THE POWER OF PRESENCE
✦ LDOE ATTENDANCE ✦

A Guide to Enhance Academic Success Through a Statewide Attendance Strategy for Louisiana Schools

LOUISIANA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

CONTENTS

OVERVIEW

Mission

The Louisiana Department of Education's (LDOE) mission is to give all children opportunities so they graduate high school ready for success in a career, college, or service.

The LDOE's Updated Statewide Educational Priorities

Performance increases are the direct result of a comprehensive statewide academic strategy that includes key legislation and program initiatives in the following areas:

- ☑ **Early childhood** leading to kindergarten readiness
- ☑ **Literacy** instruction aligned to the Science of Reading
- ☑ **Math** instruction from foundational to advanced skills
- ☑ Opportunities ensuring a **meaningful high school experience**
- ☑ An effective **teacher for every student**
- ☑ Expand **educational choice** for students and families

Using the Attendance Strategy Guide

Recognizing that consistent school attendance is fundamental to students' academic achievement, the LDOE has developed this guide to help schools and systems prioritize attendance and remove obstacles that hinder student presence in school. This guide promotes a comprehensive and organized framework designed to ensure that all students receive the support they need and that attendance challenges are addressed promptly.

Effective attendance practices necessitate a multi-tiered system of support involving the implementation of proactive, school-wide strategies to foster a positive attendance environment, the delivery of targeted interventions for students at risk of attendance issues, and the provision of comprehensive support for those with chronic absenteeism. This guide details critical system elements, including definitions of essential terms, explicit requirements and procedures for accurate attendance tracking and reporting, methodologies for data collection, analysis, and goal setting, and evidence-based best practices for attendance teams, initiatives, and engagement with families and the community.

By adhering to the principles and practices outlined in this document, schools can establish a multi-tiered support system that cultivates regular attendance and, in turn, improves student outcomes. Ultimately, this guide aims to provide schools and their leaders with a process for creating and executing effective research-based, tiered attendance strategies to improve attendance rates, reduce chronic absenteeism, and address the diverse factors that may impede students' consistent presence and active participation in school.

Legal Disclaimer: The information provided in this document does not, and is not intended to, constitute legal or regulatory requirements; instead, all information, content, and materials are intended to support school systems in improving attendance outcomes for students.

Attendance Definitions

Attendance (Whole Day)— A student is considered to be in attendance for a whole day when he or she:
1. is physically present at a school site or is participating in an authorized school activity; and
2. is under the supervision of authorized personnel for more than 50 percent (51-100 percent) of the student's instructional day.

Attendance (Half Day)— A student is considered to be in attendance for one-half day when he or she:
1. is physically present at a school site or is participating in an authorized school activity; and
2. is under the supervision of authorized personnel for more than 25 percent but not more than half (26-50 percent) of the student's instructional day.

Chronic Absenteeism— When a student is enrolled for at least 10 days and is absent 10% or more of days enrolled. This incorporates all absences: excused, unexcused, suspensions, and expulsions.

Excused Absences — Absences which are not considered for purposes of truancy, including absences incurred due to extenuating circumstances in accordance with §1103 of Bulletin 741.

Unexcused Absence— Any absence not meeting the requirements set forth in the excused absence definition, including but not limited to absences due to any job (including agriculture and domestic services, even in their own homes or for their own parents or tutors) unless it is part of an approved instructional program.

Suspension/Expulsion— Absence in which a student is not in attendance in the regular instructional setting due to disciplinary actions imposed by the school. The absence is not considered for purposes of truancy unless the student was assigned to an alternative site and is not in attendance at the assigned alternative site.

Truancy— A student is considered truant once he or she receives five unexcused absences or five unexcused tardies in a semester.

Habitual Absence/Tardiness—A student shall be considered habitually absent or habitually tardy when either condition continues to exist after all reasonable efforts by any school personnel, truancy officer, or other law enforcement personnel have failed to correct the condition after the fifth unexcused absence or fifth unexcused occurrence of being tardy within any school semester.

Tiered Attendance Strategy— An organized strategy that prioritizes evidence-based, proactive, early, and comprehensive interventions to minimize chronic absence and truancy.

ATTENDANCE RECORDING AND REPORTING

Requirements and Procedures

Daily

- Attendance must be taken and recorded daily, at the beginning of each class period, and verified by the teacher.

- Schools must immediately report unexplained, unexcused, or illegal absences or habitual tardiness. The principal or designee must make reasonable efforts to notify the parent of any prohibited student absence.

- Beginning with the 2024-2025 school year, student attendance shall be submitted daily to the LDOE, including the number of students in attendance, the number of students absent, and the truancy status of each student.

Third Unexcused Absence/Tardy Occurrence

- The principal of a school, or their designee, notifies the parent or legal guardian in writing.

- The principal or designee holds a conference with the student's parent or legal guardian.

- This notification includes information about the parent or legal guardian's legal responsibility to enforce the student's attendance at school and the civil penalties that may be incurred if the student is determined to be habitually absent or habitually tardy.

- The student's parent or legal guardian signs a receipt for the notification.

Fifth Unexcused Absence/Tardy Occurrence

- Any student who is a juvenile and who is habitually absent from school or habitually tardy is reported by supervisors of child welfare and attendance to the family or juvenile court of the parish or city as a truant child.

- A student is considered habitually absent or habitually tardy when this condition continues after all reasonable efforts by school personnel, truancy officers, or other law enforcement personnel have failed to correct it.

- Develop an Individualized Attendance Success Plan with specific, measurable attendance goals.

Additional Recommendations

Chronically Absent Students (10% Absenteeism Rate)

- Identify students meeting the 10% absence threshold based on weekly attendance data analysis.
- Document all interventions, communications, and outcomes in a uniform tracking system.
- Complete and submit monthly reporting on chronic absenteeism rates and intervention effectiveness to the appropriate system leader.

"Research shows that chronic absenteeism makes it harder for students to develop proficient literacy and math skills by third grade, achieve in middle school, and graduate from high school. Poor attendance also adversely affects educational engagement." *~Stemming the Surge in Chronic Absence: What States Can Do, A Fourth Annual Review of State Attendance Policy and Practice.* Attendance Works, June 2024

Prompt	Required Action	Attendance Support
Daily	☐ Take attendance ☐ Report absences to parents ☐ School report to LEA ☐ LEA report to SEA	• Establish an attendance team • Collect & analyze attendance data • Implement phone call, text, and email communication procedures
3rd Unexcused Absence/Tardy **10% Absences**	☐ Formal written and/or in-person notification to parents	• Implement early intervention strategies • Identify and address attendance barriers
5th Unexcused Absence/Tardy in a semester	☐ Formal written and/or in-person notification to parents ☐ Report student to the appropriate judicial office	• Implement comprehensive intervention strategies • Connect with appropriate community partners • Collaborate with FINS or TASC officers
Continued Habitual Absence/Tardies	☐ Formal written and/or in-person notification to parents ☐ Engage with the appropriate judicial office	• Adjust comprehensive intervention strategies based on response protocol

ATTENDANCE DATA MANAGEMENT

Collection, Analysis, and Goal Setting

<u>Collection:</u> **Establish a strategic data collection process to allow for insightful analysis.**

Attendance teams should consider the following key elements:

1. **Data Sources, Frequency, and Consistency**
   - Identify all relevant sources of attendance data.
   - Determine the frequency of data collection (e.g., daily, weekly, monthly) for each source.
   - Establish standardized procedures to ensure consistency in attendance recording across all sources and by all personnel. This includes defining excused vs. unexcused absence, tardiness, truancy, etc.

2. **Tools and Resources**
   - Inventory the available tools and resources that can aid in both collecting and analyzing attendance data. Examples include:
     - School Information Systems (SIS)
     - Spreadsheet software (e.g., Excel, Google Sheets)
     - Data visualization tools
     - Attendance tracking system
   - Evaluate the effectiveness and accessibility of these tools and identify any gaps.

3. **Data Elements to Collect**
   - **Attendance Rates Overall:** Collect data to calculate overall attendance rates for the school or district.
   - **Attendance Rates by Subgroup:** Gather data that allows for disaggregation of attendance rates by various student subgroups. This could include:
     - Grade level
     - Race/ethnicity
     - Socioeconomic status
     - Special education status
     - English Learner status
   - **Vulnerable Student Groups:** Specifically track attendance data for student groups identified as particularly vulnerable or at higher risk of absenteeism. This may include:
     - Students experiencing housing instability and homelessness
     - Students in foster care or frequent placement changes
     - Students with chronic health conditions
     - Students with language acquisition challenges or limited English proficiency
   - **Compare Rates:** Collect data in a way that facilitates the comparison of attendance rates:
     - Across different subgroups
     - Across different grade levels

- ○ Across different time periods (e.g., month-to-month, year-to-year)
- ○ Between schools within a district
- ● **Information about** Reasons **for Student Absences:**
  - ○ Student/family focus groups
  - ○ Student/family data surveys
  - ○ Student/family-centered problem-solving conversations
  - ○ School staff insights/ observations

Analysis: **Use data to identify students who require attendance support.**

- ● Analyze school attendance data bi-weekly to identify trends, patterns, and at-risk students early.
- ● Use data to track absenteeism rates, truancy rates, demographics, and specific causes.
- ● Analyze data to assess and track the number of students who require early intervention support or comprehensive intervention support.   Intervention tiers are detailed in the Attendance Multi-Tiered System of Support section later in this document.
- ● Examine data by school, grade, and student group to identify trends and support needs.
- ● Consider the time of year when analyzing data to determine appropriate interventions.
- ● Utilize a needs assessment to determine the reasons for absences and identify strategies to address individual student and group needs.

Goal Setting: **Establish data-informed goals for attendance improvement and employ a tiered attendance strategy with clearly defined steps to achieve those goals.**

- ● Set clear, achievable goals for improving absenteeism. Goal focus areas could include:
  - ○ Reducing chronic absenteeism rate
  - ○ Reducing truancy rate
  - ○ Increasing daily average attendance rate
- ● Sample goals include:
  - ○ Blue Bayou Elementary School will reduce the percentage of students identified as chronically absent (missing 10% or more of school days) from 20% to 15% by the end of the 2025-2026 school year.
  - ○ Blue Bayou Elementary School will decrease the average number of unexcused absences per student by 15% during the 2025-2026 school year through the implementation of a positive attendance recognition program and clear communication of attendance policies
- ● Promote goal attainment by developing and implementing a tiered attendance strategy.

Progress Monitoring

Attendance data and intervention effectiveness must be monitored to ensure continuous improvement.

Effective progress monitoring is essential for evaluating the impact of attendance strategies and ensuring that interventions are implemented successfully. It involves the ongoing collection and analysis of attendance data to track progress toward goals and make data-informed adjustments.

Key components of progress monitoring include:
- **Regular Data Analysis**: Attendance teams should consistently review attendance data to identify trends, patterns, and the effectiveness of implemented interventions. This analysis should occur at various levels (e.g., school, grade, student group) and consider factors such as absenteeism rates, truancy rates, demographics, and reasons for absences.

- **Key Metrics Tracking**: Monitor key attendance metrics, including overall attendance rates, attendance rates by subgroup, chronic absenteeism rates, truancy rates, and the number of students requiring different levels of support.

- **Assessment of Intervention Fidelity**: Ensure that attendance interventions are implemented as intended with fidelity. This may involve observing interventions, reviewing records, and gathering feedback from staff, students, and families.

- **Evaluation of Intervention Effectiveness**: Determine the impact of interventions on student attendance outcomes by analyzing data to identify evidence of absenteeism reduction and alleviation of attendance barriers.

- **Data-Driven Decision-Making**: Use the data and evaluation findings to inform decisions about continuing, modifying, or discontinuing interventions. Data-informed adjustments ensure interventions are meeting the needs of students and families to improve attendance.

"By 9th grade, missing 20 percent of school can be a better predictor of dropout rates than 8th-grade test scores."

~ *What Matters for Staying On-Track and Graduating in Chicago Public High Schools: A Close Look at Course Grades, Failures, and at Attendance in the Freshman Year.* Consortium on Chicago School Research, 2007.

IMPLEMENTING ATTENDANCE BEST PRACTICES

Best Practices for Effective District and School Attendance Teams

Reducing absenteeism requires a team approach.

District Attendance Team
A district-level team plays a crucial role in setting the vision, providing resources, and ensuring consistency in attendance practices across all schools in a system. This diverse team should include leaders with various capabilities, such as Child Welfare and Attendance personnel, district administrators, attendance specialists, data analysts, and representatives from student support services and special education. Examples of district-level attendance team responsibilities include:

- Establishing data-informed, district attendance goals, expectations, and action plan.
- Developing and maintaining district-wide data systems for tracking and analyzing attendance data.
- Providing professional learning and training on attendance best practices.
- Allocating resources to support school-level attendance initiatives.
- Facilitating communication and collaboration between schools.
- Establishing community partnerships focused on attendance support.
- Monitoring overall district attendance trends and the effectiveness of action plan interventions.

School-Level Attendance Team
A diverse group of school-level stakeholders, often part of an existing school team, must use data to identify needs and implement interventions that improve student attendance within the school. While school-level attendance team composition will vary based on context, this team typically includes at least a school administrator, as well as a counselor or social worker, data manager, attendance clerk, special education teacher and/or another staff member with access to student data. Examples of school-level attendance team responsibilities include:

- Establishing school attendance goals and expectations.
- Developing a tiered attendance strategy.
- Analyzing data to identify students in need of support.
- Identifying factors influencing attendance and developing plans to minimize barriers.
- Engaging families and communities.
- Evaluating the impact and outcomes of implemented strategies and interventions.

Define Roles and Responsibilities

- **Establish District and School Attendance Teams:** The process begins with creating teams at both the district and school levels tasked with determining how attendance is addressed. District teams can offer overarching guidance, resources, and professional learning to support school-level teams. Ideally, these teams meet at least bi-weekly.
- **Define Roles, Responsibilities, and Purpose:** The roles and responsibilities of each team member should be clearly defined.   District and school teams should unite around a shared vision, based on an aligned "Why" and common values, to provide a focused direction that supports district-wide and school-wide attendance goals and priorities.

- **Focus on Understanding Barriers:** Teams should focus on understanding the barriers to attendance and identifying targeted interventions to support students and families in overcoming barriers so students can be present in school.
- **Use Data and Resources:** Attendance teams should strategically use aligned resources and relevant data to guide the application of attendance best practices as they implement a tiered strategy to achieve attendance goals.

District-Level Team Actions:
- **Review District-Wide Data to Establish Goals:** Analyze overall district attendance data to understand baseline attendance metrics and set district-wide benchmarks for improvement. Communicate goals and attendance expectations to all stakeholders.
- **Analyze District and School-Level Data for Trends and Patterns:** Define and implement standardized metrics for tracking absenteeism rates, truancy rates, demographics, and common absence reasons across all schools. Examine attendance data across the district and within individual schools to identify overarching trends, recurring patterns, and school-specific challenges. Based on this analysis, district attendance teams may need to prioritize schools with challenges that warrant more intensive support.
- **Develop an Attendance Action Plan**: Once goals have been established, create a strategic plan with tiered support for students with attendance concerns that includes targeted action steps and processes for evaluating the impact of the support actions on student attendance and subsequent academic outcomes.
- **Develop and Maintain District-Wide Data Systems:** Develop a system for using attendance data to monitor trends through district-level reports to inform school support and tiered intervention needs.
- **Provide Attendance-Focused Professional Learning**: Develop and implement professional learning sessions for school personnel that communicate district attendance goals and expectations. These learning events should promote the implementation of best practices and a tiered strategy approach for improving attendance.
- **Allocate Resources to Support School-Level Attendance Initiatives:** Resource allocation elements to consider include staffing and personnel, incentives and recognition programs, communication and engagement strategies, and community partnerships.
- **Monitor the Effectiveness of District-Wide Initiatives and Support Systems**: Evaluate the impact of district-led attendance programs and resource allocation on overall attendance improvement.

School-Level Team Actions:
- **Develop a Tiered Attendance Strategy:** A tiered attendance strategy is organized and prioritizes evidence-based, proactive, early, and comprehensive interventions to minimize chronic absenteeism and truancy. This strategy is informed by a review of school-specific attendance data and needs assessment results to understand challenges and establish goals for improvement within the school. Strategy tiers are detailed in the Best Practices for Positive Attendance Initiatives section later in this document.
- **Analyze Data for Targeted Support:** Attendance and absenteeism data are systematically examined to identify individual students and groups with support needs. This analysis pinpoints specific trends, patterns of absence, and students exhibiting concerning attendance records. It allows for the application of tiered supports for individual students and/or identified groups.
- **Identify Factors Influencing Attendance:** Both qualitative and quantitative data should be analyzed to gain a thorough understanding of the resources, challenges, and effective strategies that impact

student attendance. It is important to explore the causes of habitual absences by tracking the school's specific data on absenteeism rates, student demographics related to attendance, and the reported reasons for absences.

- **Engage Families and the Community:** All members of the school community, including [families](#) and [partner organizations](#), are actively mobilized to understand their role in encouraging and supporting consistent student attendance. School attendance teams should create specific engagement opportunities with clearly defined partnership expectations and desired impact measurements.

- **Evaluate Impact and Outcomes**: The effectiveness of the team's efforts is rigorously assessed by consistently monitoring student outcomes and determining if interventions are resulting in improved attendance, with necessary adjustments made based on the data.

Best Practices for Developing a Tiered Attendance Strategy

Complete a Needs Assessment → Define and Develop Strategies and Interventions at Each Tier → Develop a Tracking System → Develop Pattern Response Protocol → Implement the Tiered Attendance Strategy

- **Complete a [Needs Assessment](#)**: This first step in planning a tiered attendance strategy helps schools understand their unique attendance situation by gathering and analyzing data to identify attendance needs, strengths, challenges, and the effectiveness of current interventions and communication methods. The results inform the development of targeted strategies and a multi-tiered system of support (MTSS).

- **Define and Develop Strategies and Interventions at Each Tier**: A clear understanding of evidence-based strategies and interventions and their alignment within each tier (proactive, early intervention, comprehensive intervention) is necessary before creating a comprehensive MTSS menu or tailoring strategies to a specific school. A structured MTSS menu can be used to detail the specific supports and interventions the school will offer at each strategy tier.

- **Develop a Tracking System**: A system to collect and analyze attendance data as well as track interventions is essential for effectively monitoring needs, responding to patterns, and implementing targeted strategies. This system will allow teams to evaluate the impact of interventions and respond accordingly. The tracking system should include records of data analysis, all interventions, communications, and outcomes.

- **Develop Pattern Response Protocol**: Once the tracking system is in place and the MTSS menu with specific strategies is defined, a protocol outlining how the team will respond to different patterns of attendance data they observe can then be developed. This ensures a consistent and data-driven approach to intervention.

- **Implement the Tiered Attendance Strategy**: Utilizing needs assessment information, school attendance teams identify students who should receive the MTSS strategies and interventions. This implementation will vary based on a school's unique context, attendance data, student population, and available resources. Implementation actions should be strategically planned and carefully tracked.

Attendance Multi-Tiered System of Support
Regular attendance serves as the cornerstone of academic achievement. Impactful attendance management requires a multi-tiered system that proactively encourages consistent presence in school while providing targeted support for students facing chronic absenteeism challenges. The following guidance provides a framework for developing an MTSS targeting the needs of all students.

PROACTIVE STRATEGIES focus on all students and are aimed at preventing absenteeism before it affects achievement. Examples of proactive strategies include:

- Providing relevant, engaging instruction
- Addressing parental misconceptions about attendance
- Utilizing clear and timely processes to communicate information about attendance with parents
- Incentivizing attendance through recognition programs, contests, and rewards
- Cultivating student belonging through engagement with activities and organizations
- Fostering family and community involvement through targeted engagement opportunities

EARLY INTERVENTIONS focus on students with 3 or more unexcused absences per semester and **students with a 10% or higher absence rate**. Interventions are implemented to improve attendance and reduce the risk of chronic absenteeism. Examples of early interventions include:

- [Addressing identified attendance barriers](#) with targeted solutions
- Grouping students who may benefit from the same interventions
- Partnering a student with a school-level mentor
- Developing [student attendance support plans](#) to meet academic needs
- Providing opportunities for attendance recovery and missed learning recovery

COMPREHENSIVE INTERVENTIONS focus on students with 5 or more unexcused absences per semester. Interventions are implemented to support students and correct truancy/chronic absenteeism. Examples of comprehensive interventions include:

- Increasing academic support, including weekly academic check-ins
- Conducting home visits
- Communicating with parents regarding attendance concerns and available supports
- Promoting interagency collaboration
- Notifying parents of intent to report habitual unexcused absence/tardiness to juvenile court and requesting the need for attendance documentation (excused absences)
- Making legal referrals outlined in statutes and policies.

Best Practices for Family Engagement and Communication
Build strong, trusting relationships with families through positive engagement and communication.

Productive partnerships between schools and families are an essential element for student success. When families and schools collaborate, not only does attendance improve, but academic outcomes are positively impacted as well. Best practices for engaging families include:

- Communicating the importance of attendance to all stakeholders
- Clearly defining expectations and elements of effective attendance support
- Recognizing and celebrating positive attendance
- Improving communication between home and school to foster collaboration by using two-way, personalized communication

- Addressing barriers to attendance collaboratively and making connections to aligned community resources

Best Practices for Community Engagement and Partnerships

Cultivate impactful collaborations and shared ownership that aligns strengths and resources with data-informed areas of need.

There are multiple categories of community partnerships that system and school attendance teams should consider when they are working to build connections that help meet the needs of students with attendance concerns. When fostering strong, mutually beneficial relationships with the wider community, it is important to create targeted opportunities for engagement that address specific needs. It is also critical to maintain open lines of communication and to define the anticipated impact evidence that will indicate success.

Business Partnership Examples:

- Address specific student needs, such as providing uniforms, school supplies, or hygiene products
- Incentivize positive school attendance by offering gift certificates, donating products, or sponsoring a "Student of the Month" program
- Engage in mentorships, connecting attendance to career success
- Host college or career events highlighting the importance of attendance

Healthcare Collaboration Examples:

- Health education for families
- Accessible on-site health services
- Improved communication on health-related absences

Social Service Agency Engagement Examples:

- Resource fairs for families
- Case management for high-need families
- Transportation assistance for students

Faith-Based Organization Involvement Examples:

- Attendance messaging to congregations
- Volunteer support (tutoring, mentoring)
- Donation drives (supplies, clothing)

LEGAL AND PROCEDURAL GUIDELINES FOR ATTENDANCE

Required Communication

Student Information Reporting— Principals, administrators, and teachers must report student information (names, birth dates, race, parents, and residence) to the central office within 30 days of the school term or session's start, and at other times as required by BESE or the LDE.

School Website Link— By December 1, 2023, each public school website must include a link to the LDE-designated school attendance data page.

Attendance Data Reporting—Beginning with the 2024-2025 school year, student attendance shall be submitted daily to the LDOE, including the number of students in attendance, the number of students absent, and the truancy status of each student.

Student Departure— No student who has not been emancipated may leave school during the school day on their own authority. The school principal or the principal's designee shall make all reasonable efforts to notify the parent or other person responsible for the student's school attendance of any such prohibited absence by a student.

Official Notice of Non-Enrollment or Unexcused Absence—Supervisors of child welfare and attendance and home-school coordinators shall give written notice, either in person or by registered mail, to the parent or guardian of a student within the compulsory school attendance age, when no valid reason is found for a student's nonenrollment or unexcused absence from school, requiring enrollment or attendance within three days from the date of notice.

Reporting to Family or Juvenile Court— Any student who is a juvenile and who is habitually absent from school or habitually tardy is reported by supervisors of child welfare and attendance to the family or juvenile court of the parish or city as a truant child, according to the provisions of chapter 2 of title VII of the Louisiana Children's Code relative to families in need of services.

Court Determination— The court determines how to address the truant child, which may involve placing the truant in a home or in a public or private institution where school is provided, or other measures.

Families in Need of Services (FINS) Reporting

Per RS 17:133, any student who is a juvenile and who is habitually absent from school or is habitually tardy shall be reported by visiting teachers and supervisors of child welfare and attendance to the family or juvenile court of the parish or city as a truant child, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 2 of Title VII of the Louisiana Children's Code relative to families in need of services, there to be dealt with in such manner as the court may determine, either by placing the truant in a home or in a public or private institution where school may be provided for the child, or otherwise. A student shall be considered habitually absent or habitually tardy when either condition continues to exist after all reasonable efforts by any school personnel, truancy officer, or other law enforcement personnel have failed to correct the condition after the **fifth unexcused absence or fifth unexcused occurrence of being tardy within any school semester**.

When a student meets the requirements that warrant a FINS report, the following information must be included:

- Student demographic and parent contact information
- The specific dates of unexcused absences
- At least three in-house measures taken by the school to address the attendance concerns
- Documentation establishing a course of conduct - elements for this requirement may include:
    - All special education evaluations on file (parental consent is required - IDEA§300.622(a))
    - All IEP's regardless of classification (parental consent is required - IDEA§300.622(a)
    - Behavioral records, Including incident reports, suspensions, and referrals
    - Attendance records as far back as available Elementary school records
    - Report Cards
    - Health Records (including reports from outside agencies)
    - Collateral involvement (documentation provided by others)
    - All supporting documentation for each measure attempting, including documentation outlining number of times each measure has been attempted

Parents must be notified prior to filing a FINS referral. **The school is responsible for obtaining release of information forms.**

Policy Requirements

BESE Policy

Bulletin 741: Louisiana Handbook for School Administrators

- § 713: Attendance Records (pg. 31)
- § 719: Reports to the Supervisors of Child Welfare and Attendance (pg. 32)
- § 1103: Compulsory Attendance (pg. 35)
- § 1104: Remote Instruction (pg. 37)
- § 1105: Absences and Attendance (pg. 38)
- § 1117: Child Welfare and Attendance (pg. 41)
- § 2314: Carnegie Credit and Credit Flexibility (pg. 65)

Louisiana Statutes

RS 17:221: School attendance; compulsory ages; duty of parents; excessive absences; condition for driving privileges

RS 17:151.3: Kindergarten; establishment; entrance age; prerequisites

RS 17:154.1: Length of school day and year; requirements

RS 17:154.3: School schedules; minimum work days; instructional days

RS 17:221.8: Pregnant or parenting students; policies; attendance, breastfeeding, and child care

RS 17:226: Exemptions from compulsory attendance

RS 17:226.1: Compulsory attendance; exemption for minors engaged in artistic or creative services

RS 17:227: State directors of child welfare and attendance; duties

RS 17:228: Visiting teachers, or supervisors of child welfare and attendance

RS 17:229: Appointment of visiting teachers, or supervisors of child welfare and attendance

RS 17:230: Powers and duties of visiting teachers, or supervisors of child welfare and attendance

RS 17:232: Attendance records, principals' and teachers' duty to furnish; penalty for violation; pupil absence upon own authority prohibited; notice

RS 17:233: Cases of habitual absence or tardiness referred to juvenile or family court; denial or suspension of driving privileges; parental responsibilities

RS 17:235: Cooperation of other state agencies and institutions with visiting teachers, or supervisors of child welfare and attendance

RS 17:235.2: Statements of compliance; students and parents; required

RS 17:236.3: Virtual school; definition; attendance policies

RS 14:92.2: Improper supervision of a minor by parent or legal custodian

Appendix A: Needs Assessment

A focused needs assessment, completed individually by each attendance team member, is an essential **first step in informing the school's tiered attendance strategy**. This process systematically pinpoints the specific gaps and barriers hindering consistent attendance among students and families within the district. The collective insights from these individual assessments will then **shape the development of targeted interventions and supports** designed to foster improved attendance and, ultimately, greater student success.

Needs Assessment

Name and Role:
Outcomes: ☐ A clear understanding of our school's specific attendance strengths and challenges.   ☐ Identification of key barriers to consistent attendance.   ☐ Data to inform the development of our tracking system and interventions.

Guiding Question	Response	
1. In your words describe the hurdle(s) your school faces to get students to and keep them at school?		
2. Which of the following factors are most impactful on student attendance? Circle the TOP 5.	A. Lack of basic necessities B. Illness C. Family responsibilities D. Housing instability E. Involvement with Juvenile Justice System F. Poor transportation G. Behavioral health H. Avoidance of bullying	I. Avoidance of difficult subject matter J. Avoidance of unsafe conditions K. Avoidance of embarrassment L. Do not see the value in attending school M. There are no barriers N. Would rather do something else besides attend school O. Other

Guiding Question	Response
3. **How would you rate family response to outreach attempts?**	0: Families are always unresponsive to contact / attempts to get students back at school are ineffective. 1: Families sometimes respond, but we are often not kept in the loop about phone and address changes. Some students return to school, but outreach impact is unclear. 2: Families often respond. Some students return to school. Outreach success is inconsistent – some tactics work sometimes, but not always. 3: Families mostly respond and come in person to solve attendance issues. Students return to school. We collect data from families about outreach. Other:
4. **Which is currently the most effective method of communication to relay critical information to families?**	A. Email B. Phone C. Text D. Newsletter E. Mail F. Other:
5. **Select attendance interventions that you currently use. Select all that apply.**	A. Attendance conference or home visit B. Weekly newsletter C. Open houses or family nights D. PTO E. Robocalls/attendance calls F. Notification letters G. Daily check-in with student H. Warning letters I. Truancy referral J. Classroom-based interventions K. Attendance incentives L. Attendance recovery M. Community-building N. Other:
6. **Which of your current interventions are most successful and why?**	
7. **Which of your current interventions are least successful and why?**	

Guiding Question	Response
8. Does your school rely more on positive or punitive attendance intervention?	A. Positive B. Punitive C. Both equally
9. Your school's biggest challenge to support effective attendance practices is…	
10. Your school's biggest strength to support effective attendance practices is…	
11. Your district's biggest challenge to support effective attendance practices is…	
12. Your district's biggest strength to support effective attendance practices is…	

Needs Assessment Results

Consider:	Our School Results:
What areas does your school excel in? What are some of the strengths?	
What areas does your school fall short? What are some of the challenges?	
What are additional takeaways noted from the needs assessment?	

Appendix B: Sample Tiered Attendance Strategy Template

2025-2026 Tiered Attendance Strategy Template

School Attendance Goal (s):

Plan Outcomes:
- ☐ A clear and consistent process for responding to various attendance patterns.
- ☐ Timely and appropriate interventions for students in need.
- ☐ A data-driven approach to monitoring and improving attendance.

Tier	Strategies/ Interventions	Person(s) Responsible	Resources to Support Action
Proactive Strategies: For all students focused on preventing absenteeism before it affects achievement			
Early Intervention: For students with 3 or more unexcused absences per semester & students with a 10% absence rate			
Comprehensive Intervention: For students with 5 or more unexcused absences or tardies per semester			

Strategy Implementation Data Tracking

Student	# of absences	Strategy/ Intervention	Communication/ Documentation	Progress Monitor/Outcome

Appendix C: Attendance Strategy Guiding Questions

Attendance Strategy Planning

Guiding Question	Response
Foundational Questions (Overall Strategy): ☐ What are our school's specific attendance goals? ☐ How do these align with district and state goals? ☐ How will we define and measure attendance, chronic absenteeism, and truancy in our school? ☐ What data sources will we use to track attendance, and how frequently will data be collected and analyzed? ☐ What tools and resources (e.g., SIS, software) will support our attendance tracking and intervention efforts? ☐ How will we ensure consistency in attendance practices across classrooms and grade levels? ☐ How will we communicate the importance of attendance to students, families, and staff?	
Proactive Strategies (All Students) ☐ What proactive strategies can we implement to promote positive attendance for all students? ☐ How can we create a positive and engaging learning environment that encourages students to attend school regularly? ☐ What incentives or recognition programs can we use to celebrate good attendance? ☐ How can we foster strong relationships with families and the community to support attendance?	

Guiding Question	Response
Early Intervention (At-Risk Students) ☐ What criteria will we use to identify students who are at risk of chronic absenteeism? (e.g., 3+ unexcused absences, 10% absence rate) ☐ What early interventions will we implement for these students? ☐ How will we assess the reasons for their absences and address any barriers to attendance? ☐ How will we monitor the effectiveness of these interventions?	
Comprehensive Intervention (Habitually Absent Students) ☐ What comprehensive interventions will we use for students with chronic absenteeism or truancy? ☐ How will we increase academic support for these students? ☐ What steps will we take to collaborate with families and involve external agencies (e.g., social services, courts) when necessary? ☐ What legal and procedural guidelines do we need to follow?	
Data Analysis and Evaluation ☐ How often will we analyze attendance data to identify trends, patterns, and areas for improvement? ☐ How will we use data to track the effectiveness of our interventions at each tier? ☐ How will we ensure that our interventions are implemented with fidelity? ☐ How will we use data to make decisions about modifying or adjusting our attendance strategy?	

Appendix D: Sample Attendance Team Meeting Agenda

This agenda provides a framework for your attendance team meetings and aligns with the High Quality Professional Learning Cycle.

Attendance Team Agenda

Define Purpose
- What do you notice about the data?
- Have absenteeism and truancy rates decreased or increased?
- What grade levels or student groups might need more support?

Overall	Total	21.4%
Grades Pre-K-5	Total	21.4%
Race/Ethnicity	Black	20.1%
Race/Ethnicity	Hispanic	80%
Race/Ethnicity	White	32.3%
Race/Ethnicity	Multiple Race	15.4%
Gender Status	Male	20%
Gender Status	Female	22.9%
English Learner Status	English Proficient	21.4%
Disability Status	Regular Ed Students	21.2%
Disability Status	Students with Disabilities	22.5%
Economically Disadvantaged	Economically Disadvantaged	21.5%
Economically Disadvantaged	Non Economically Disadvantaged	0.0%
Foster Status	Foster	16.7%
Foster Status	Non Foster	21.5%
Homeless Status	Homeless	50%
Homeless Status	Non Homeless	20.9%
Migrant Status	Non Migrant	21.4%

Receive New Learning

● Model a process to analyze data to assess and track the number of students who require early intervention and support, and how many need comprehensive support.

Internalize & Practice

● Use the data to identify and group students who need early intervention support and comprehensive support.

● Identify students from both groups whose progress will be tracked by a team member this week.

Implement the Learning

● Ensure that attendance interventions are implemented as intended and with fidelity by:

  ○ (Team Member A) Observing the early interventions provided for identified students.

  ○ (Team Member B) Reviewing the records of identified students receiving comprehensive intervention.

  ○ (Team Member C) Gather feedback from identified staff and families.

Assess Impact

● Determine the impact of interventions on student attendance outcomes.

● Use the data and evaluation findings to inform decisions about continuing, modifying, or discontinuing interventions.

Bring back evidence to respond to the following questions:

● Are absenteeism rates reducing for students who are receiving interventions?
● Are interventions addressing underlying causes of attendance problems?

Appendix E: Sample Chronic Absence/Truancy Notice Letter to Parent

[Date]

Greetings [School District OR School] Family,

We need your help! [STUDENT NAME]'s absences from school are concerning, and your partnership is critical. Students who miss just one or two days of school each month can fall seriously behind.

[STUDENT NAME] is now "truant" because [she/he/they] missed school (or was more than 30 minutes late) without a valid excuse on:

- Insert date of absence/tardy here
- Insert date of absence/tardy here
- Insert date of absence/tardy here

Being absent can lead to doing poorly in school. Students who miss many days of school are more likely to:

- Fail their classes
- Drop out from high school [For Elementary: Are unable to read at grade level]
- Have poor relationships with parents and teachers

To help us support [Student Name]'s success and to ensure compliance with Louisiana law, we request that you provide any documentation for unexcused absences.

We are required by Louisiana law to send you this letter and to warn you of the consequences of additional unexcused absences (see below). We also want to remind you we are here to help! Please remember that every absence matters, and just a couple of days each month add up. You are key to improving [STUDENT NAME]'s attendance. Please let us know how we can support you and your student in improving their attendance. Like you, we want to see [STUDENT NAME] succeed.

Sincerely,

Principal/Designee/CWA

Louisiana Chronic Absence / Truancy Law R.S. 17:233 Cases of habitual absence and or tardiness are referred to juvenile or family court. Any student who is a juvenile and who is habitually absent from school or is habitually tardy shall be reported by the Supervisors of Child Welfare and Attendance to the family or juvenile court of the parish or city as a truant. **A student shall be considered habitually absent or habitually tardy when:**
- **Conditions continue to exist after all reasonable efforts to correct the conditions are exhausted.**
- **After the fifth unexcused absence or fifth unexcused tardy within any month.**
- **If a pattern of five absences is established.**

The State of Louisiana Compulsory Attendance Law mandates that students cannot be absent more than 10 unexcused days for an academic year. Any student with 11 or more unexcused days can be retained in their current grade.
If you have concerns about your child's attendance or if you believe our records are inaccurate please feel free to contact the school at [SCHOOL_PHONE_NUMBER].

Appendix F: Critical Elements of an Individualized Student Attendance Plan

Critical Elements of an [Individualized Student Attendance Plan](#) (ISAP)

Comprehensive Assessment

To begin, a thorough assessment of the student's situation is crucial to understand the underlying causes of their absences. School attendance teams should gather information from various sources, including the student, their family, teachers, counselors, and other relevant school personnel. This assessment should also include an evaluation of current grades and any missed learning. A comprehensive approach ensures an accurate identification of the specific risk factors contributing to the student's absenteeism, which often fall into categories like barriers, aversions, or disengagement.

Key Activities

- Analyze attendance data for patterns and causes
- Gather information from the student, family, teachers, and counselors
- Identify specific risk factors for absenteeism to **solve a problem** or **change a behavior**

BARRIERS	AVERSION	DISENGAGEMENT
Students **CANNOT** attend school due to these barriers.	Students **WILL NOT** attend school to avoid these challenges/concerns.	Students **DO NOT** attend school because of disinterest or lack of connection.
Chronic and/or Acute Illness Family Responsibilities ● Caring for younger siblings or elder care for other family members ● Working to support family income	**Academic Challenges** ● Avoidance of challenging work ● Academically behind/learning loss	**Instructional Disconnect** ● Lack of connection to students' interest and backgrounds ● Irrelevant and/or unengaging curriculum
Unmet Basic Needs ● Housing instability ● Food insecurity ● Poor transportation ● Unsafe path to school ● Natural disaster/property loss	**Social/School Climate Challenges** ● Avoidance of embarrassment ● Avoidance of bullying ● Avoidance of unsafe conditions ● Language barriers	**Instructional Disconnect** ● Lack of connection to students' interest and backgrounds ● Irrelevant and/or unengaging curriculum

BARRIERS	AVERSION	DISENGAGEMENT
Involvement with Juvenile Justice System	**Mental Health Challenges** ● PTSD ● Anxiety ● Depression ● Trauma **Parent Concerns/ Misconceptions** ● Risk of exposure to illness ● Parents' poor experience with school	**Poor Relationships** ● Adult distrust ● Inadequate sense of safety, belonging, or support in school ● Poor peer relationships **Discipline History** ● Frequent discipline referrals ● Experience with suspension/expulsion **Misconceptions Regarding Value of School Attendance** ● No perceived consequences for absences ● Peer pressure to skip ● Desire to enter the workforce **Student is Overage**

Adapted from LSU Social Research & Evaluation Center and Attendance Works

Goal Setting

The second critical element of an ISAP is goal setting. This entails collaboratively establishing clear, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) attendance and/or academic goals with the student and their family. These goals should emphasize gradual progress, and it's important to acknowledge even minor improvements to encourage the student and foster positive momentum. Recognizing and rewarding efforts toward better attendance can significantly boost a student's motivation.

Sample Goals

Using a timeline: [Start Date] - [End Date]):

- Increase attendance to 85% by the end of the semester
- Reduce unexcused absences by 50% within the next 6 weeks
- Maintain at least a 91% attendance rate for period of the goal
    - Progress Monitoring Method: Weekly attendance review by mentor and student
- Reduce tardiness to no more than once per week
    - Progress Monitoring Method: Daily attendance log review

Evidence-Based Intervention Strategies

The third critical element involves implementing evidence-based intervention strategies tailored to address the specific barriers, aversions, or disengagement identified during the comprehensive assessment. This includes identifying and mobilizing necessary resources to support the student.

Reason for Absences	Possible Interventions
Food Insecurity	- Provide breakfast after the bell - Supply weekend backpack of food - Engage with local food bank
Housing Instability	- Access to a uniform closet - Provide hygiene resources - Collaborate with local support agencies
Academically Behind/Learning Loss	- Utilize individualized student support plans - Provide academic enrichment opportunities - Identify learning gaps and provide academic interventions
Language Barriers	- Provide targets academic support - Increase parental outreach - Connect with specialized services such as Interrupted Formal Education (SIFE)
Instructional Disconnect	- Facilitate skillful implementation of HQIM - Connect instruction with academic enrichments such as robotics, coding, debate, art, etc. - Provide opportunities for participation in work-based learning
Lack of Belonging	- Encourage engagement in after-school activities - Promote positive student-teacher interactions - Connect students with a mentor

Regular Monitoring and Progress Evaluation

Regular monitoring and progress evaluation are critical for the success of any ISAP.

Key Activities

- Establish clear communication protocols

- Conduct regular review meetings with all stakeholders to determine the effectiveness of the interventions

- Make data-driven adjustments to the plan

Attendance Best Practices References

This strategy document draws on the insights and guidance from published research regarding how to improve attendance outcomes for students. Some of the key research materials include the following.

Hedy N. Chang, David Osher, Mara Schanfield, Jane Sundius, and Lauren Bauer, Using Chronic Absence Data to Improve Conditions for Learning, Attendance Works and American Institutes for Research (AIR), September 2019

Jordan, Phyllis (2023). Attendance Playbook: Smart strategies for reducing student absenteeism post-pandemic. FutureEd.

Murray, G., Picardo, R., Thomas-Smith, J., and Rhodes, J. (2022). Improving Student Attendance: An action planning workbook to address chronic absenteeism and the needs of students and families through multi-tiered systems of support. Social Research and Evaluation Center at the Louisiana State University College of Human Sciences and Education.