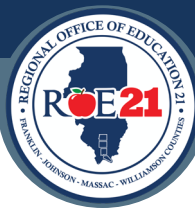




ROE 21
Safety. Support. Success

Regional Office of Education #21 **Partners Against Chronic Truancy (PACT) Manual**

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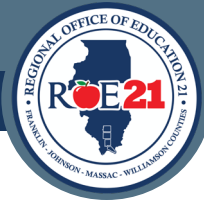


Partners Against Chronic Truancy (PACT)

The guidelines presented in this user manual have been developed to share specific information regarding the Partners Against Chronic Truancy (PACT) Intervention and Optional Education Program. It is our sincere hope that the guidelines will clarify the procedures necessary to access the PACT Team services after all resources, at the school level, have been exhausted. Our goal is to ensure that all students are provided the opportunity to reach their maximum educational potential through improved attendance.

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Introduction

Every year as many as 8 million students nationwide are chronically absent, meaning they miss 10 percent or more of the school year for any reason, excused or unexcused. That level of absenteeism predicts poor academic performance as early as preschool and is a warning sign that a high school student may drop out of school. To address the issue of poor attendance, the Regional Office of Education #21, in a coordinated team effort with local school districts, local governmental agencies, community agencies, and social service agencies, developed a comprehensive truancy prevention and intervention program, known as Partners Against Chronic Truancy (PACT).

The PACT team (consisting of the entities listed above) created a manual to include the procedures necessary for the development and implementation of a successful student Truancy Program. To move towards this goal, each school should compare the procedures and suggestions listed in this manual to its current attendance protocol and implement additional measures as needed.

The PACT program serves all grade levels with intensive intervention and prevention services targeted to chronic truants. These services include but are not limited to:

- development of an individual service plan
- educational monitoring
- alternative education
- dropout intervention services
- case management
- goal setting
- connection to community services/agency referrals
- advocacy
- supportive parental involvement including home visits
- reinforcing positive attendance

Working together we can help reduce chronic truancy and ensure children's success in school by supporting attendance.





ROE#21 PACT Team Contact Information

Website: <https://www.roe21.org/pact/>

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Project ECHO Alternative School

TAOEP Educational Program 7th/8th grade

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Email: chale@roe21.org

Website: <https://www.roe21.org/programs/echo/>

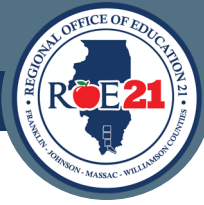
Lorie LeQuatte, Regional Superintendent

Email: llequatte@roe21.org

Mandy Horn, Assistant Regional Superintendent

Email: mhorn@roe21.org





Schools Served by ROE #21 PACT Team

Mr. Luke Saeger, Truancy Interventionist

Franklin and Williamson Counties

Akin CCSD #91

- Akin Grade School

Benton CCSD #47

- Benton Middle School
- Benton Grade School

Benton CHSD #103

- Benton Consolidated High School

Carterville CUSD #5

- Carterville High School
- Carterville Junior High School
- Carterville Intermediate School
- Tri-C Elementary

Christopher CUSD #99

- Christopher High School
- Christopher Elementary

Ewing-Northern CCSD #64

- Ewing-Northern Grade School

Frankfort CUSD #168

- Frankfort Community High School
- Central Junior High School
- Frankfort Intermediate School
- Denning Elementary

Johnston City CUSD #1

- Johnston City High School
- Washington Middle School
- Jefferson Elementary
- Lincoln Elementary

Sesser-Valier CUSD #196

- Sesser-Valier High School
- Sesser-Valier Junior High/Elementary

Thompsonville CUSD #174

- Thompsonville High School
- Thompsonville Grade School

Zeigler-Royalton CUSD #188

- Zeigler-Royalton High School
- Zeigler-Royalton Jr. High/Elementary

Mr. John Cox, Truancy Interventionist

Williamson County

Crab Orchard CUSD #3

- Crab Orchard High School
- Crab Orchard Elementary

Herrin CUSD #4

- Herrin High School
- Herrin Junior High School
- Herrin Elementary School
- Northside Primary

Marion CUSD #2

- Marion High School
- Marion Junior High
- Adams/Alternative Learning Center
- Jefferson Elementary
- Lincoln Elementary
- Longfellow Elementary
- Washington Elementary

Mr. Jeff Bink, Truancy Interventionist

Johnson and Massac Counties

Buncombe CSD #43

Cypress ESD #64

Goreville CUSD #1

- Goreville High School
- Goreville Elementary

Joppa Maple Grove CUSD #38

- Joppa High School
- Maple Grove Elementary

New Simpson Hill ESD #32

- New Simpson Hill Grade School

Vienna ESD #55

- Vienna Grade School

Vienna High School #13-3

- Vienna High School

Massac County USD #1

- Massac County High School
- Massac County Jr. High
- Brookport Elementary
- Franklin Elementary
- Jefferson Elementary
- Metropolis Elementary
- Unity Elementary



The PACT Program

The PACT Program is composed of three interrelated components that are essential to the success of the program. The implementation of all three components should be incorporated into a comprehensive plan to improve student attendance.

1. COMMUNICATION

Communication includes all measures the local school undertakes to ensure student(s), parents, staff and community understand the school attendance policy. Communication is accomplished through letters, flyers, announcements, staff meetings, attendance assemblies, and other means developed at the school level. A well-designed proactive approach for direct and continual communication can have a positive impact upon improving student attendance.

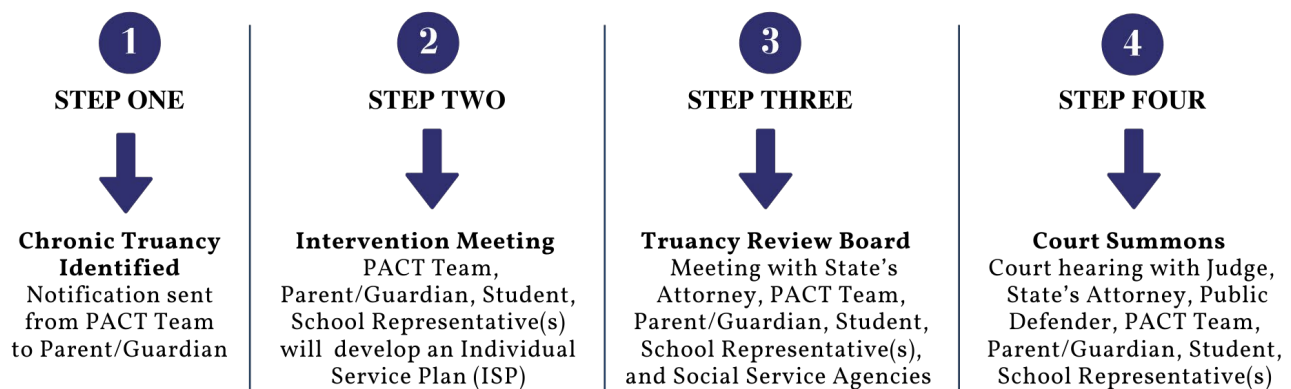
2. SCHOOL PREVENTION & INTERVENTION

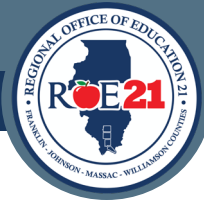
Truancy prevention is based upon accurate daily recording and monitoring of student attendance, both excused and unexcused, by the school staff. Early and accurate identification of excessive absences may prevent a student's referral to the ROE #21 PACT Program. Prevention efforts may include phone calls home, warning letters, home visits, conference with student/parents, visits with school social worker, etc. **All prevention efforts initiated by the school, including referrals to outside agencies, are to be documented and maintained for future reference.**

3. REGIONAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION INTERVENTION

The ROE #21 PACT Program services will be initiated for **chronic** truant students **only after all resources, at the school level, have been exhausted.** These services will include expanded prevention and intervention for students in grades K-12, in addition to optional education for 7th and 8th grade students. Adding an optional educational support component to Project ECHO Alternative Junior High School will allow for more intensive individualized intervention for future high school success.

The PACT Program Four-Step Process





THE DEFINITION OF TRUANT ACCORDING TO **THE ILLINOIS SCHOOL CODE - CH. 105 ILCS, SEC. 5/26-2A**

A **“truant”** is defined as a child who is subject to compulsory school attendance and who is absent without valid cause, as defined in the Article, from such attendance for more than 1% but less than 5% (between 2 full days and 8 full days) of the past 180 days.

*A student must be absent without valid cause for the entire day for the day to count towards truancy. A student who is absent without valid cause for only a portion of a school day can only be disciplined under the student handbook, but the day would not count towards truancy.

“Valid cause” for absence shall be illness, observance of a religious holiday, death in the family, family emergency, and shall include such other situations beyond the control of the student as determined by the board of education in each district, or such other circumstances which cause reasonable concern to the parent for the safety or health of the student.

“Chronic or habitual truant” shall be defined as a child subject to compulsory school attendance and who is absent without valid cause from such attendance for 5% or more of the previous 180 regular attendance days.

- The *previous 180 regular attendance days* can span between two school years.

“Truant minor” is defined as a chronic truant to whom supportive services, including prevention, diagnostic intervention and remedial services, alternative programs and other school and community resources have been provided and have failed to result in the cessation of chronic truancy, or have been offered and refused.

A **“dropout”** is defined as any child enrolled in grades 9 through 12 whose name has been removed from the district enrollment roster for any reason other than the student’s death, extended illness, removal for medical non-compliance, expulsion, aging out, graduation, or completion of a program of studies.

“Excused Absence” shall mean: an absence for which there is a **Valid Cause** (See definition) either:

- known to the principal/principal’s designee; or
- attested by a letter (or note) signed by the parent or legal guardian setting forth such cause and approved by the principal/principal’s designee either before or after the date of absence.

“Unexcused Absence” shall mean: an absence for which there is no **Valid Cause** (See definition).

TRUANCY PROCESS

Guidelines to Request Truancy Services

Prior to contacting the ROE #21 PACT Program

School Interventions

Prior to referring students to the PACT Program, a minimum of 3 previous interventions **must** be provided **by the school**. School interventions may include phone calls home, warning letters, home visits, conference with student/parents, visits with school social worker, etc. The school level truancy team should include administration, school social worker, guidance counselor, teacher(s), and attendance liaison.

Excluding data may delay the process of truancy requests for intervention.

To initiate the PACT Program, submit a [Truancy Referral](#)

When to submit the truancy referral...

The State of Illinois attendance guidelines define chronically truant as 5% unexcused absences from the total number of student attendance days (equivalent to 9 unexcused school days for a 180 day school year). The [Truancy Referral](#) should be submitted by the school when a student has accumulated 5% unexcused absences calculated from the total number of student attendance days, **this number can be less than 9.**



Participation Status

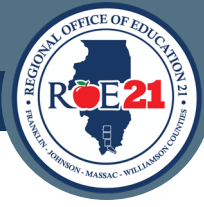
New Student Referral- First time student has been entered into the PACT program.

Continuing- A student received PACT program services the prior year and continues to receive services during the current year.

Re-entry- Student who previously received PACT program services exited from the program in prior years and returned during the current year.

If student is 'Re-Entering', enter the dates the student first entered and exited the program.

ONLY ONE TRUANCY REFERRAL PER STUDENT PER SCHOOL YEAR IS NEEDED



TRUANCY PROCESS (CONTINUED)

STEP ONE

Chronic Truancy Identified (Notification Letter)

After the truancy referral is submitted, a letter will be sent to the parent/guardian from the PACT Team as notification that their student has been referred to ROE #21 PACT Program.

STEP TWO

Intervention Meeting

If the student **accumulates** an additional 3-5 **unexcused** absences, the school should submit a [Step Two Meeting](#) request. This meeting, located at the school, will include the Truancy Interventionist, School Representative(s), parent/guardian, and the student. An Individual Service Plan (ISP) is developed during this meeting to identify barriers, address supports, and establish objectives and goals to increase student attendance and academic achievement.

STEP THREE

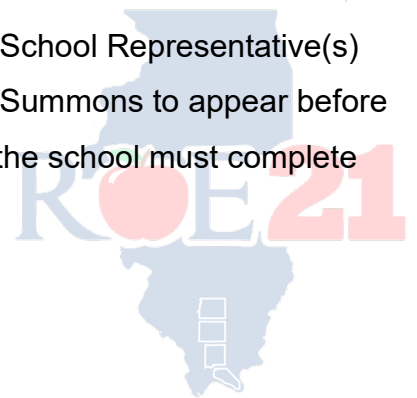
Truancy Review Board Meeting

If the student **accumulates** 10 or more **unexcused** absences, the school should submit a [Step Three Meeting](#) request. This request will initiate a Truancy Review Board Meeting (TRB). The TRB may include the Truancy Interventionist, ROE Personnel, Social Service Agencies, the State's Attorney, School Representative(s), parent/guardian(s), and the student. More information regarding the TRB can be found [HERE](#).

STEP FOUR

Court Summons

If truancy continues, the Truancy Interventionist in collaboration with School Representative(s) will submit a petition to file with the County State's Attorney. A Court Summons to appear before a judge will be issued to the parent/guardian(s). To initiate this step, the school must complete and notarize a [Request to File Truancy Petition](#).





HELPFUL HINTS FOR THE TRUANCY PROCESS

Contact Information:

It is important to complete each form submitted to the ROE with the most **CURRENT** and **COMPLETE** contact information for both student and parent/guardian(s). This will ensure the truancy process is not delayed.

Student Attendance:

Providing a current student attendance report from your student information system in each step of the process is required.

Interventions Attempted at the School Level:

Email all documentation of interventions attempted to the appropriate truancy interventionist. Include dates and responses from parent/guardian/student. This will enable ROE #21 Truancy Interventionists to assess appropriate level of intervention.

What happens to the referral?

The designated Truancy Interventionist receives the referral and determines a course of action based on the accumulated prior interventions and data provided by the schools. Due process requires specific written notification be given to the parent/guardian as well as documenting all prior attempts to resolve truancy, including, but not limited to phone calls, home visits, school conferences, home conferences, staffing, providing alternative programming, school counseling/social work, and community referrals for counseling.

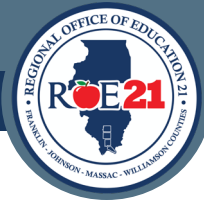
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[Sample Letters](#)

[Truancy Review Board FAQ](#)

[Truancy Intervention Program Guidelines for Schools](#)





- ☐ New Referral
☐ Continuing
☐ Re-entry

**Regional Office of Education #21
Partners Against Chronic Truancy Program
Individualized Service Plan (ISP)**

Student: _____ SIS#: _____

D.O.B _____ Gender: M F Grade: _____ School: _____

Referral Pre-Attendance: _____% Total Days Attended: _____ Unex: _____ Ex: _____ Sus: _____
Total Days Enrolled: _____

Post Attendance: _____% Total Days Attended: _____ Unex: _____ Ex: _____ Sus: _____
Total Days Enrolled: _____

Attendance Objective: Increase attendance by _____%
Truancy interventionist will track attendance weekly/biweekly.

Date Letter Sent: Step 1 _____ Step 2 _____ Step 3 _____

Current Services

Recommended Services

Provider

_____	Tutoring/ Academic Services	_____	_____
_____	Mentoring	_____	_____
_____	IEP	_____	_____
_____	Counseling	_____	_____
_____	Attendance Contract	_____	_____
_____	Drug/Alcohol Assessment	_____	_____
_____	Probation/Court Involvement	_____	_____
_____	Other	_____	_____

What is the nature of the Student's Attendance Barrier? (Please check all that apply)

Transportation Issue

- ___Distance too far to drive/walk
___Lack of funding for transportation
___Misses bus
___Inadequate transportation to school

Safety Issue

- ___Lives in or near unsafe neighborhood
___Unsafe school environment
___School challenges

Health Issue

- ___Pregnancy
___Medical/mental health complication
___Substance/alcohol use/abuse
___Handicap/disability

Academic/School Issue

- ___Difficulty with teacher
___Difficulty with school personnel
___Poor academic performance
___School discipline problem
___Suspended from school

Home Issue

- ___Tending to younger siblings
___Parent/Guardian mental/physical health issue
___Experiencing violence, abuse, or neglect in home
___Student is also a parent
___Homeless/McKinney-Vento eligible
___Domestic violence
___Runaway
___Dating violence
___Parent/guardian incarceration
___Parent/guardian separation

Student Characteristics

- ___Low achievement
___Low attendance
___High failure rate
___Parenthood
___Credit deficiencies
___Discipline referral
___Substance/alcohol problem

Social Issue

- ___Gender intimidation
___Gang activity
___Financial issues
___Difficult peer relationships
___Bullying
___Personal relationship

Other: _____



**Regional Office of Education #21
Partners Against Chronic Truancy Program
Individualized Service Plan (ISP)**

Page 2

Plan of Action: This student will be assigned to the academic courses required to meet his/her educational goals. The student will attend school Monday through Friday. In addition, the student will (select one or more):

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1. Cooperate with program and school staff | <input type="checkbox"/> 4. Attend and participate in all classes |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2. Complete assigned seatwork | <input type="checkbox"/> 5. Follow policies and procedures |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 3. Pass all academic courses | <input type="checkbox"/> 6. Attend individual and group counseling session as needed |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> 7. Join a school club or team |

Assessment Procedures: Student is achieving his or her learning objectives or individual outcomes through (select one or more):

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1. Improved student attendance | <input type="checkbox"/> 4. Passing end of unit tests |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2. Grade level advancement and/or credits earned | <input type="checkbox"/> 5. Participate in standardized testing as assigned |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 3. Communication with school counselor | <input type="checkbox"/> 6. Other _____ |

Academic Objectives: Measurable goal(s) that student will meet which are related to academics.

Behavioral/Attendance and/or Other Objectives: Measurable goal(s) that student will meet which are related to behavior or other.

Timeline: Specific plan for achieving objectives and outcomes (*to be determined by objectives, actions, and procedures above*):

Service Plan Participants' Signatures

Student: _____ Date: _____

Parent: _____ D.O.B: _____ Date: _____

School Representative: _____ Date: _____

Truancy Interventionist: _____ Date: _____

Other Representative: _____ Title: _____

Other Representative: _____ Title: _____

Other Representative: _____ Title: _____

Follow up is to be scheduled within one month

Date: _____ Time: _____

Completion of PACT Program Graduation: _____ Promotion: _____ Continuation: _____

Truancy Interventionist: _____ Date: _____



**REGIONAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION #21
Partners Against Chronic Truancy Program
ATTENDANCE CONTRACT**

**BETWEEN
REGIONAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION #21 PACT PROGRAM
and**

School

Parent(s)/Guardian(s)

Student(s)

Because we have been referred to the ROE #21 PACT Program and there is concern about our child(ren)'s absences and/or tardies to school, we agree to the following conditions:

1. The child(ren) in this family will arrive to school on time.
2. The child(ren) will come to school even if they are marginally ill. School personnel will determine if my child is ill enough to be sent home.
3. If the child(ren) must remain home because of illness, I will telephone the school to report this absence. I will do this on the morning of the absence.
 - a. I understand that if my child remains home because of illness, the school authorities shall/ may request a doctor's note for each day of absence. This medical excuse must contain the following information: [Medical Excuse Form](#)
 - i. the date on which the doctor saw the child;
 - ii. the diagnosis of the child's illness;
 - iii. the number of days for which the child should be out of school.
4. I will keep in close communication with the local school.
5. The school will notify the Regional Superintendent's office in writing of any Out of School Suspensions, Exclusions, or Pending Expulsions.

I (We) further understand that if these conditions are not followed, this contract can and will be used in a court of law as evidence of my failure to meet my legal responsibility.

Signed on this date: _____ at _____

Student

School Representative

Parent(s)/Guardian(s)

PACT Team Member



Medical Excuse Form

This form is required ONLY after five (5) medically excused absences (doctor's notes) have been used. Please fax the completed Medical Excuse Form to the student's school.

SECTION I: TO BE COMPLETED BY PARENT/GUARDIAN

Student Name _____ Date of Birth _____ School Name _____

I hereby authorize this health care provider to release the information requested on this form for my child listed above.

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date

SECTION II: TO BE COMPLETED BY A MEDICAL PROVIDER

Date of Appointment _____ Time of Appointment _____ Time In _____ Time Out _____

Reason of Appointment (check only one)

☐ Current Injury/Illness

☐ Routine Office Visit

☐ Follow-up Visit

☐ Orthodontic

☐ Dental

☐ Vision

☐ Emergency

☐ Tests

☐ Other _____

Was it medically necessary for this student to be absent on the date of appointment? Yes _____ No _____

Will this student need to be absent more than one day? Yes _____ No _____

If Yes, how long? _____ When may this student return to school? _____ (date)

Health Care Provider _____

Signature

Date

Name & Address _____

Phone _____

Fax _____

WHY ARE SO MANY STUDENTS MISSING SO MUCH SCHOOL?

There are many reasons students are absent and they fit into four broad categories: **Barriers, Negative School Experiences, Lack of Engagement and Misconceptions.**

Barriers are factors that impede a student from getting to school. While some barriers affect families in low-income communities more, others such as transportation cut across all income levels.

Negative School Experiences include a range of challenges, such as bullying or unfair disciplinary practices, that cause a student or a student's family to avoid school.

Lack of Engagement is the result of factors such as the absence of a relationship with at least one caring adult, or culturally relevant and engaging instruction, which results in a student feeling little or no connection to school.

Misconceptions are common ideas about attendance that families or students believe to be true but are not. For example, too often missing class is only seen as a problem if absences are unexcused.

BARRIERS	NEGATIVE SCHOOL EXPERIENCES	LACK OF ENGAGEMENT	MISCONCEPTIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Illness, both chronic and acute - physical and mental • Lack of health, mental health, vision, or dental care • Family responsibilities • Trauma • Depression or anxiety • Unsafe path to/from school • Poor Transportation • Housing and food insecurity • Frequent school changes • Involvement with child welfare or juvenile justice systems • Inequitable access to resources due to bias & discrimination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Struggling academically and behaviorally • Ineffective or harmful interventions • Bored • Social challenges/bullying • Suspensions and expulsions • Harsh, biased disciplinary practices especially for students of color • Negative attitudes of parents due to their own school experience • Undiagnosed disability • Lack of appropriate accommodations for disability • Pressure for academic success 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of or inequitable access to challenging, culturally responsive, engaging instruction & enrichment • Lack of or ineffective academic, emotional and behavioral support • No meaningful or negative relationships to adults in the school • Stronger ties with peers out of school than in school • Unwelcoming school climate • Failure to earn credits/no future plans • Many teacher absences or long-term substitutes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Absences are only a problem if they are unexcused • Missing 2 days per month doesn't affect learning • Sporadic absences aren't a problem • Attendance only matters in the older grades • Suspensions are not relevant

USED WITH PERMISSION FROM ATTENDANCE WORKS





Engaging Parents: Messaging Dos and Don'ts

Parents want their children to do well in school. However most don't know how many days their student is absent each year, and few understand the connection between strong attendance and achievement. One strategy for improving attendance is talking with families, guardians and other adults about absences.

Do

- **Make sure to approach the conversation with concern and optimism** rather than telling families what they're doing wrong. Almost all families want their child to be in school, but many don't understand the connection between too many absences and poor achievement. Assume that once they know better, they will do better.
- **Build upon the hopes and dreams of families for their children.** Families want the best for their children, including success in school and, for many, a college education. Let them know that strong attendance will enable their child to do well in school, graduate ready for the work force or college. Consider sharing your hopes and dreams for their children so families see that you care about their child's success.
- **Ensure families and students are aware of what they miss when students are absent, even in the early grades.** Help families understand that lessons build on one another—an absent student misses the chance to learn something that he will need in order to understand more difficult material later in the school year. The exercise [Washing the Elephant](#) helps parents understand how some things taught in the classroom can't be learned at home.
- **Families can be your best allies when it comes to getting their child to school every day.** Help them to identify the barriers that might keep their child from getting to school. What approaches can help them address these challenges? Consider how you can provide families access to or information about resources that address challenges such as recurring illness, mental health and transportation challenges. Families can also fill out [My Family's Help Bank](#) to identify family members, neighbors or others who could help get their child to school.
- **Help families recognize the importance of monitoring and tracking absences.** Research shows that parents with children missing more than two days a week often didn't know the number of absent days. Yet the same parents are often willing to track absences and take steps to improve attendance. You can offer parents the [Student Attendance Success Plan](#) to track their children's attendance and work with teachers to set goals. A [facilitator's guide](#) is available to show you how to explain the plan to parents.
- **Leverage trusted messengers with strong relationships to families.** Parents and students say they most trust teachers to talk with them about attendance. If you need support, consider reaching out to other members of the school staff who have developed a friendly relationship with the family who can talk with them about absences. If the family comes from a different cultural or language background, the school can contact a community partner for assistance.
- **Draw on the knowledge of social workers, probation officers, court-appointed special advocates and community services providers.** They can help you understand a student's past attendance patterns if she has transferred from another school. You'll also find out if the student is missing school because of court dates or other required appointments. These individuals can advocate that such appointments take place during non-school hours

Don't

- **Don't assume families know what good attendance is.** By and large, families and students don't know that missing two days a month over the course of a school year puts a student off-track for graduation.
- **Don't just rely on robocalls to let families know that their children have missed school.** Studies show that parents often don't listen to recorded phone calls from school.
- **Don't send impersonal, threatening letters** home which could add to the impression that no one at school cares about their children. Parents can be turned off by notices that use jargon or cite legal codes.
- **Don't jump to the conclusion that students miss school because their families don't care.** Most families believe their student is on track for graduation, even for students who are chronically absent.
- **Don't assume families are aware of the number of days their child has been absent.** Surveys show that almost all families underestimate their children's absences by half.