



CONNECTICUT STATE  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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# **All Students in School & Engaged!**

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Webinar: Reducing Chronic Absence in Connecticut's Schools

May 31, 2017

# CSDE Presenters



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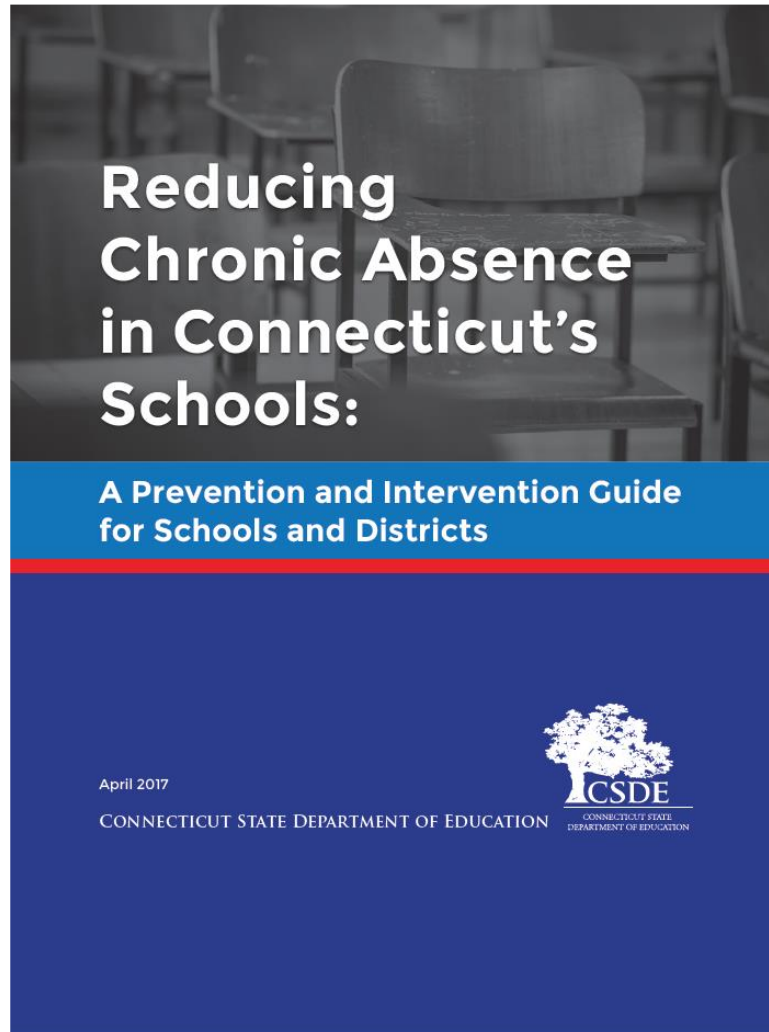


# Welcome

- Context for Webinar
- Presentation Focus
  - Why Attendance Matters
  - Clarifying Definitions
  - Connecticut's Chronic Absence Landscape
  - Understanding Student Attendance Reporting
  - What Districts Can Do to Improve Attendance
  - What Schools Can Do to Improve Attendance
  - Questions & Answers
  - Closing Remarks and Next Steps



# Debut of New Chronic Absence Guidance





## ABSENTEEISM

is a red alert that students will  
dropout of high school

# Why Attendance Matters

# Absences Add Up!

## Absences Add Up!

Chronic absence is defined as missing 10 percent or more of days of school for any reason, including all absences, excused, unexcused, and disciplinary. Being chronically absent has a significant impact on a student's ability to read at grade level, perform academically, and graduate on time.

**Student Attendance Rate =**

Student's Total Days of Attendance

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Student's Total Days of Membership\*

*\* Student's Total Days of Membership equals the number of instructional days a student has been enrolled in the current school for the current school year.*



# Why Chronic Absence is an Important Issue

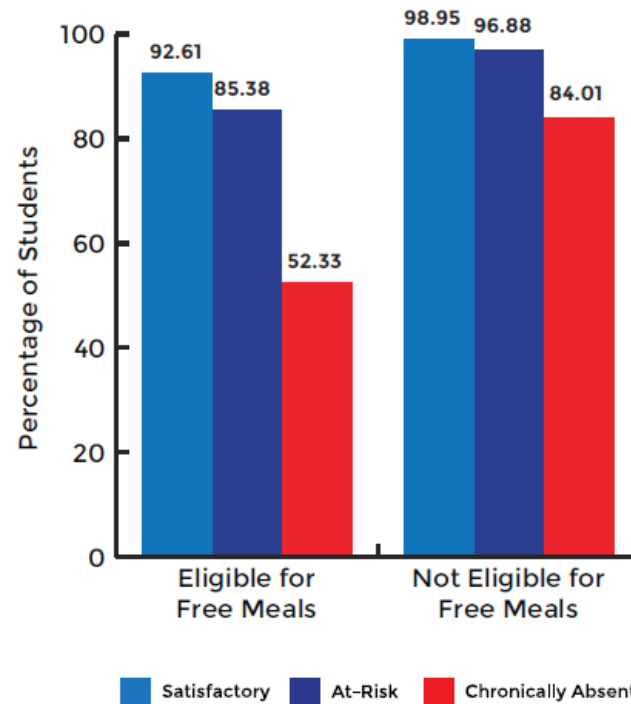
National research documents the following negative impact:

- At every age and every stage, chronic absence erodes the academic and social skills needed to succeed in school.
- Being chronically absent has a significant impact on a student's ability to perform at grade level, do well on standardized tests, and graduate on time.
- Children who are chronically absent in both kindergarten and first grade are much less likely to read proficiently by the end of third grade.
- By sixth grade, chronic absence is a key early indicator of dropout from high school.
- By ninth grade, attendance may be a better indicator of dropout than eighth-grade test scores.



# Impact of 9<sup>th</sup> Grade Attendance on Four-Year Graduation Rates

Impact of Ninth-Grade Attendance on Four-Year Graduation Rates by Economic Status (Free Meal Eligibility) 2014-15 Cohort



Source: Connecticut State Department of Education,  
Performance Office, 2014





# Clarifying Definitions



# Multiple Measures of Attendance

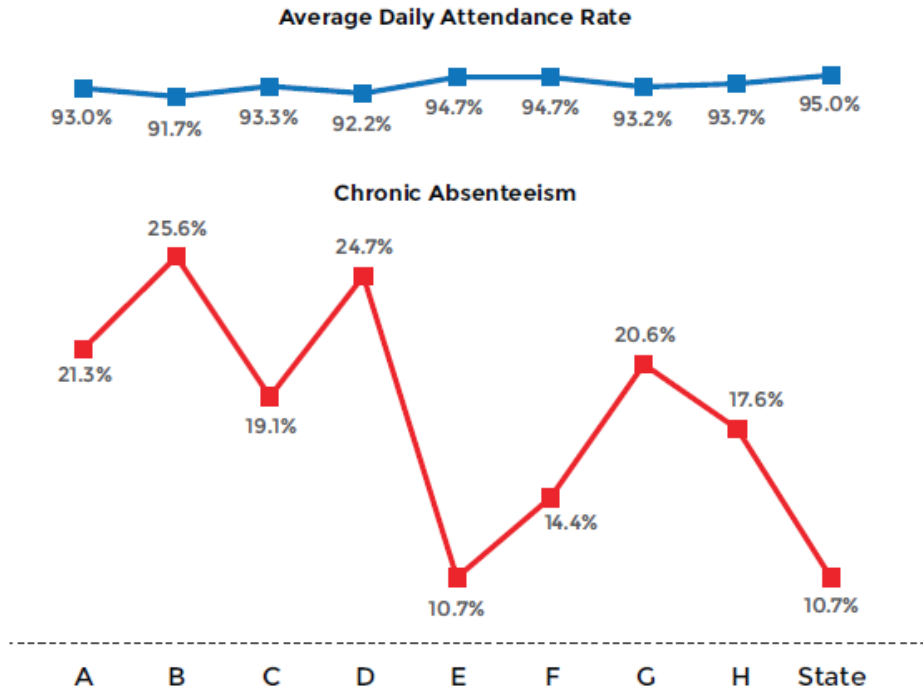
<b>Average Daily Attendance</b>	<b>How many students show up to school every day?</b> The percent of enrolled students who attend school each day. It is used in some states for allocating funding.
<b>Truancy</b>	<b>Who is missing school without permission?</b> Typically refers only to unexcused or unverified absences.
<b>Chronic Absence</b>	<b>Who is missing so much school they are academically at risk?</b> CSDE defines it as missing 10% or more of the total number of days enrolled during the school year for any reason. It includes both excused, unexcused, out-of-school suspensions and in-school suspensions that last more than one-half of the school day.



# Average Daily Attendance

*Measures the average number of students who show up on any given day.*

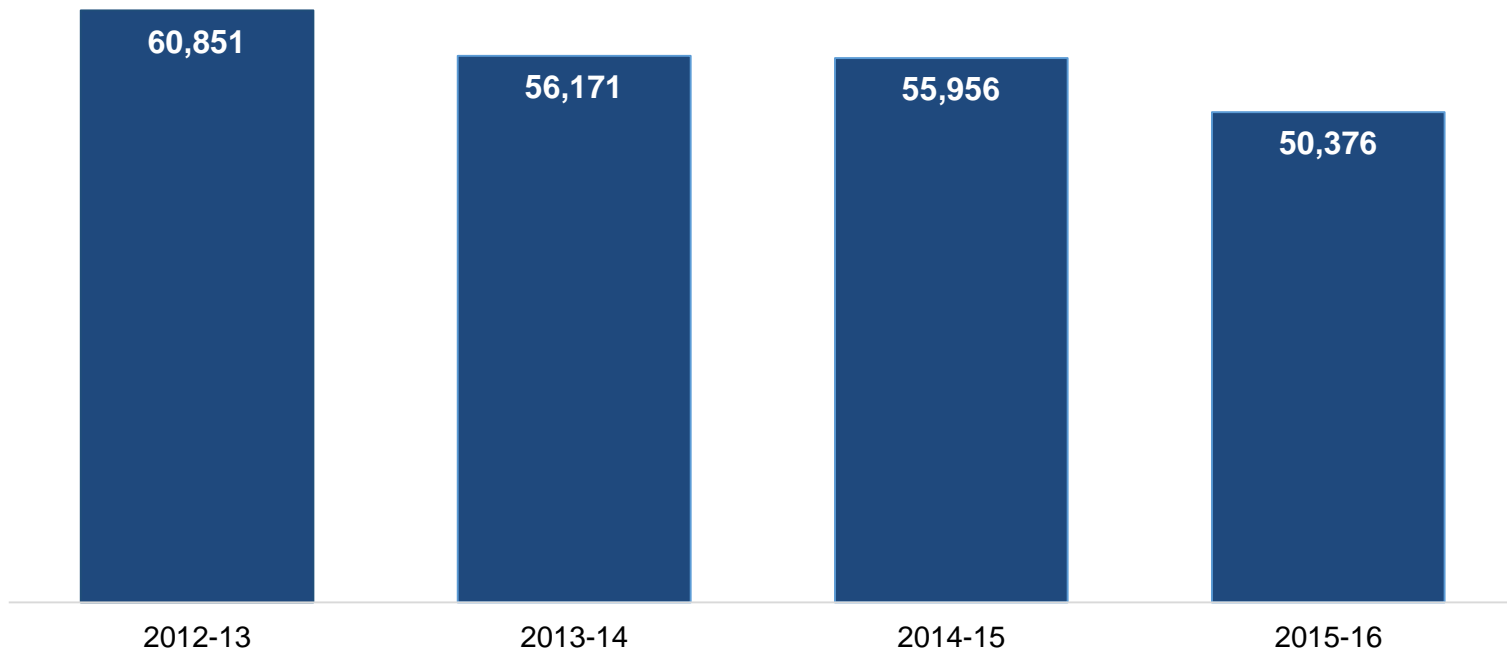
## 2013-14 Attendance Rate and Chronic Absenteeism (Eight Alliance Districts with Network Schools)



# Connecticut's Chronic Absence Landscape

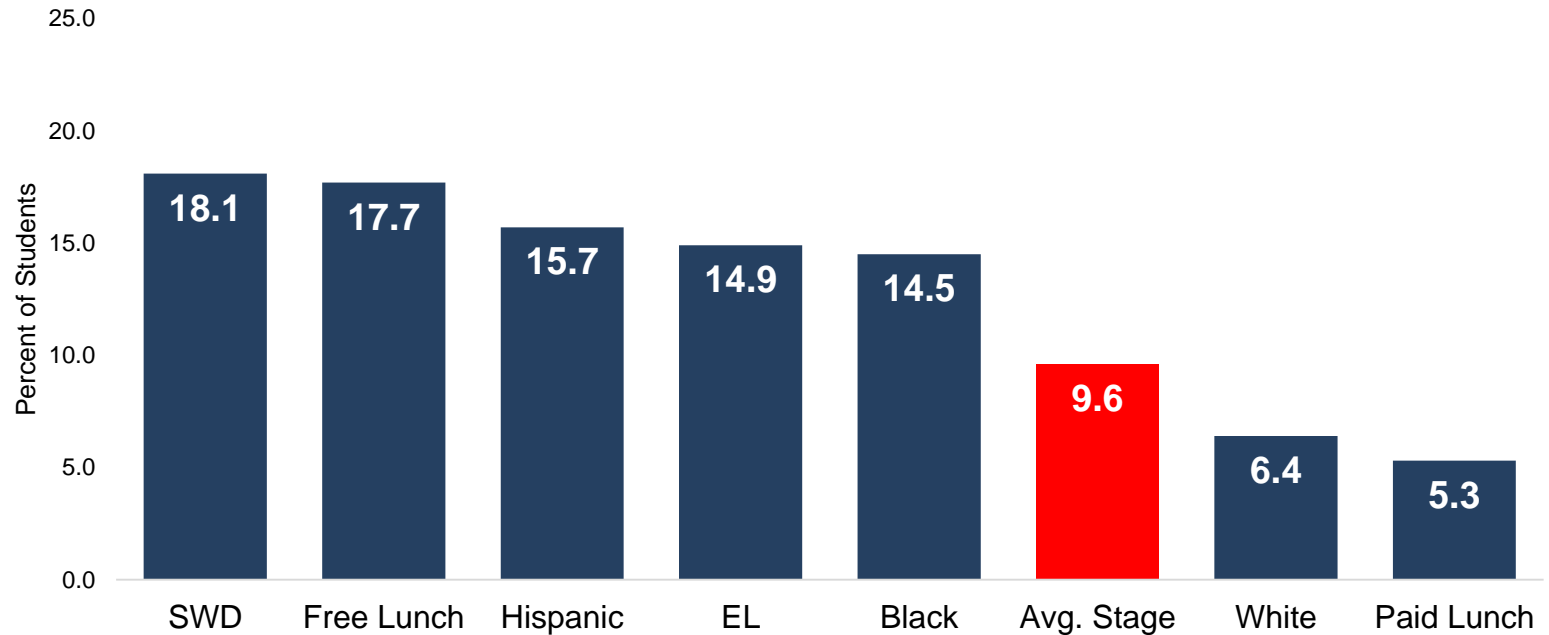


# Number of Students Chronically Absent

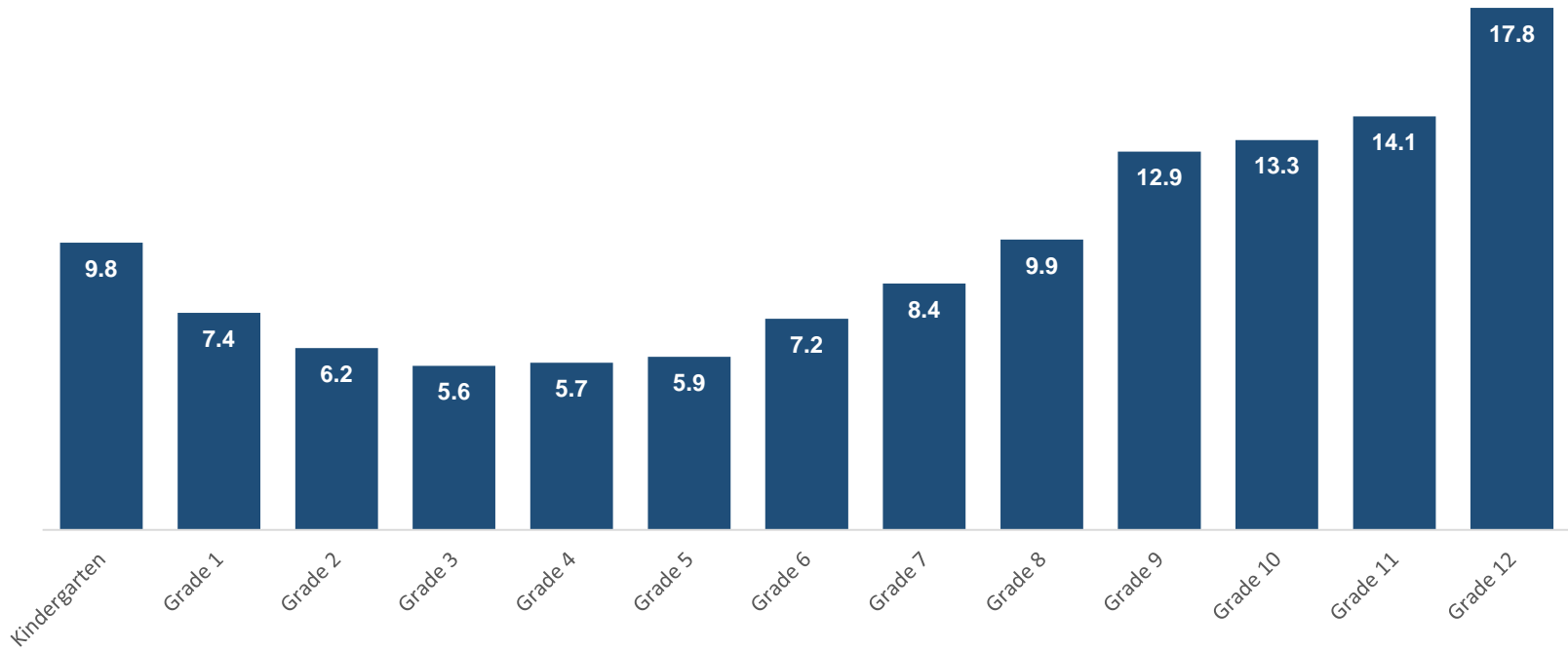


# Who is Chronically Absent?

Snapshot  
Percent Chronically Absent, 2015-16



# Chronic Absence by Grade Level 2015-16



### Connecticut Education at a Glance

- Home
- Related Links**
- +/- Condition of Education
  - Data Dictionary
  - Data Suppression Guidelines
  - Related Links Crosswalk
- Instructional Videos**
- Intro to EdSight

<p><b>NEW THIS MONTH</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Course Enrollments by Subject Report</li> <li>Attendance Report - High Needs Subgroup Added</li> <li>2017 Discipline Board Presentation</li> </ul>	<p><b>OVERVIEW</b></p> <p><b>206</b> Districts</p> <p><b>1,441</b> Public Schools/Programs</p>	<p><b>STUDENTS</b></p> <p><b>538,893</b> Total Enrollment</p> <p><b>9.6%</b> Chronic Absenteeism Rate*</p>
<p><b>EDUCATORS</b></p> <p><b>52,641.1</b> Certified Staff FTE</p> <p><b>8.3%</b> Minority Certified Staff</p>	<p><b>INSTRUCTION</b></p> <p><b>76.0%</b> Schools Offering AP Courses</p> <p><b>85.1%</b> Students On-Track to Graduation*</p>	<p><b>PERFORMANCE</b></p> <p><b>73.1</b> State Accountability Index*</p> <p><b>87.4%</b> Four-year Cohort Graduation Rate*</p>

2015-16 Next Generation Accountability Results

2015-16 Profile and Performance Reports

\*Metric from Next Generation Accountability

Need Help? CONTACT US

JOIN OUR LISTSERV



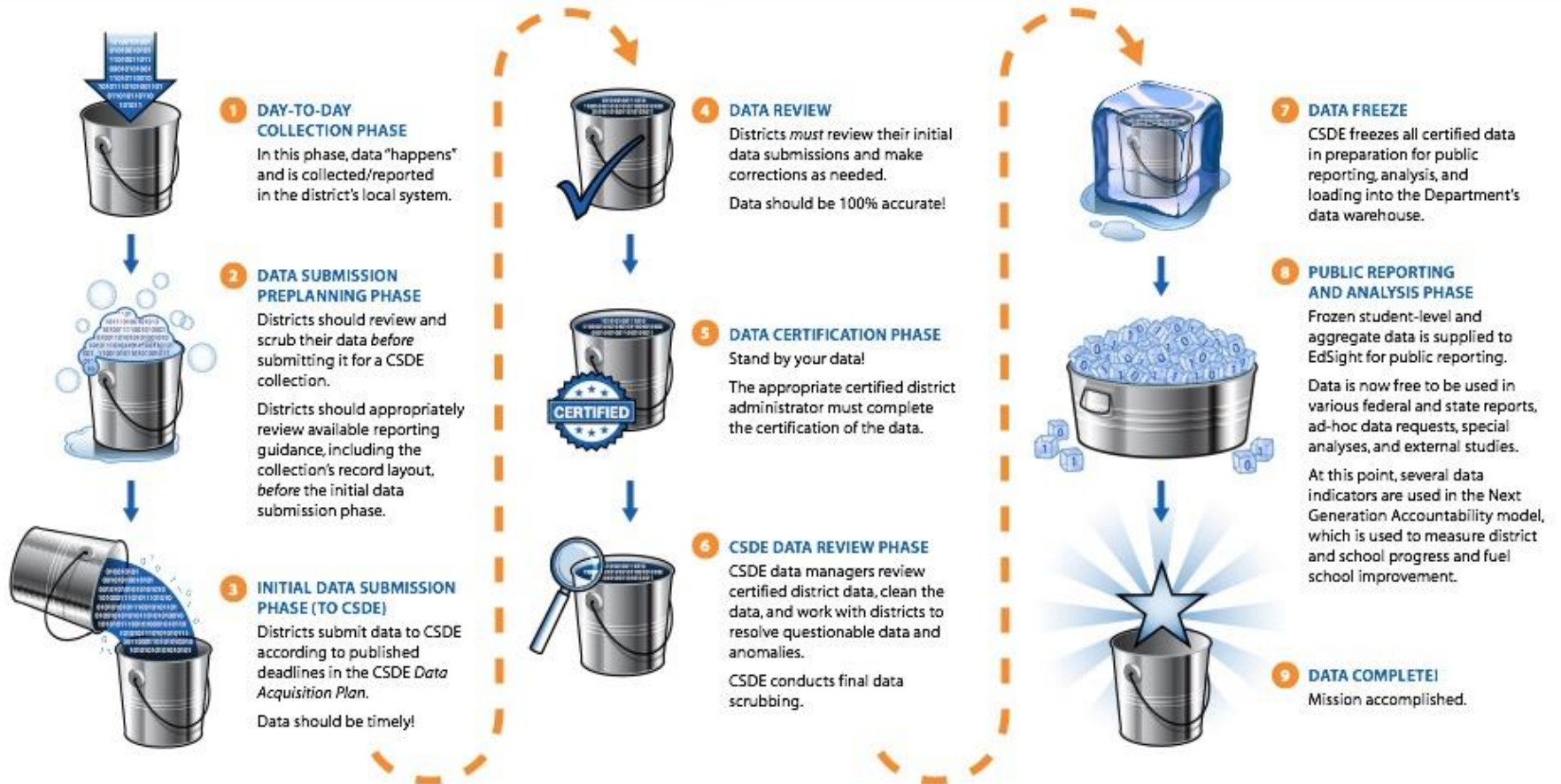


# Understanding Student Attendance Reporting



# DATA LIFE CYCLE

The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) collects vast amounts of data about students, schools, and educators. This information undergoes a rigorous procedure of collection, review, and validation before it is reported to the public. Here's how that process works.



# How does the Connecticut State Department of Education Use These Data?

- Ad hoc data requests
- Next Generation Accountability Model
- Strategic School Profiles
- School Turnaround Office Reports & Trackers
- Chronic absenteeism data is available on our public reporting portal [EdSight](#); (there are immediate plans to provide student counts for all analysis in addition to standard percentage totals).





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# **PSIS: Appendix G (You've Got Guidance)**

# What Is Appendix G?

- Appendix G is one of the appendices included in the PSIS User Reference Guide. This document can be found on the PSIS Public Help Site and can be downloaded and printed (recommended).
- Appendix G provides guidance on report student attendance data in PSIS.
- To improve data quality and the overall understanding of how to appropriately report student attendance data to CSDE, we've improved and clarified the guidance.
- We've vetted draft documentation through staff who represent more than 15 districts and identified CSDE consultants.



# What is “In Attendance”?

- In **January 2008**, the Connecticut State Board of Education adopted the following definition of student attendance:
- A student is considered to be “in attendance” if present at his/her assigned school, or an activity sponsored by the school (e.g., field trip), for at least half of the regular school day. **A student who is serving an out of school suspension or expulsion should always be considered absent.**



# General Guidance for Reporting Student Attendance in the Public School Information System

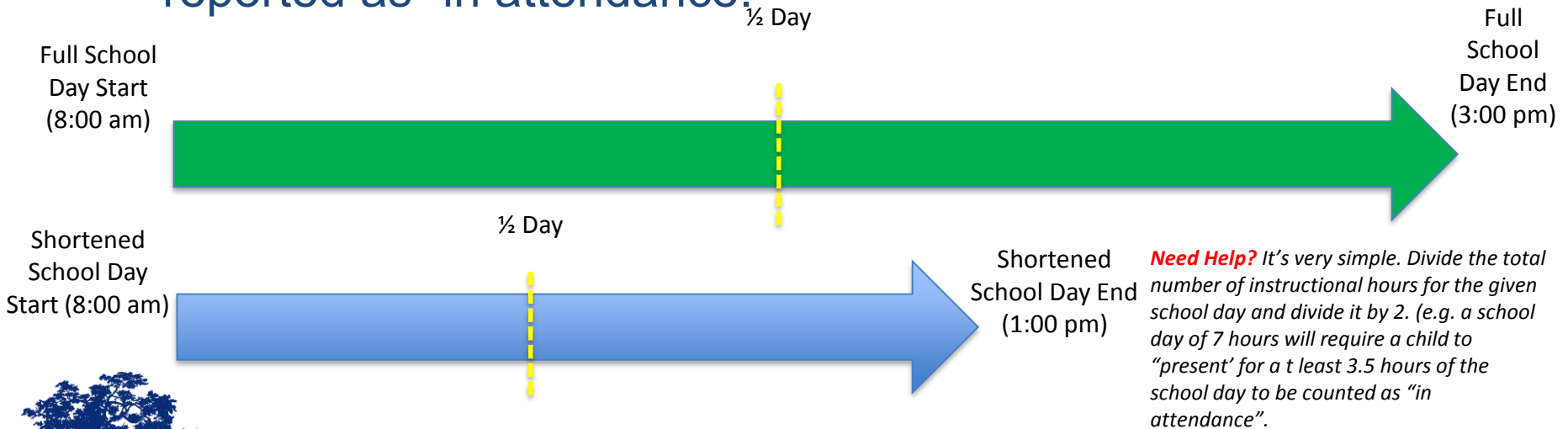
Districts may develop attendance policies (e.g., period-by-period attendance) that differ from State written guidance for their own local reporting purposes.

- However, for reporting student attendance to the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE), specifically PSIS (i.e., days of membership, days in attendance), districts **must** adhere to all guidance provided in this appendix of the most recently published *Public School Information System User Reference Guide*.
- Any student who is physically attending their assigned school building (i.e., facility 1) for **at least half** of the instructional school day should be reported as “in attendance” for the purpose of reporting membership and attendance days to the CSDE.



# Handling of Early Dismissal Days

On early dismissal days and all days shortened due to inclement weather, the instructional school day is calculated as the total amount of instructional time provided to students on that school day. For example, if a school is open for four hours due to a shortened or amended school day schedule, a student must be present for a minimum of two hours to be reported as “in attendance.”





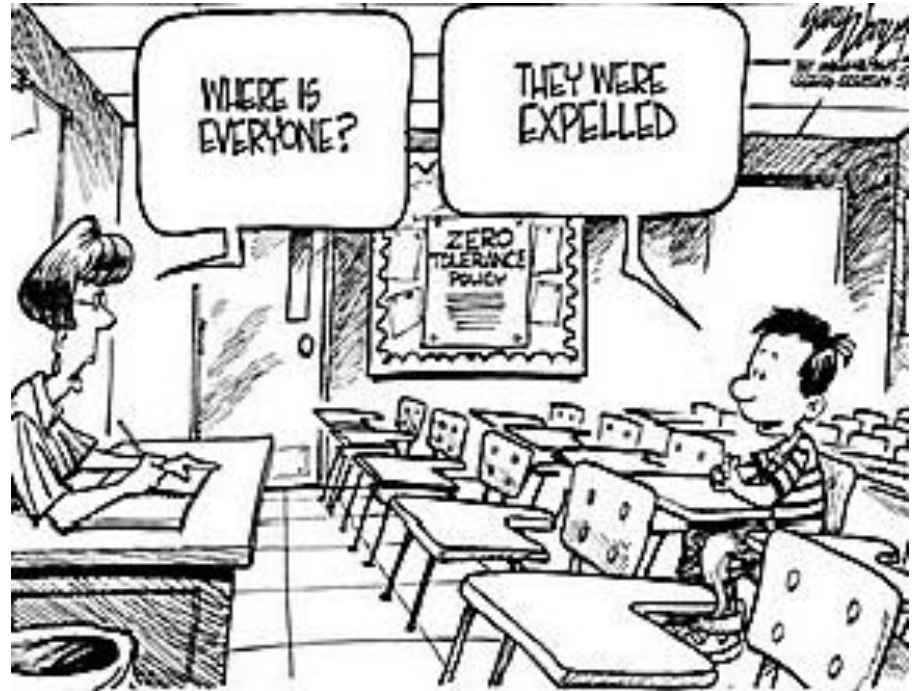
# Early Dismissal Days



- On early dismissal days and all days shortened due to inclement weather, the instructional school day is calculated as the total amount of instructional time provided to students on that day.
  - For example, if a school is open for four hours due to a shortened or amended school day schedule, a student **must** be present for a minimum of two hours to be reported as “in attendance.”

# Disciplinary Absences

- Students serving an out-of-school suspension or expulsion are reported as “absent” except for each day that the student receives an alternative education program for **at least half** of the instructional school day.



# Extended Family Vacations/Travel

- Students missing more than half of the instructional school day for the purpose of travel or vacation are reported as “absent.”
  - The fact that a parent or guardian has authorized such absence has no impact on the child being reported as “absent.”
  - In addition, students removed from school for extended stays abroad are reported as “absent” even if the child was provided with supplemental work by their home school in an effort to minimize the child’s missed classroom instruction.



# Data Reporting: Please Follow The Rules

- Districts are **strongly prohibited** from seeking to use the unenrollment of students to favorably report aggregate school- and district-level student attendance measures (e.g., chronic absenteeism rates).
- Due to federal reporting requirements and guidelines, the district exit date used when unregistering a student must be the date from an official document (e.g., transcript, appropriate signed parent withdrawal form, IEP, etc.).
- Districts must adhere to all appropriate due process procedures before seeking to withdraw a student from PSIS, taking into full consideration compulsory education regulations (10-184), set forth truancy requirements and all other necessary documentation required.



# Half-Day Kindergarten Program Enrollment

- Students who attend a half-day kindergarten program should be reported as “in attendance” if the student is present for **at least half** of that program’s instructional day.



# Homebound Students

- Students who are homebound due to illness or injury are reported as “absent” **unless** they are receiving instruction and/or tutoring from an appropriately certified teacher for a designated amount of time that the school or district deems adequate, which will ensure that the student is able to successfully return to their home school and regular school classroom.

**WARNING:** If an appropriately certified teacher does not provide the student instruction, the student **must** be marked “absent.”

# Medically Fragile Student Populations

## Medical Absences

- Students who are absent from school for medical reasons (e.g., routine medical appointments, chronic illness, hospitalization) are reported as “absent” for each day that they are **not** present for **at least half** of the instructional school day and **not** receiving instruction by an appropriately certified teacher.



# Attendance for Outplaced Students

- Students attending outplaced facilities (e.g., approved private special education facilities, vocational facilities, etc.) **must** be reported in accordance with all written guidance provided in this appendix.





# School Sponsored Activities

- Students participating in a school-sponsored activity during the instructional school day should be reported as “in attendance.” Appropriate examples of such school-sponsored activities include, but are **not** limited to the following:
  - Cooperative work experience programs
  - Community service and/or service-learning programs
  - Field trips
  - District-sponsored activities



# What Districts Can Do to Improve Attendance



# District and School Teams

Public Act 15-225 (later codified as C.G.S. 10-198c) requires districts and schools to have district- or school-level chronic absenteeism teams if:

- District chronic absenteeism rate is 10 percent or higher it is required to have a District Attendance Team
- District has more than one school with a school chronic absenteeism rate of 15 percent or higher there should be either a District Attendance Team or School Attendance Team
- District has schools with a chronic absenteeism rate with 15 percent or higher shall have a School Attendance Team at each of these schools



# Understanding Roles and Responsibilities at District Level

Improving and sustaining good attendance requires year-round, active engagement of district- and school-based leaders and administrators.

## Boards of Education

- Adopt school attendance policies and procedures;
- Foster continuous improvement and accountability by reviewing chronic absence data twice each year; and
- Include chronic absence strategies in district and school improvement plans.



# Understanding Roles and Responsibilities at District Level

## Central Office Administration

- Responsible for ensuring chronic absence is systematically addressed across the district
- Promote and support a districtwide culture of attendance
- Ensure that evidence-based attendance policies and procedures are in place in all schools and grade levels
- Spearhead connections with community providers
  - Elevate the importance of this work by designating a cabinet-level administrator to lead and facilitate district's attendance efforts

## Principals

- Ensure that the school adopts and implements a comprehensive, tiered approach to improving attendance at all grades
- Lead and facilitate the School Attendance Team
- Provide professional development opportunities to build capacity for addressing chronic absence



# District Attendance Teams

District Attendance Teams bring together district-level administrators and community agencies to address chronic absence across the entire district.

## Key Functions:

- Routinely unpack, analyze and utilize data to inform action.
- Organize a systemic districtwide response and policy/practice improvement
- Promote shared accountability and continuous improvement

A district may form a new team for this purpose or add as an explicit function of an existing districtwide group.



# Routinely Unpack, Analyze, and Utilize Data

- Produce accurate school-specific data reports (every 10 days) that disaggregate student attendance data by:
  - School
  - Grade
  - Subgroups (race, ethnicity, gender, free or reduced priced meals, students with disability and English learners.)
- Use data to develop tiered intervention strategies and monitor and understand attendance patterns
- Geo-map chronic absence data by neighborhood and/or ZIP code
- Identify schools that need extra help as well as “bright spots” to use as inspirational examples for others



# Organize a Systemic Districtwide Response

- **Positive engagement** – districtwide messaging and outreach campaign for parents, students and community providers (including preschool providers)
- **Build capacity** – ensure that strategies for addressing chronic absence are included in professional learning for administrators and school staff
- **Strategic partnerships** – engage the support of the entire community. Analyzing districtwide data provides a platform for forming strategic community partnerships to support broad community messaging as well as addressing common barriers to attendance





# Shared Accountability & Continuous Improvement

Districts should:

- Ensure that the educator evaluation and support plan prioritizes reducing chronic absence
- Encourage and provide support for student and education support specialists (SESS) to focus on reducing chronic absence in student learning goals and objectives (SLOs)
- Review staff attendance patterns to ensure that adults are modeling the behaviors expected of the students
- Set realistic and achievable target goals.
- Be prepared to “tell the story” behind the data if results are different – positive or negative – from the goals established for the time period.



# What Schools Can Do to Improve Attendance



# Forming School Attendance Teams

## ***Going it alone:***

- One person (school social worker, school counselor)

## ***Takes a team:***

- School administrator, school nurse, school psychologist, family engagement liaison, parents

## ***Think creatively and outside the box:***

- School secretary, school resource officer or lunch lady
- Youth Services Bureau, health centers, School Governance Council members



# Functions of School Attendance Teams

## ***Understand and monitor attendance trends***

- Use qualitative and quantitative data to understand the attendance challenges at your school
- Use trend data to identify sub-groups of students who are vulnerable
- Monitor progress

## ***Organize the schoolwide attendance strategy***

- Coordinate a multi-tiered strategy to reduce chronic absence
- Emphasize prevention, early warning and intervention
- Identify System solutions and whole school strategies
- Connect families and students to resources



# Characteristics of an Effective Attendance Teams

- Defined roles and responsibilities (facilitator, note taker, data coordinator, etc.)
- Established group norms and expectations
- Utilizes a standard agenda
- Has a set meeting time
- Shares and coordinates resources and materials
- Defined relationship with PBIS, SRBI and/or other school-based teams

[www.attendanceworks.org](http://www.attendanceworks.org)



# Understand and Monitor Attendance Trends

- Principal should secure regular attendance reports from central office
- Team should regularly review the data trends every two weeks to understand how many and who the students are that are chronically absent
- Team is responsible for understanding the causes for absenteeism for individual students as well as common causes for groups of students
- Team determines which students are chronically absent or at risk of becoming chronically absent and determine strategic next steps.



# Contributing Factors to Chronic Absence

Myths	Barriers	Aversion	Disengagement
Absences are only a problem if they are unexcused	Chronic disease (asthma) or lack of health/dental care	Academic or social struggles	Lack of engaging and relevant instruction
Okay to miss a day here or there	Caring for siblings or other family members	Being teased or bullied	Peer pressure to be with peers out of school vs. in school
Attendance only matters in the later grades	Unmet basic needs: transportation, housing, food, clothing, etc.	Poor school climate or unsafe school	No meaningful relations with adults in school
PK and K are seen as daycare, not learning	Trauma	Parents had negative school experience	High suspension rates and disproportionate school discipline
	Feeling unsafe getting to school		

(Attendance Works, 2014)



# Organize the Schoolwide Attendance Strategy

## ***Engage students and families***

- Create caring connections to peers and adults,
- Create a school community that is warm and welcoming
- Educate and empower families about the importance of attending school every day

## ***Address attendance barriers***

- Identify systemic barriers to attendance
- Strengthen existing policies, practices and programs to address common barriers across student groups

## ***Set goals and develop an attendance plan***

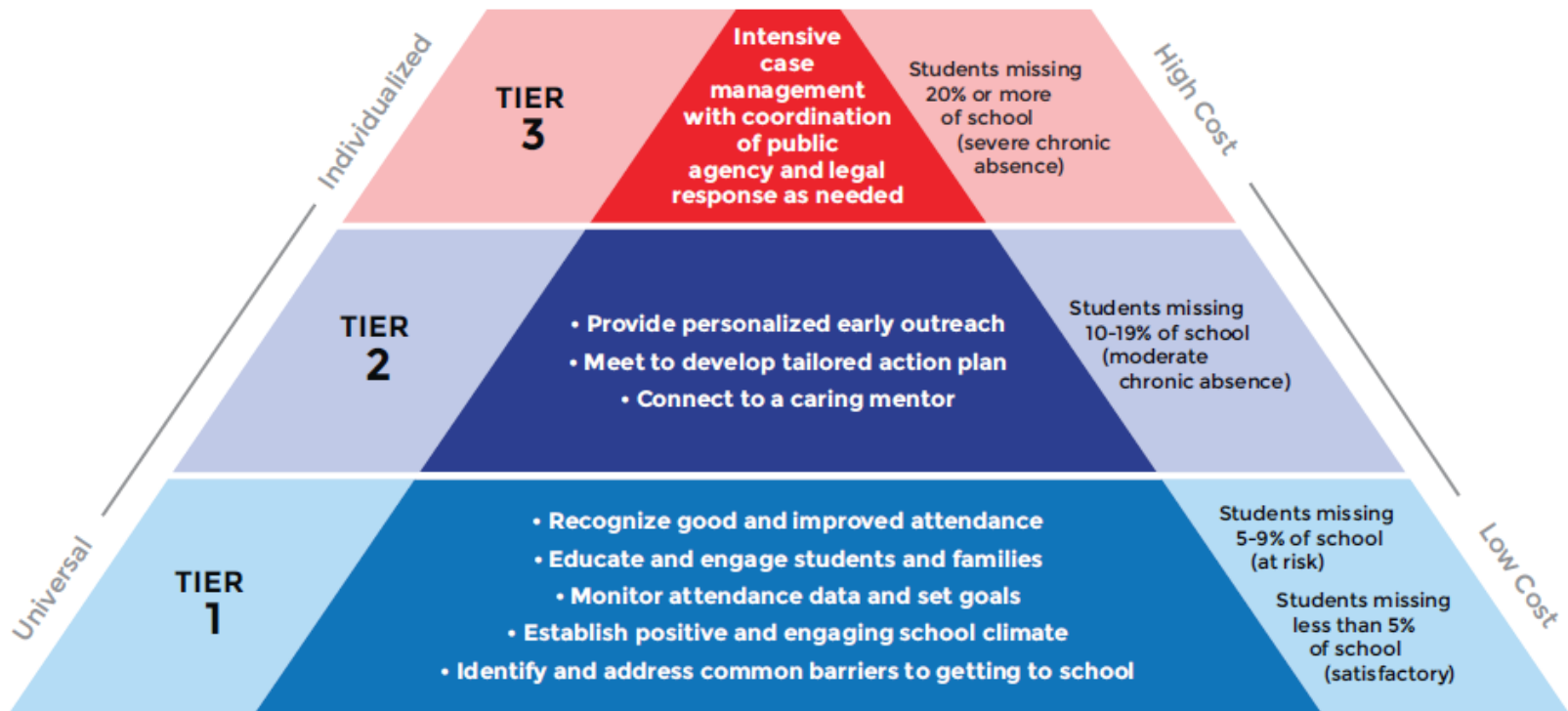
- Build in shared accountability for reducing chronic absence
- Develop a schoolwide attendance plan including an assessment of current trend data, target goals, description of tiered intervention strategies and how success will be measured.





# Coordinate a System of Tiered Supports

Improving attendance requires a tiered approach that begins with prevention.





# Fill Out Your Pyramid

For each tier, fill in the activities/supports currently in place.

School District/ School Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## TIER 3

Students at risk of missing 20% or more of school (severe chronic absence)

High Cost

## TIER 2

Students at risk of missing 10-19% (moderate chronic absence)

## TIER 1

All students

How many students are in each tier?

Tier 3

Tier 2

Tier 1

Low Cost

<http://www.attendanceworks.org/tools/schools/3-tiers-of-intervention/>

# Tier 1 Strategies

## *Attendance is higher when schools:*

Engage students and parents

- Create a school climate that encourages students to come to school every day.
- Offer before- and after-school programs
- Create visuals that reflect attendance messaging
- Call families when students miss school and welcome students back when they return
- Host transition meetings for new families

Recognize good and improved attendance in addition to perfect attendance

- Create friendly competition among classrooms and celebrate individual progress, recognize students and parents at special assemblies
- Engage neighborhood businesses in promoting good attendance

Remove barriers to attendance

- Conduct a safe walk to school program (walking school bus)
- Organize health interventions such as flu and dental clinic



# Teachers' Role

Teachers are an especially important and trusted resource that can make attendance a normal topic in all interactions with students and parents.

- Emphasize attendance from day one
- Greet students and families personally and ask about absences
- Engage students in tracking their own attendance
- Talk about attendance at back-to-school nights and at parent-teacher conferences
- Contact parents early. Don't wait for parent-teacher conferences



# Tier 2 Interventions

- Conduct personal outreach to families through home visits and phone calls
- Train staff on how to communicate with families
- Recruit students as attendance ambassadors
- Implement a mentoring program
- Ensure priority placement in summer and after-school programs



# Tier 3 Interventions

Tier 3 Interventions are intense and individualized strategies for students who miss the most school. Typically, interagency collaboration and coordination is essential to helping students in Tier 3 overcome the serious challenges they face so they can be in school.

- Collaborate with a community organization, such as a Youth Service Bureau, to develop and implement community truancy prevention and intervention models.
- Screen students for childhood trauma and providing or connecting to effective, evidence-based treatments through [www.KidsMentalHealthInfo.com](http://www.KidsMentalHealthInfo.com).
- Implement a dropout prevention program such as Check and Connect or Success Mentors to have strong evidence of positive effects on staying in school. Adult mentors consistently check in with students in order to facilitate improved engagement in both school and the community.



# Questions & Answers



# Closing Remarks and Next Steps





# Thank You!

**Thank you for participating in today's webinar.**

The recorded webinar will be posted within one week on the CSDE Chronic Absence webpage.  
[www.ct.gov/sde/chronicabsence](http://www.ct.gov/sde/chronicabsence)

**If you have additional questions, please contact:**

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