

PRESS RELEASE

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Most states driving attendance improvements with prevention and using legal action as a last resort

The majority of U.S. states are promoting data-informed and prevention-oriented solutions to reduce chronic absence in schools, according to a new report from Attendance Works.

These actions by states from different regions indicate a growing consensus on how to take action on an issue that is having a detrimental impact on student well-being and achievement nationwide. Chronic absence, missing 10% of school for any reason, remains elevated, with one in four students chronically absent, compared with one in six prior to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Attendance Works published its sixth annual report today, [Beyond the Roll Call: Reducing Chronic Absence Through State Action](#), examining the progress to date on state attendance data, policy and practice known to improve student attendance and outcomes. Based on an examination of websites for all 50 states and Washington, D.C., and a survey of state education departments completed in spring 2026, this year's report focuses on:

- Building a robust, comparable attendance data system
- Ensuring localities can access data to drive solutions
- Recommendations for how states can accelerate progress

“Today’s report indicates a growing consensus among states throughout the country that reducing chronic absence requires access to actionable data and starts with prevention and relationship building,” said Hedy Chang, Attendance Works president and CEO. “Swift action from states to ensure attendance data is not just collected, but is used to support early, preventive action at the local level is crucial to turn around today’s persistent chronic absence,” Chang added.

While districts are a cornerstone for sustainable change in schools and communities, state departments of education, policymakers and legislators are essential for ensuring effective practices for improving attendance are implemented at scale.

The summary report includes [a table](#) describing each state's attendance policy and practice as well as the available chronic absence data. A technical report offers an in-depth discussion of the findings.

Key Takeaways

This year's technical report identifies 19 findings that show accelerating progress and offer examples of positive state actions. Report highlights include:

- 1. Twenty-two states now provide districts with regularly updated chronic absence reports throughout the school year.** Knowing whether chronic absence is improving or worsening, and for how many and which schools, districts, grades and student groups, is critical for developing meaningful plans to improve attendance and educational outcomes. In three states, Ohio, Connecticut and Rhode Island, the data reporting is publicly available to everyone including districts.
- 2. Thirty-one states are advancing prevention-oriented guidance for districts and schools in easy-to-use handbooks published on their websites, up from 21 last year.** Attendance Works recommends prevention and early intervention strategies that are tailored to local realities as key to improving attendance. In general, the guidance from states reveals an emphasis on using courts as a last resort. Examples of state guidance with early, prevention-oriented strategies include [Alaska](#), [California](#), [Colorado](#), [Georgia](#), [Ohio](#), [Minnesota](#), [Louisiana](#), [Maryland](#), [Nebraska](#), [New Jersey](#), [New Mexico](#), [South Carolina](#), [Utah](#), [Virginia](#) and [Washington](#).
- 3. All states but two publish chronic absence data on their department of education website and most offer data by school, district and student group.** While 19 states, (three more than in the 2022-23 school year) now offer data by grade level, many more states could easily publish this information. [Delaware](#) has been collecting grade-level data since 2021. Surprisingly, not all states publish data that show the student populations typically experiencing the highest levels of absenteeism. For example, only 32 states publicly report chronic absence data for students experiencing homelessness.
- 4. Most states (38) define chronic absence as missing 10% or more of the school year, and the majority of states (40) include all absences (excused, unexcused and suspensions).** Attendance Works advises against exclusions for any reason in order to ensure that the data fully reflects the percentage of students with lost opportunities to learn and develop in the classroom. The [state-by-state table](#) includes what our survey collected about the nature of the exclusions.
- 5. The lack of a common definition of a day of attendance continues to be a major challenge.** When this definition is varied it makes it difficult to compare schools and districts within a state and can hide the true extent of chronic absence. Seventeen

states leave this definition to local discretion for in-person school and an even larger number (26) for virtual schooling.

- 6. In some states, minimum enrollment policies can lead to an undercounting of chronic absence rates among highly mobile and homeless students , which makes it challenging for states and districts to respond.** At least three states — Connecticut, New Mexico and Kentucky — require conducting outreach and intervention before a student can be dropped from the rolls, if a family has not provided documentation of a move or a transfer.

About Attendance Works

Attendance Works is a nonprofit initiative that advances success in school and beyond for all students by reducing chronic absence. Our website offers free downloadable resources, research, consulting services and more: www.attendanceworks.org