mental health symptoms, illness, health condition or medical appointment for the student or person for whom the student is legally responsible. Examples of symptoms, illness, health conditions or medical appointments include, but are not limited to, medical, counseling, mental health wellness, dental, optometry, pregnancy, and behavioral health treatment (which can include in-patient or out-patient treatment for chemical dependency or mental health);



What did this policy change do?

Added a new reason that an absence must be excused in [WAC 392-401-020](#)

This is the only new requirement.



What did this policy change NOT do?

Add new resources for schools or communities to increase access to behavioral health services

Explicitly limit the number of days a student could be excused for mental health reasons

Remove a school district's authority to establish board policy to address excessive absenteeism

Require doctor's notes or stop districts from requiring them

Set a state-wide threshold for districts to stop excusing absences



Washington state efforts to address mental health

HB 1664: Increased funding for school counselors, nurses, social workers and psychologists in K12 each year until 24-25 SY

HB 1890: Directed the Children and Youth Behavioral Health Work Group to convene a strategic advisory group to develop a plan for identifying and meeting system gaps

HB 1800: Increased HCA staff for connecting families to BH resources; creation of BH360 – resource navigation for WA families

HB 1216: Funded Behavioral Health Navigators at all 9 ESDs to provide support for districts to develop and implement comprehensive suicide prevention and behavioral health supports

OSPI Suicide prevention grants: 10 awards worth up to \$20,000 for districts to implement a comprehensive tiered suicide prevention program

The School-based Behavioral Health & Suicide Prevention

Subcommittee convenes stakeholders across the state to share resources and provide recommendations to improve school-based



Why this policy change?

Governor Inslee declared a Youth Mental Health Crisis

March 15, 2021



Washington Office of Superintendent of
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION



STATE OF WASHINGTON
— OFFICE OF GOVERNOR JAY INSLEE —

EMERGENCY PROCLAMATION OF THE GOVERNOR

21-05

Children and Youth Mental Health Crisis



Youth Advocacy led to Passage of HB 1834

The Washington State
Legislative Youth Advisory
Council (LYAC) and other youth
advocates worked with
legislators to pass the bill



Washington Office of Superintendent of
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

What is the purpose for the rule change?

Creates consistency in

excusing mental health related absences across the state to reduce a

punitive approach

Makes clear that mental health is as significant as physical

Continue to address stigma surrounding mental health



Background and Purpose

- Mental health and reengagement purpose
- OSPI Attendance background
- House Bill 1834 background

Core Components

- Definitions for Assessing Mental Health Absences
- Systems and Strategies for Addressing Mental Health Absences: Action Steps for Districts and Schools
- Action Steps for School Districts
- Possible Thresholds for Responding to Excessive Excused Absence

Covered
in
Guidance



Next Steps

- Learning from Implementation
- Collaborating on developing a model excessive absenteeism district board policy
- Youth and family facing media toolkit



Mental Health Absence Guidance

[HB 1834 Mental Health
Related Absences
webpage](#)

[Mental Health
Absence Explainer](#)
(June 2022)

[Mental Health Related
Absences: Guidance to
Support
Implementation of
House Bill 1834](#)

(August 2022)

Email:
MentalHealthAbsences@k12.wa.us





Washington Office of Superintendent of
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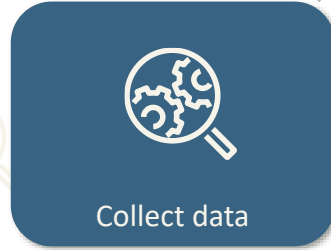
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Guidance for Implementation

Guidance for Implementation

(continued)



Looking Ahead

How are SEAs, local education agencies (LEAs), and school leaders supporting implementation and adoption of the policy?

How are SEAs and LEAs monitoring use and impact, both intended and unintended?

How do best practices in addressing mental health needs and chronic absenteeism align and conflict?

How do we best engage youth and families?



Chronic Absenteeism and School Accountability

How are SEAs equipping/supporting schools to address increased rates of chronic absence as part of school accountability?



Topics for Future Meetings



Share suggested topics for future meetings in Jamboard

<https://jamboard.google.com/d/1WVrJqQLKiPM-N0OC5W1Cv2QQkmNp9Hc79mfuQjRI1YU/viewer?ts=635ff0b2&pli=1&f=0>



Evaluation

- ✓ ***Complete the Meeting Evaluation***
- ✓ https://app.upmetrics.com/data_collector/cklwj8q71w9w707306xnps5vv

THANK YOU!