



**New Jersey
Department of Education**

Engaging Families and Supporting School Attendance



2024

Engaging Families and Supporting School Attendance

Welcome to the guidance document aimed at assisting school districts in effectively engaging with families to support and improve school attendance. Recognizing the vital role families play in a student's educational journey, this document provides practical strategies and recommendations for fostering strong partnerships between schools and families.

Importance of Family Engagement in Addressing Absenteeism

Family engagement plays a crucial role in addressing chronic absenteeism among students. By involving families in the process, schools can create a supportive environment that promotes regular attendance and academic success. Here are key points to consider:

1. **Building Partnerships and Relationships with Families:** Establishing positive relationships with families is essential. It fosters trust, open communication, and collaboration in addressing attendance issues.
 - Establish open lines of communication through various channels such as newsletters, emails, and parent-teacher conferences.
 - Provide opportunities for families to participate in school events, workshops, and decision-making processes.
 - Encourage two-way communication by actively seeking family feedback and input regarding attendance-related issues.
2. **Providing Support:** Families may face various challenges contributing to absenteeism. Support services for transportation, health, nutrition, and other barriers can help improve attendance.
3. **Education and Awareness:** Educate families on the importance of regular school attendance and its impact on academic achievement. Provide resources and information to help families understand how they can support their child's attendance.
4. **Home-School Communication:** Regularly communicate with families through newsletters, phone calls, emails, and meetings. Keep families informed about their child's attendance and progress.
5. **Creating a Welcoming Environment:**
 - Foster a welcoming and inclusive school environment where families feel valued and respected.
 - Offer resources and support services to address families' diverse needs, including language barriers, transportation issues, and socio-economic challenges.
 - Ensure that all communications and materials are accessible and culturally sensitive.
6. **Promoting Attendance Awareness:**
 - Launch attendance awareness campaigns to educate families about the importance of regular school attendance.
 - Share data and statistics on the correlation between attendance and academic achievement to emphasize the impact on student success.
 - Provide practical tips and strategies for overcoming common barriers to attendance, such as illness, transportation, and family obligations.
7. **Early Intervention and Support:**
 - Implement early intervention strategies to identify and address attendance issues promptly.
 - Establish a system for monitoring and tracking student attendance data to identify patterns and trends.
 - Collaborate with families to develop personalized attendance improvement plans tailored to the needs of individual students.
8. **Celebrating Success and Recognition:**
 - Recognize and celebrate students and families with consistent attendance and active engagement.
 - Highlight success stories and positive outcomes to inspire other families and promote a culture of attendance excellence.
 - Provide incentives and rewards for improved attendance, such as certificates, awards, or special privileges.

Absence Assessment Tool - Family

The Absence Assessment Tool – Family (AAT-F) is designed to help identify various factors or barriers contributing to a child's school absences. It serves as a preliminary screening tool and part of a comprehensive assessment designed to assist districts with identifying the underlying reasons for a child's absence patterns. As a district employee, you will use this tool to interview parents/guardians and, if appropriate, the child. The goal is to gather a holistic view of the factors affecting the child's school attendance. This assessment should be provided in the language that is most accessible to the parents/guardians.

Demographic Information (optional)

Name of Student:

Grade Level:

Parent/Guardian Name(s):

Phone Number:

Additional Contact Information:

Attendance Patterns

Instructions: Carefully read each section of the AAT-F to the parents/guardians. After reading each statement, ask the parents/guardians to indicate if it accurately describes their child's situation or behavior related to school absences by answering "Yes" or "No." Record the parent's/guardians' response for each statement by circling their response. Clarify any questions the family may have about the statements to ensure accurate responses.

1. Does you feel your child misses school frequently? Yes/No/Unsure
2. Are there specific days or times when attendance is more challenging? Yes/No/Unsure
 - a. If Yes, what are those days or times?

Identification of Potential Barriers to School Attendance

General Barriers	Yes	No	Unsure
1. Is illness a barrier to your child's school attendance?			
2. Does your child have a chronic health condition that affects their ability to attend school regularly?			
3. Do family matters impact your child's ability to attend school regularly?			
4. Are there family responsibilities that interfere with your child's school attendance?			
5. Does your child need to care for a family member, leading to missed school days?			
6. Is transportation a challenge for your child in getting to school?			
7. Is there reliable transportation available for your child to travel to and from school?			
8. Are there issues with public transportation or distance to school affecting attendance?			
9. Are housing issues affecting your child's attendance at school?			

10. Does your family experience unstable housing situations that impact school attendance?			
11. Are there concerns about safety or living conditions that contribute to school absences?			

Aversion to School	Yes	No	Unsure
12. Does your child seem unsure or hesitant about going to school?			
13. Does your child mention feeling overwhelmed by schoolwork or assignments?			
14. Does your child mention feeling anxious or stressed about school attendance?			
15. Is there a fear of bullying or social challenges at school?			
16. Does your child's absences coincide with specific school-related events or activities?			

Disengagement from School	Yes	No	Unsure
17. Does your child seem disengaged or uninterested in school activities?			
18. Are there particular subjects or classes where your child shows disinterest?			
19. Does your child mention feeling disconnected from peers or teachers at school?			
20. Is there a lack of extracurricular activities or interests at school for your child?			
21. Does your child struggle with understanding the relevance of school to their future?			
22. To the best of your knowledge, have any situations with teachers or staff made it harder for your child to feel engaged at school?			

Misconceptions about the Impact of Absences	Yes	No	Unsure
23. Do your family's cultural beliefs or traditions affect how you think about going to school or school attendance?			
24. Do you think missing school affects how much your child learns?			

Scoring Summary

Circle the numbers answered "Yes". Sum the total number of circled numbers in each row, place the sum on the blank line beside the section title, and divide by the total number of items in that section. The section(s) that scored 50% or above are the areas that need the most support, resources, and attention.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11
 12 13 14 15 16
 17 18 19 20 21 22
 23 24

Likely Barrier to School Attendance

___/11 = ___% Barriers

___/5 = ___% Aversion to School

___/6 = ___% Disengagement from School

___/2 = ___% Misconceptions

Additional Information

1. Would additional support services help address your child's attendance? Yes/No
2. Do you require assistance overcoming these challenges to improve your child's attendance? Yes/No
3. Please share any additional information or concerns about your child's attendance.

Once the barrier(s) have been identified, using the [Data-Based Decision Making for Addressing Chronic Absenteeism](#) toolkit from the New Jersey Department of Education prioritize each barrier and select the interventions that most appropriately align with the identified barrier(s).

Barrier Identified	Priority	Tier 1 Interventions	Tier 2 Interventions	Tier 3 Interventions
<i>Example: Aversion to School</i>	<i>Moderate</i>	<p><i>Communicate to parent(s)/ caregiver(s) how student attendance is improving or remains a concern.</i></p> <p><i>Establish a system to notify appropriate personnel when student is absent for two school days a month.</i></p>	<p><i>Develop personal connections.</i></p> <p><i>Make personal calls to families.</i></p> <p><i>Offer access to healthcare.</i></p> <p><i>Develop a mentoring program.</i></p>	<p><i>Refer student for additional support and evaluation.</i></p> <p><i>Utilize student support staff and identify individual barriers for student.</i></p>