



PRESS RELEASE

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New Report Details How School Districts are Reducing Chronic Absence for Students Experiencing Homelessness

Homeless Students Miss School at Nearly Twice the Rate of Their Peers

As the rate of homelessness rises nationwide, school districts are struggling to ensure students experiencing homelessness attend school regularly despite their challenges. A new analysis from SchoolHouse Connection and Attendance Works identifies creative strategies that districts are using to reduce chronic absence among this vulnerable group.

A [series of case studies](#) released today highlight the best practices for identifying homeless students, tracking their attendance, and using community and state support to address barriers that keep them from getting to school.

“Students experiencing homelessness are chronically absent at [far higher rates](#) than other students, and it’s essential that we bring them back to school,” says Barbara Duffield, executive director of SchoolHouse Connection, a nonprofit organization working to overcome homelessness through education. “The districts we feature are using data-driven approaches while bringing heart and compassion to serve these children, youth and families.”

“Essential to this work is bringing together a team of district staff members who support homeless students and those working on absenteeism,” says Hedy Chang, founder and executive director of the nonprofit Attendance Works. “Breaking down these silos within a district is so important if we are going to help homeless students attend school regularly.”

The key strategies include:

- **Identifying students eligible for support.** Federal law provides safeguards to help homeless students stay in school, but schools need to know who these students are. In addition to registration forms, districts are training attendance clerks, teachers, counselors and administrators to recognize the signs of housing instability. Some districts are visiting motels and RV parks to find students in need.
- **Tracking and sharing attendance data.** Districts are sharing real-time data with schools about which students are homeless and what their absenteeism rates look like. They are using data on chronic absence to drive timely action and ensure more coordinated action across departments and inform the work of attendance teams.
- **Addressing barriers for homeless students.** Transportation remains the biggest barrier for these students as sudden housing changes often leave them out of position for bus routes or walking to school. Districts are rerouting buses to motels where homeless families live, using car services with drivers vetted for safety and providing gas cards to families. They are also supporting students and families with other needs, such as food, clothing and mental health counseling.
- **Tapping community and state resources.** Districts are amplifying their work improving attendance for homeless students with help from community-based organizations and, in some places, state grants specifically for this population. Many use a Community Schools approach that coordinates nonprofits and government agencies in supporting students.

The districts featured in case studies include: Adams 12 Five Star Schools in Colorado, Coalinga-Huron Unified School District in California, Henrico County Public Schools in Virginia and Kansas City Kansas Public Schools. The team also identified best practices being used by districts in Maine, Rhode Island and Washington state, as well as additional examples from California and Colorado.

A SchoolHouse Connection-University of Michigan database provides [chronic absence rates](#) for homeless populations at the district, county and state levels, as well as Congressional district and state legislative district.

- [Read the case studies here](#)
- [Read best practices from six other districts](#)
- [Read the top 10 strategies](#)
- [Register for the March 13 webinar](#)

[Attendance Works](#) is a national initiative that promotes opportunities to learn and advances student success by inspiring and catalyzing policies and practices that prevent and reduce chronic absence.

[SchoolHouse Connection](#) is a national nonprofit organization working to overcome homelessness through education.