



Advisory - Preschool Attendance

Chronic Absenteeism as defined in New Jersey’s ESSA State Plan

Percentage of a school’s students who are not present for ten percent or more of the days that they were “in membership” at a school. (“In membership” means enrolled in the school program.)

The method by which preschool-level chronic absenteeism is calculated

The school-level chronic absenteeism rate is calculated by dividing the number of chronically absent students during the school year by the total number of students enrolled in the school. NJDOE [Guidance for Reporting Student Absences and Calculating Chronic Absenteeism](#) (Revised, May 2019) [Getting Students to School: Strategies for Improving Attendance and Reducing Chronic Absenteeism](#) (Released May 2018)

New Jersey’s 2016-2017 state-wide preschool-level chronic absenteeism rate is 30.6 percent

Attendance records

When a school district contracts with a private provider or Head Start agency, each entity should review and clarify the student attendance requirements in their contract. (*See below under Attendance Records.)

Steps to guide attendance improvement

- Create trusting and caring relationships early to promote open communication among families, children, administrators, teachers, staff, and community health care providers.
- Provide information about the benefits of regular attendance and the consequences of chronic absenteeism on educational outcomes.
- Approach the issue of absences out of concern and with sensitivity, rather than compliance or judgement.
- Reach out to families by calling parents to address needs related to good school attendance.
- Implement a large-scale public information ad campaign on the importance of regular preschool attendance. Include social media networks.
- Provide web-based parent/family access to attendance data and offer a “Help getting my child to school” feature.
- Address transportation issues by collaborating with transit agencies and community partners to find other ways to get children to school.
- Create an environment free of harassment, intimidation, and bullying.
- Create an environmentally clean and Asthma-Friendly School campaign to help keep children safe, healthy and in school. School nurses can provide parent workshops to educate parents on asthma, health triggers, and treatments.
- Gather data on children who cannot attend school due to illness, housing instability, family responsibilities, and transportation. Offer ideas and help make connections to social services and other supports.
- Address absenteeism/attendance through multiple school-wide initiatives.
- Encourage utilization of family reporting systems for better attendance data collection.
- Provide professional development and support for teachers/staff to help them understand the medical barriers to school attendance and engage them as partners in meeting the diverse cognitive, emotional, and social needs of children.
- Address food insecurity with sensitivity.
- Ongoing and regular home/school communications.
- Offer home visits to strengthen the home-school partnership.

Attendance Records

School districts have a financial agreement for each student enrolled in a private provider and Head Start program. Every child's attendance in those programs impacts financial obligations. Every private and Head Start provider must collect and report attendance information on each enrolled child. Private providers and Head Start programs are not reimbursed when a child is absent from their program.

- The provider and district must work together to address chronic absenteeism which is defined as missing ten percent of enrolled school days or 18 days of a 180-day school year. Days should be prorated based on the number of student enrollment days. Providers with excessive absenteeism rates should create an action plan to improve student attendance.
- If any enrolled child is absent without excuse for up to ten consecutive days of school, the district and provider shall make every effort to contact the family and help support them to get the child to school. The district and provider are encouraged to begin attempts to contact the family prior to ten consecutive unexcused absences - as early as the third consecutive day of absence without contact from the family.
- Private providers and Head Start programs - The provider must make a concerted attempt to help the child come to school. If these attempts fail, and the child is absent without excuse for ten consecutive days, the child shall no longer be enrolled, and the private provider or Head Start program may fill the slot with another child.
- In-District programs - In accordance with *N.J.A.C. 6A:13A-4.4 (g)*, in-district preschool children shall not be expelled or suspended, which includes sending children home early or excluding children for any reason other than medical such as injury or illness. Districts do not receive funding based on individual students, however, all efforts should be made to maintain high attendance rates. Positive behavior supports through the *Pyramid Model for Supporting Social Emotional Competencies* shall be employed to reduce or eliminate challenging behaviors.

This guidance should not be deemed solely applicable to address chronic absenteeism, but also suitable for any absenteeism, regardless of the number of days.

Resources and Helpful Links:

1. [S1876 \(1R\) and A2192 \(1R\)](#)
2. [Attendance Works](#)
3. [Department of Education \(DOE\) Chronic Absenteeism Guidance](#)
4. [DOE Improve Attendance Strategies](#)
5. [ACNJ NJ Legislative Testimony February 5, 2019](#)
6. [Family Engagement Practices That Help Children Thrive](#)
7. [Helping Your Child be a Happy and Healthy Learner: Preschool Age Children](#)
8. [Insights into Absenteeism in DCPS Early Childhood Programs](#)
9. [ACNJ Showing Up Matters](#)
10. [NJ Partners Gathering, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation](#)
11. [CEELO Fast Fact \(Pre-K Attendance – Why It's Important and How to Support It\)](#)