

BEST PRACTICES FOR PROMOTING SCHOOL ATTENDANCE FOR HEALTH ADMINISTRATORS AND HEALTH EDUCATORS

Parents all want what's best for their kids, but may not understand the importance of regular attendance. The *medical home* can support students' success.

Chronic Absenteeism

Chronic Absenteeism is an indicator that is defined as missing 10% or more of school days (just 2-3 days per month) or 18 or more days per year. Often parents and schools are unaware of when missed school days add up. Both excused and unexcused absences contribute to chronic absenteeism, student learning, and later life success.

In NYC, more than **20%** of students are chronically absent.¹ This rate may be higher in your community.

What you can do to address it in your clinic:

1. **Connect with your local schools!** Partnering with schools in your community can be a great opportunity to collectively improve health and academic outcomes for kids. Working with schools will help reinforce the health education provided in your clinic and increase the number of patients and scope of your practice.
2. **Put up posters and flyers encouraging good attendance** in the waiting room and patient rooms. You can also **distribute information** about the importance of attendance and ways to improve attendance.
3. Greater exposure to the importance of attendance will help parents prioritize attendance with their children.
4. **Schedule medical appointments for school-aged children before or after school hours to avoid unnecessary absences.** Missing 3 school days a month due to medical appointments in preschool, kindergarten, or 1st grade leads to delayed reading skills in 3rd grade and a 4x increased risk of dropping out of high school².
5. Encourage providers and front desk staff to **remind parents to send their children back to school after the health visit.** Often, parents keep their children at home after medical appointments and this leads to students getting behind in their classes and missing important material.
6. **Refer to Community Resources.** Identifies partners in your community that provide additional resource that other address issues that could be impacting students' ability to meet the needs of families and children.
 - a. https://www.omh.ny.gov/omhweb/rfp/2011/child_mh_clinics/faq.pdf
 - b. http://www.commonwealthfund.org/usr_doc/Ginsburg_Colocation_Issue_Brief.pdf
7. Become a **Reach out and Read** program site! Handing out books during the medical visit can serve as a catalyst for early literacy, which leads to improved school performance and attendance later in life.
 - a. <http://www.reachoutandread.org/resource-center/medical-providers/start-a-program/>

¹ New York City Department of Education - <https://tools.nycenet.edu/dashboard/>

² <https://www.rwjf.org/en/library/research/2016/09/the-relationship-between-school-attendance-and-health.html>