

State Self-Assessment Tool

The goal of this self-assessment is to help state leaders identify strengths and opportunities to develop a systemic approach to reducing chronic absence. The tool is built around six key ingredients: **shared responsibility, actionable data, capacity building, positive engagement, strategic partnerships, and adequate resources**. While assessing your state education agency across all six ingredients, think about the actions your SEA takes on its own, as well as the role of partners.

A cross-departmental state team should undertake the following steps at least annually:

- 1) **Complete the assessment:** Each person should complete the assessment separately to reflect on strengths and opportunities for improvement. Consider adding the heads of departments not represented on the team such as Assessment and Accountability, School Improvement, or Federal Programs who can offer valuable perspectives and suggestions.
 - a. **If you are meeting in person**, give each participant a copy of the self-assessment to complete on their own.
 - b. **If you are meeting virtually**, create an online version of the self-assessment using applications like Google Forms or Survey Monkey.
- 2) **Tabulate the results** and share with the team so they can see how everyone responded to each question.
 - a. **If you used a paper-and-pencil version**, collect/summarize the results using a clean copy of the tool or have participants transfer their responses to a wall chart (see instructions).
 - b. **If you used the online version**, download/print out the summary reports.
- 3) **Discuss:** Convene the group to review what the combined data reveal about strengths, gaps, and differences of opinion. Use the results to identify practices that should be continued and to flag potential areas for improvement.
- 4) **Set goals:** Once team members have agreed on initial priorities, get feedback from key stakeholders, then finalize your goals.
- 5) **Make a plan:** Assign responsibilities and establish timelines for completion.
- 6) **Communicate about the plan:** The team should communicate the results of the assessment with other SEA staff and – if appropriate – districts and partners, and engage them in executing the plan.

**Chronic absence is missing 10% or more of school for any reason – including excused and unexcused absences as well as suspensions. It is different from truancy (unexcused absences) or average daily attendance (how many students typically show up each day), both of which can mask high levels of chronic absence.*

SHARED RESPONSIBILITY	Solidly in Place	Needs Improvement	Urgent Gap	Don't Know	Rationale for Rating
1. The state uses data to establish statewide attendance improvement goals and set annual targets.					
2. Our SEA encourages LEAs to have a data-driven plan to address chronic absence that includes improvement goals and a process for monitoring and recognizing progress.					
3. Our SEA creates internal structures and opportunities for staff across departments of the SEA to collaborate around efforts to support LEAs in improving attendance.					
4. Our SEA regularly meets with other public agencies and statewide organizations to examine statewide chronic absence patterns and trends to inspire collective and individual agency action.					
5. Our SEA works with the legislature to develop early intervention and prevention policies to address truancy and chronic absence.					
6. Our SEA works closely with the governor to make attendance a top priority.					

ACTIONABLE DATA	Solidly in Place	Needs Improvement	Urgent Gap	Don't Know	Rationale for Rating
1. Our state has a standard definition for a day of attendance and chronic absence (ideally missing 10% or more of school for any reason, including excused and unexcused absences along with suspensions).					
2. Our SEA requires Local Education Agencies (LEAs) to maintain and submit accurate attendance data for inclusion in the state longitudinal student database.					
3. Our SEA publicly reports statewide chronic absence data disaggregated by district, school, grade, and student groups, early and often.					
4. Our SEA publicly reports on types of absence – excused, unexcused, and suspensions – by district, school, grade, and student groups in order to examine who is affected by current truancy and disciplinary practices.					
5. Our SEA helps and/or helps LEAs produce real-time attendance dashboards that include chronic absence rates by district, school, grade, and student groups.					
6. Our SEA provides tools to help LEAs collect qualitative data from students and families about the reasons students miss school.					

CAPACITY BUILDING	Solidly in Place	Needs Improvement	Urgent Gap	Don't Know	Rationale for Rating
1. Our SEA has developed a comprehensive attendance policy that includes guidance to support improved attendance, beginning with prevention and early intervention.					
2. Our SEA builds the capacity of LEAs to implement a multi-tiered system of support to address chronic absence.					
3. Our SEA offers training on how to analyze attendance data patterns and trends.					
4. Our SEA provides technical assistance on how to develop effective district and school teams to implement evidence-based attendance improvement practices.					
5. Our SEA helps LEAs embed attendance into existing initiatives (e.g. PBIS, MTSS, etc.).					
6. Our SEA provides LEAs, which have high levels of chronic absence, with intensive support either directly or via intermediaries (e.g., educational service centers).					

POSITIVE ENGAGEMENT	Solidly in Place	Needs Improvement	Urgent Gap	Don't Know	Rationale for Rating
1. Our SEA consistently raises public awareness about the value of school attendance and reducing chronic absence.					
2. Our SEA equips LEAs to help families understand, in their home languages, the value of showing up for school and the consequences for well-being and academic success when they do not attend.					
3. Our SEA supports LEAs in engaging students and families as partners, as early as possible, in identifying attendance barriers and generating solutions.					
4. Our SEA promotes early outreach to students and families for any type of absence and the use of legal action as a last resort.					
5. Our SEA helps LEAs intentionally link their student and family relationship building and engagement practices to their attendance improvement strategies.					
6. Our SEA publicizes bright spot LEAs that achieve measurable reductions in chronic absence and to inspire action.					

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS	Solidly in Place	Needs Improvement	Urgent Gap	Don't Know	Rationale for Rating
1. Our SEA has materials and resources to help public agencies, statewide and local non-profits, and stakeholders collaborate with LEAs to promote prevention and early intervention.					
2. Our SEA has mapped statewide resources that support attendance and engagement including specific departments within the SEA, other state agencies, intermediaries, and technical assistance centers.					
3. Our SEA provides tools to LEAs to map local organizations that can contribute to improving attendance.					
4. Our SEA encourages LEAs to collaborate with community and agency partners to contribute to a multi-tiered system of attendance support.					
5. Our SEA works to coordinate state, county and local agencies and partners to address the major reasons for absences (e.g. health, mental health, housing insecurity, transportation).					
6. Our SEA leverages state and federal programs and initiatives (e.g., expanded learning, community schools, health services, Pre-K, etc.) to support attendance improvement strategies.					

ADEQUATE RESOURCES	Solidly in Place	Needs Improvement	Urgent Gap	Don't Know	Rationale for Rating
1. Our SEA has identified gaps in statewide resources for improving attendance and engagement, including for particular districts, grades, student groups, and geographic locations (e.g. rural, reservations).					
2. Our SEA regularly provides LEAs with information about federal and state funding sources that can be combined to improve attendance.					
3. Our SEA aligns the resources of existing initiatives with attendance improvement strategies.					
4. Our SEA prioritizes the distribution of resources to LEAs with higher rates of chronic absence.					
5. Our SEA identifies and promotes policies and practices that help ensure all students, including families facing challenges, have access to school.					
6. Our SEA advocates for adequate funding to address systemic barriers to attendance.					

Overall Reflections & Next Steps

1. What are your SEA's greatest strengths across the six ingredients?
2. What are the biggest challenges your state faces across the six ingredients?
3. What are the three or four most important steps that could be taken over the course of the next year to lay the foundation for reducing chronic absence?
4. If you are conducting this assessment with others, share all of your ideas for the three or four most important steps. Identify if any of the steps are more important to achieve first to lay the foundation for others. Agree upon the top three to five shared priorities for action.
5. For each priority, identify the following: what are the resources that could be leveraged; who are the key groups that should be involved; who could take the lead in moving it forward; and what is your timeline for action.
6. Determine how to monitor impact and engage in continuous improvement.