Chronically Absent Students: An Opportunity to Expand Public Health Partnerships with Educators

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Oregon Public Health Association Conference, 2013
Average Daily Attendance

- The % of enrolled students who attend school each day. It is used in some states for allocating funding.

Truancy

- Typically refers only to unexcused absences and is defined by each state under No Child Left Behind. It signals the potential need for legal intervention under state compulsory education laws.

Chronic Absence

- Missing 10% or more of school for any reason – excused, unexcused, etc. It is an indication that a student is academically at risk due to missing too much school starting in Kindergarten.
Chronic Absenteeism: Excused and Unexcused Absences Add Up to Too Much Missed School

### 2013-2014 School Calendar

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AUGUST/SEPTEMBER</th>
<th>OCTOBER</th>
<th>NOVEMBER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NT/1/2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Definition:**
Missing 10% or more of School Days in a School Year, Includes Excused and Unexcused Absences.
High Levels of ADA Can Mask Chronic Absence

95% ADA ≠ A

Chronic Absence for 6 Elementary Schools (K-5) in an Urban School District in Oregon, 2009-2010 @ 95% ADA

98% ADA = little chronic absence
95% ADA = don’t know
93% ADA = significant chronic absence
Oregon Has a Chronic Absence Problem

1 in 4 in Oregon children across K-12 chronically absent
Who in Oregon is Affected?
All Children Potentially At Risk

Percent Chronically Absent

- 1% - 13%
- 14% - 26%
- 27% - 43%

Major Cities (population)
- 15,000 - 56,000
- 56,001 - 130,000
- 130,001 - 480,000
Oregon Average is High: All Children Affected, Some Groups of Children Worse Off

Percentage of Oregon students who are chronically absent, by subgroup ED = economically disadvantaged; ELL = English language learner; SPED = special education. Source: ECONorthwest analysis of ODE data, 2009-10.
Economically Disadvantaged Children at Higher Risk

[Bar graph showing the percentage of economically disadvantaged children in grades K to 12, with a higher percentage in grades 9 to 12 than in grades K to 8.]
Schools serving similar students can have very different chronic absence outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>10% of Schools with Best Model Performance</th>
<th>10% of Schools with Worst Model Performance</th>
<th>All Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% ED</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% ELL</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% SPED</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Non-White</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chronic Absence</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Predicted Rate</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Actual Rate</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Difference</td>
<td>-14%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chronic Absenteeism Is a Warning Signal
Chronic Absences Contributes to Academic Struggles
The Effects of Chronic Absence on Dropout Rates Are Cumulative

With every year of chronic absenteeism, a higher percentage of students dropped out of school.

Proportion of Students Dropping Out by Number of Years the Student was Chronically Absent from 8th-12th Grades

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>% of students dropping out</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>36.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>51.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>58.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>61.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Graduation is Important to Job Opportunities & Life Long Health

Sources: The High Cost of High School Dropouts, Alliance for Excellent Education, 2011
U.S. Department of Education 2011
Variation Across Schools Helps Identify Good Practice and Need for Intervention

**Chronic Absence Levels Among Schools in an Oregon Metropolitan Statistical Area (2009-10)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Elementary</th>
<th>Middle</th>
<th>High School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># of Schools with 0% - 5% Chronic Absence</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of Schools with 5% - 10% Chronic Absence</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of Schools with 10% - 20% Chronic Absence</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of Schools with &gt;20% Chronic Absence</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total # of Schools</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Factors Contributing to Chronic Absence

**Myths**
- Absences are only a problem if they are unexcused
- Sporadic versus consecutive absences aren’t a problem
- Attendance only matters in the older grades

**Barriers**
- Lack of access to health care, lack of use of care
- Poor transportation
- No safe path to school, Bullying

**Aversion**
- Child struggling academically
- Lack of engaging instruction
- Poor school climate and ineffective school discipline
- Parents had negative school experience

Example Parent Reasons for K-3rd Grade Student Absences

Suggested Strategies from Literature

Build culture of attendance
Identify barriers and build capacity to address barriers
Interagency resource allocation and coordination
School health capacity
School wide attendance support
  ▪ Real time data for attendance tracking
  ▪ Chronic absence reporting
  ▪ Family and youth engagement

Railsback, J. (2004) Increasing Student Attendance: Strategies from Research and Practice, Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory
Opportunities to Support Schools

- **Students who were chronically absent in prior year or starting to miss 20% or more of school**
  - Work with frequently chronically absent youth and families:
    - Access basic resources (i.e. food, housing)
    - Connect to services
  - Primary care services, School Based Health, School nursing, Mental health, Mentoring, Restorative Justice

- **Students at risk for chronic absence**
  - Data-driven planning, Coordinated School Health, Health care access, Family engagement

- **All students**
  - Universal/Preventive Programs, Awareness
  - Counseling & Education
  - Prevention & Intervention Programs
  - More Individual Attention
  - Lower Individual Attention
## Opportunities to Partner to Address “Health” Reasons

### Myths
- Health educators inform family and schools of appropriate absences
- Use of attendance data with schools

### Barriers
- School Based Health Center Wellness Visits
- Voluntary dental, nursing care services
- Connect families to transportation
- Anti bullying policies, programs

### Aversion
- Mentoring
- Teacher wellness supports
- Support School Health Capacity, Restorative Justice
- Parent engagement
**Example: Key Health Messages + Attendance**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symptoms or Illnesses</th>
<th>Should My Child Go to School?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parent sick, stressed, hospitalized</td>
<td>YES – Get a neighbor, relative or spouse to take your child to school and pick him or her up.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chronic disease (Asthma, Diabetes, etc.)</td>
<td>YES – Your child should attend school. School personnel are trained to assist your school with his or her chronic disease and associated needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head Lice</td>
<td>YES – Your child can be in school if he or she has had an initial treatment with a product for lice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fever</td>
<td>NO- If your child has a fever of 101 or higher, keep them at home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coughing</td>
<td>NO- Keep child at home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diarrhea</td>
<td>NO – If, in addition to diarrhea, your child acts ill, has a fever or is vomiting, keep him or her at home.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: A Health Flyer for Parents, The Office of the District Attorney, Alameda County, Alameda County Public Health Department, interagency Children’s Policy Council, Center for Healthy Schools and Communities, 2012
Oregon Example: All Hands Raise Partnership, Communities Supporting Youth Collaborative

...a cross-sector collaborative
- Align and increase school and community supports
- Contribute to academic and life success
- Focus on eliminating disparities

Co-Conveners:
Sun Service System Coordinating Council (Multnomah County Health Department)
Portland State University’s Center for Improvement of Child and Family Services

http://www.pdx.edu/ccf/c2c
CSY’s Chronic Absence Strategy

**Red Zone - Intensive**
- Response Plan with Higher Level Interventions

**Yellow Zone - Strategic**
- Student Attendance Response Team
  (Meets at least 1x per month)
- Positive Phone Call Home or Administrator/Student Meeting
- Response Plan with In-School Interventions

**Green Zone - Universal**
- Examination of School-wide Attendance and Planning (at least 3x per year)
- Information Provided to Students and Families
- Lesson on Attendance Early in Year
- Recognition of Good or Improved Attendance
Questions?