

School attendance as a social determinant of health: Alder Elementary Community Assessment Response (CARES)

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TOPIC/TARGET AUDIENCE: Nursing interventions for chronic absenteeism in elementary school/Educators, School Nurses

ABSTRACT: BACKGROUND: Chronic absence in elementary school, defined as missing more than 10 percent or 20 days of school, can have long-term impacts on education and health. Chronic absenteeism is among the top indicators that a student will not finish high school. Thus, chronic absenteeism is a public health issue that disproportionately affects our most vulnerable students. This is an ongoing issue at Alder Elementary School in Portland's East County, where a relatively high percentage (23.9%) of the student body missed 10% or more of the days they were enrolled during the 2015-2016 academic year.

METHODS: We utilized relational meetings with Alder staff and parents to identify chronic absenteeism as an issue. The Keller Wheel of Public Health Interventions, the FADE Model, and SWOT analysis provided a framework for the project.

RESULTS/OUTCOMES: The project was endorsed by Alder Elementary and Reynold's School District, and is currently in the pilot phase.

CONCLUSIONS: Home visits by nursing students with families of chronically absent Alder Elementary School students are a feasible intervention. We recommend analysis of the results from the pilot program to determine effectiveness of the home visit model, inform the expansion of the program, and provide data for future attendance initiatives.

OBJECTIVE(S):

- Identify barriers to attendance for chronically absent students at Alder Elementary School
- Describe Alder Elementary's barriers to attendance with useful quantitative data
- Design a home-visit program in which OHSU student nurses collaborate with the Alder Elementary School attendance team and individual families of chronically absent students to increase school attendance

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