



Supporting Student Attendance and Engagement During *Hybrid or Remote Learning*

Connecticut State Department of Education
Department of Children and Families
Attendance Works

October 29, 2020



Webinar Practices

Attendee Reminders

- Thank you for attending!
- All attendees will be placed on mute for the duration of the webinar.
- Ask all questions in the “Question” feature box.
- The “Chat” feature will not be monitored for questions.
- There is time set aside to address questions.
- This session is being recorded and will be posted to the CSDE COVID-19 web page.



Today's Lead Presenters

**Dr. Miguel A.
Cardona**



Commissioner
Department of
Education

**Vannessa
Dorantes**

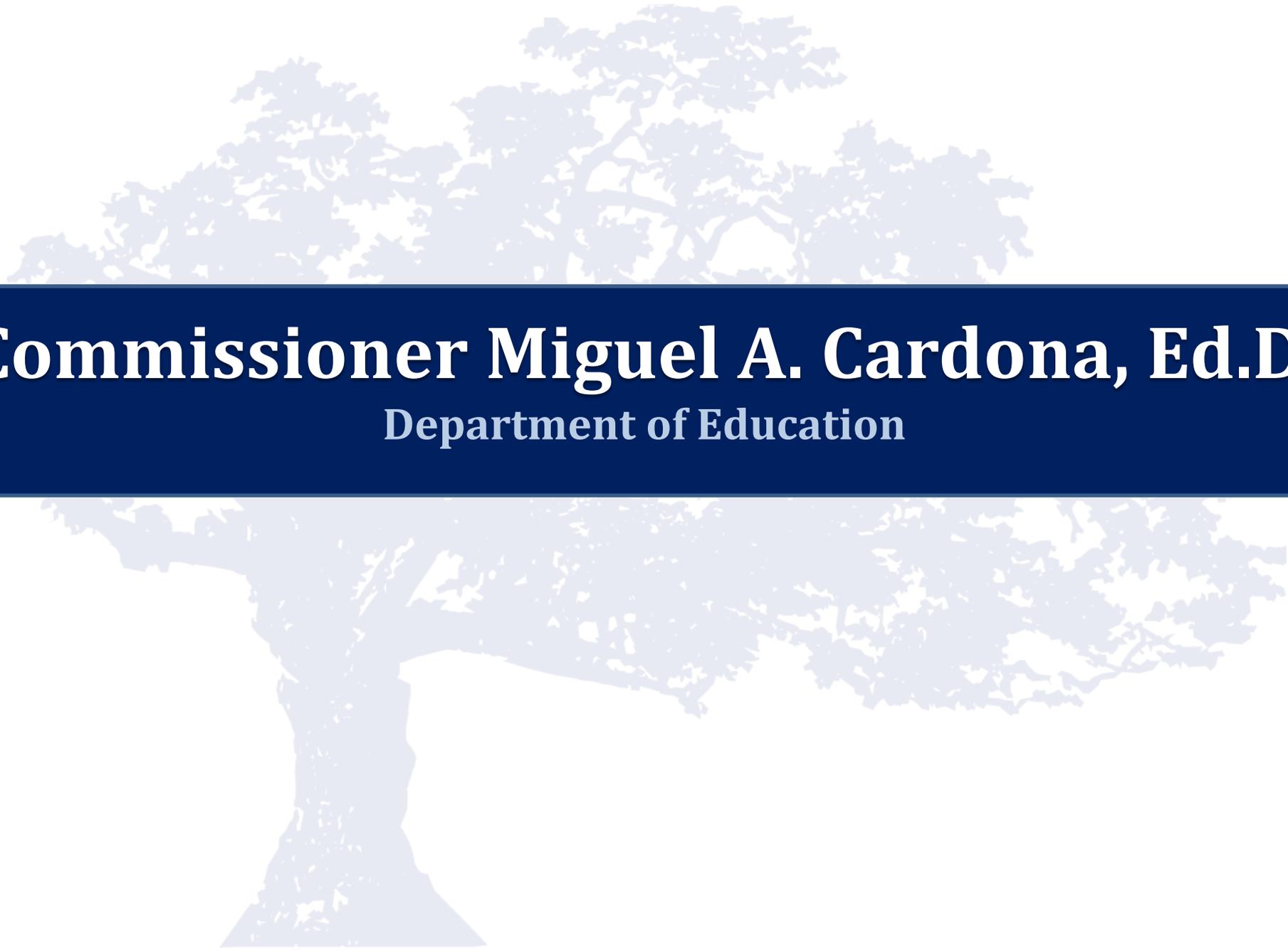


Commissioner
Department of
Children and
Families

**Hedy
Chang**



Executive
Director
Attendance
Works



Commissioner Miguel A. Cardona, Ed.D.
Department of Education

Student Attendance and Engagement in the COVID Era

Unique school attendance challenges:

- **Students** are facing more challenges than ever including: decreased socialization; new rules of engagement; isolation; new technology; and the need for more social emotional support
- **Families** are facing a multitude of priorities at home and work and have become true partners in their child's education
- **Schools** must adjust how and when attendance is taken and recorded and be flexible to the needs of families
- **Community providers** are learning to adapt to families needs



Student Attendance and Engagement Practices for Success

Key Practices

- **Work together** – schools, families & communities
- **Notice absences early** – to ensure preventive action is taken
- **Track/monitor absenteeism data** – to respond quickly if learning models are not working as planned
- **Identify successful practices** – that can be taken to scale
- **Connect to overall goals of equity and access** – to maintain level of urgency and proactive communication



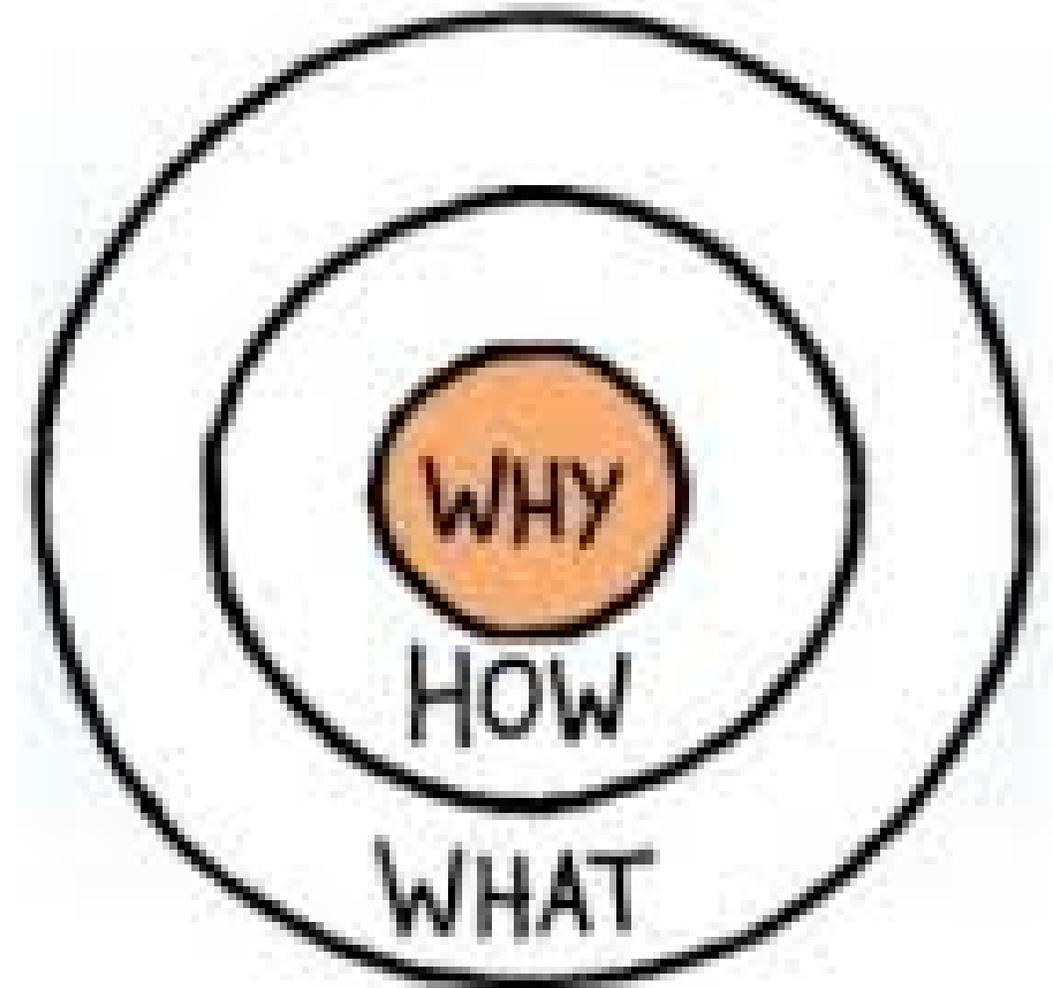
Student Attendance and Engagement Practices for Success

Keep revisiting the why!

-Why is this worth it?

-How are we accomplishing this?

-What are we recording?



Today's Webinar

Today's webinar is an opportunity for an open dialogue with partners:

Commissioner Vannessa Dorantes

- Trauma-informed approach to student safety and well-being during remote and hybrid learning

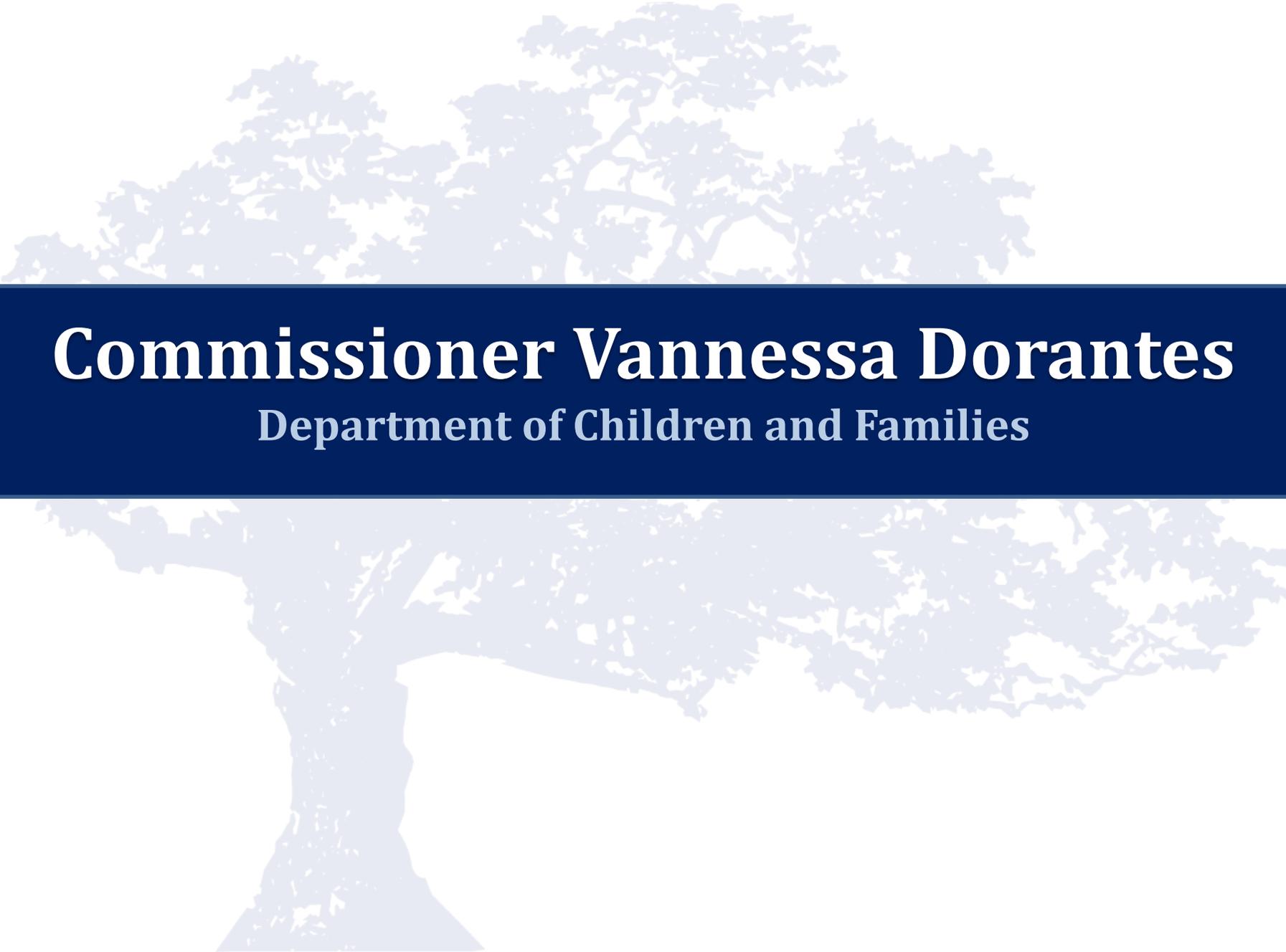
Hedy Chang and Deputy Commissioner Russell-Tucker

- Using attendance data to guide action during pandemic
- Identifying appropriate strategies to improve attendance
- Analyzing data to identify who needs support

Chief Performance Officer Ajit Gopalakrishnan

- Tracking daily attendance on remote days in 2020-21





Commissioner Vannessa Dorantes

Department of Children and Families

CT Department
of Children &
Families

Commissioner

Vannessa Dorantes

MANDATED REPORTERS
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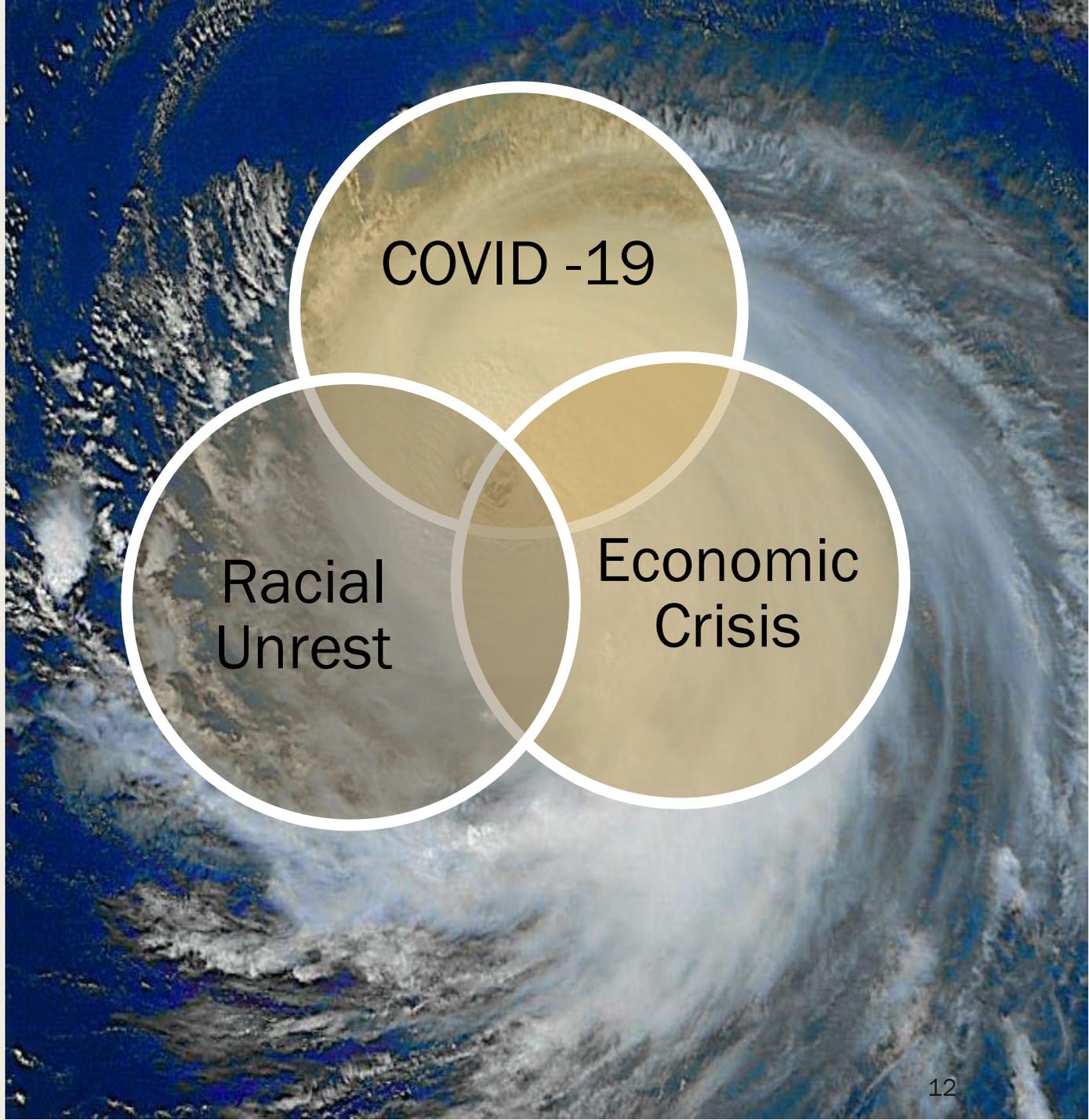
MANDATED SUPPORTERS

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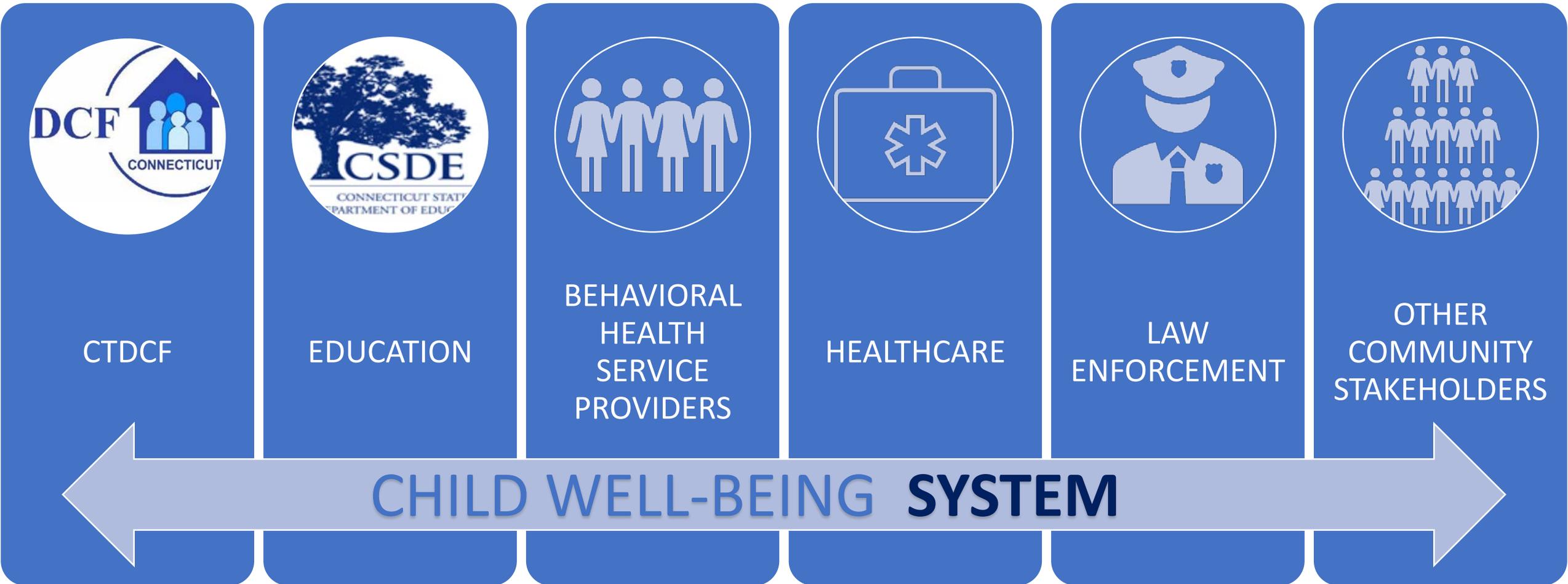




Where We Find Ourselves **Now**: In the (im)Perfect Storm



None of us do this alone



Assessing Child Abuse/Neglect in a Remote Environment

Build Rapport

- Disclosure is much more likely when there is a trusting relationship. Incorporate activities that foster connection.
- Check in on regularly on student's social, emotional, and physical well being.
- Without creating bias, what does the district know about the student based on previous interactions, effort and ability in school?

Assess

- What is the student's behavior, environment, affect, and general presentation representing?
- Does the student have special needs or increased vulnerability?
- Remote learning creates a unique opportunity to also develop a relationship with the caregiver for communication and assessment beyond academics.

Clarify

- Is there an explanation for the presenting concern from the student and caregiver? Are they congruent?
- How does the student indicate that the concern makes them feel?
- Is there resources that should follow up with the student, like a school based social worker? Do other professionals share your assessment?



ASSESSING SUPERVISION REMOTELY

- There is no state statute regarding age at which a child can be left home alone.
- Children should be able to identify a way to contact an appropriate caregiver (parent, neighbor, responsible sibling).
- Child's developmental level, access and proximity to resources, and level of comfort should be considered.



ASSESSING EDUCATIONAL NEGLECT REMOTELY

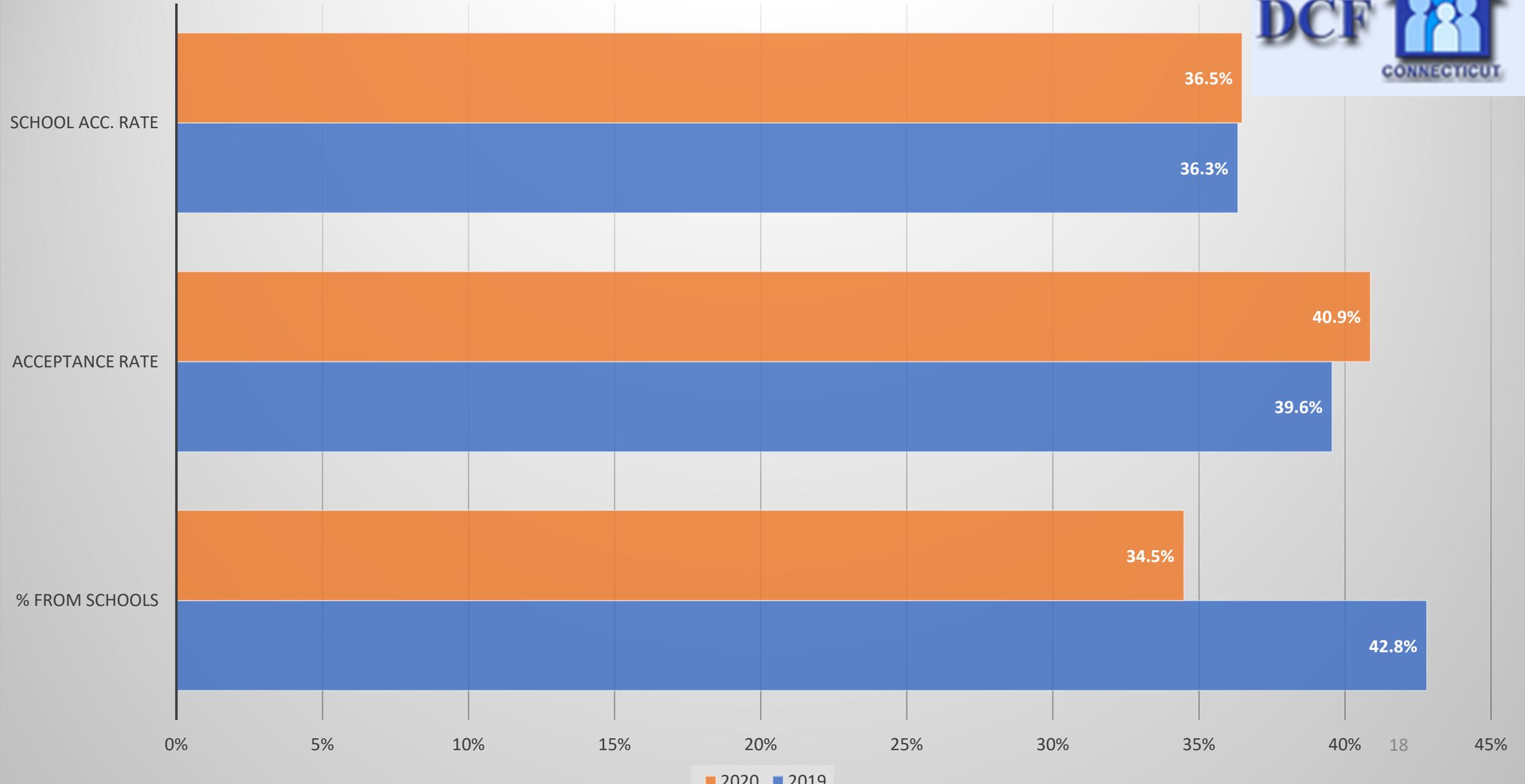
- What **barriers** are identified that are impacting access/participation?
- Is parent/caregiver **directly responsible** for those barriers and unwilling to resolve them?
- What **efforts** have been made by the district to identify the concerns and engage in **solution focused dialogue**?

If you have a reasonable suspicion of abuse/neglect of a child that is an immediate concern for the child's safety, please contact the DCF Careline at **1-800-842-2288.**

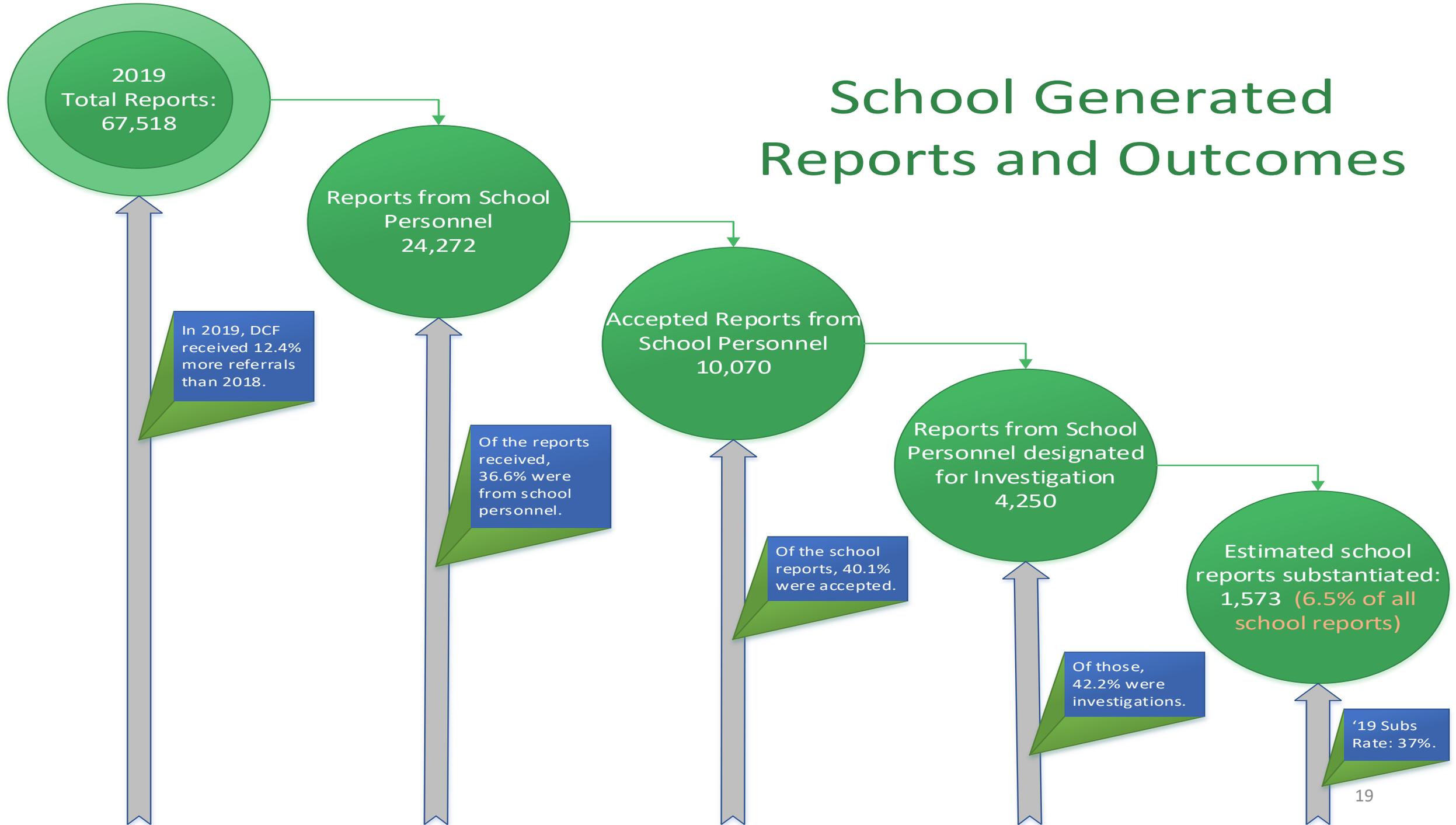


https://www.proprofs.com/training/course/?title=draft-dec-2019-connecticut-mandated-reporter-training-for-school-employees_5de7fde99ae99

45 Days Post Labor Day



School Generated Reports and Outcomes



DCF dedicated COVID 19 portal

<https://portal.ct.gov/DCF/COVID-19/HOME>



CT.gov Home / Department of Children and Families / COVID-19 INFORMATION and RESOURCES

- Adoption/Foster Care >
- Employment >
- FAQs >
- For Children >
- For Families >
- For Providers >
- For Teens >
- Mandated Reporter Training >
- Med Admin Cert Training >

Search Department of Children and Families

by Keyword

- Child Care
- Domestic Violence (IPV)
- Education
- Family Activities
- Food
- Housing/Eviction
- Income
- Health / Mental Health
- Substance Use
- Support Groups
- WIFI (FREE)

When it builds up... talk it out.

Call: 1-833-258-5011
Visit: www.talkitoutct.com
Watch-TV PSA: [TalkItOutCT](#) / [TalkItOutCT \(Spanish\)](#)
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When it builds up, talk it out.
1-833-258-5011
TalkItOutCT.com

- Seeking Statewide Resources? 2-1-1
- COVID-19 FAMILY RESOURCES
- Contact DCF
- COVID-19 Correspondence
- COVID-19 Newsletters
- Commissioner Videos

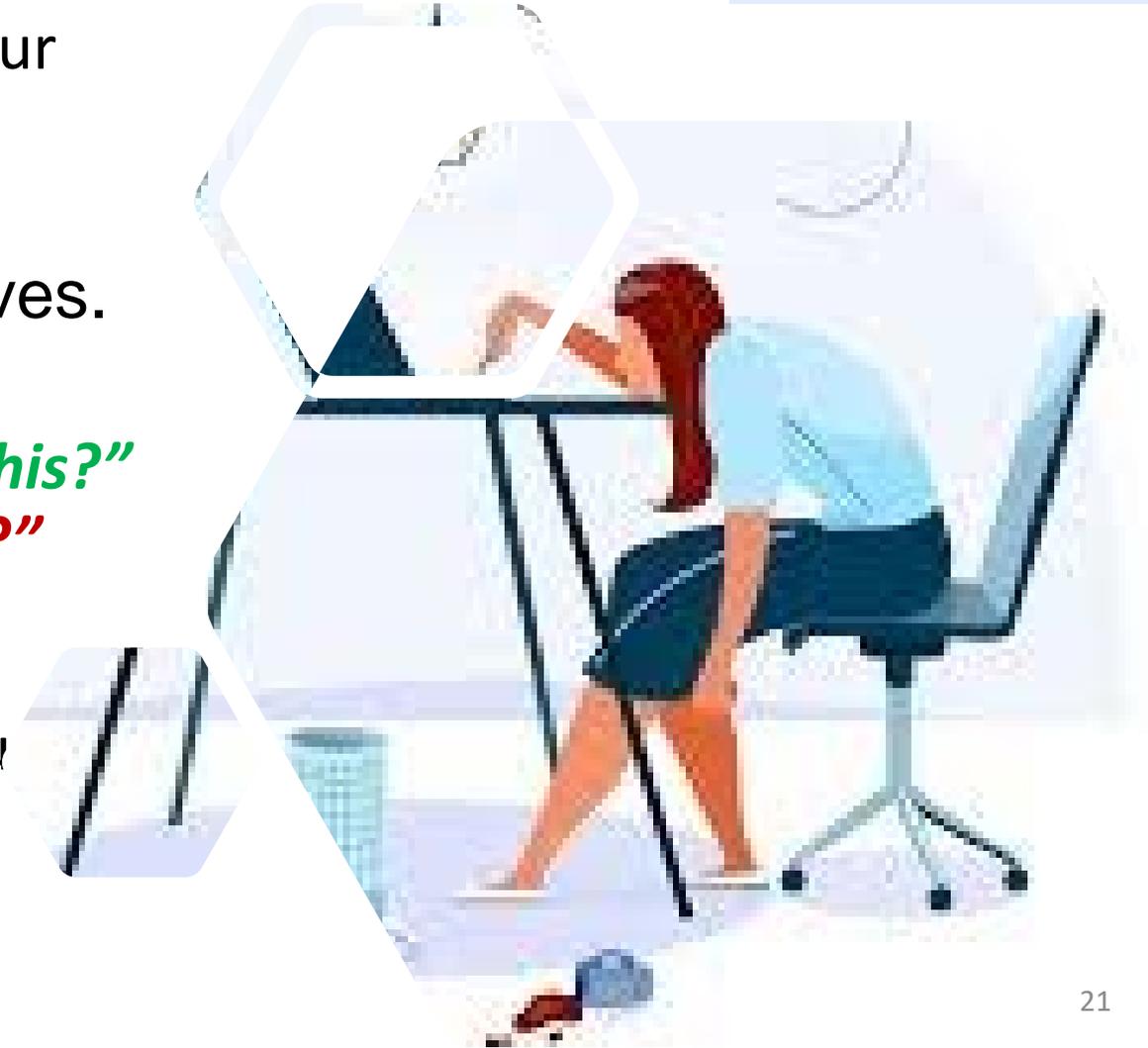


OVER 21,000 unique urls have visited

Educator/Student Relational Interactions



- Go slowly in your engagement with your students.
- Take a stance of *“not knowing.”* Students are the experts on their lives. **They have wisdom to share.**
- *“How are you getting through all of this?”* rather than, *“What’s wrong with you?”*
- **Listen more**
- **Co-regulate** through empathy and tune in verbally and non-verbally.
- Stay **compassionate** and **curious**



Distance Learning CT DCF Foster Parent Feedback

*

*Includes all FosterCare types
(core, kin/relative & tfc)*

Nearly all participated in distance learning and a majority of caretakers reported feeling somewhat to extremely comfortable; smaller percentage felt less equipped to support distance learning for students

About 95% of respondents indicated students had access to equipment necessary to participate in distance learning; a small number had primarily packet instruction and no need for equipment;

Majority of students engaged in distant learning reported spending 2 or more hours/day engaged (online, packets, teacher-led instruction)

Small percentage did not participate or participated sporadically
Primary barriers related to students' unwillingness to engage
Students tended to be of high school age

Nearly all students promoted to the next grade; those that did not tended to be of high school age (may have been struggling prior to remote learning)
More than 60% received pass/fail vs. letter grades

Majority of students were using school equipment (remainder had their own or used foster parent equipment)

Educator/Student Relational Interactions



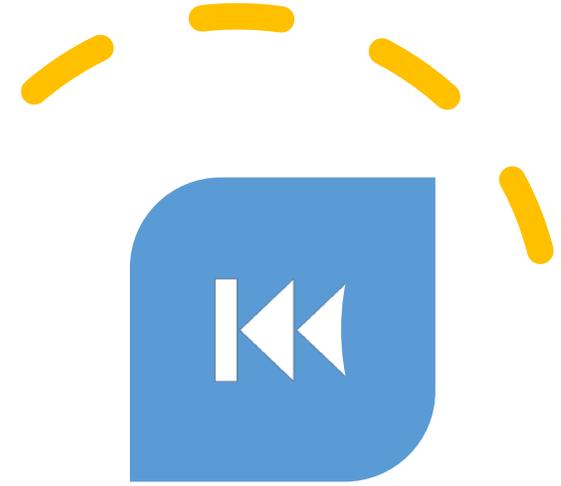
USE OPEN-ENDED
QUESTIONS THAT
INVITE CURIOSITY AND
SELF-REFLECTION



NOTICE WHEN
EMOTIONS QUICKLY
SHIFT, WHICH OFTEN
INDICATES THAT IMPLICIT
TRAUMA MEMORIES
HAVE BEEN ACTIVATED.



STAY IN THE PRESENT
MOMENT AND
RESPOND WITH
COMPASSION AND
ACCEPTANCE.



WHEN YOU MAKE A
MISTAKE—ACKNOWLEDGE,
APOLOGIZE, AND REWIND,
MODELING EXPRESSION OF
VULNERABILITY, COURAGE,
AND HONESTY.



SPHERES OF SYSTEMIC RACIALIZATION

STRUCTURAL:

Dynamic, cumulative among institutions, durable

INSTITUTIONAL:

Bias in policies & practices in a school, agency, etc

INTERPERSONAL:

Bigotry and implicit bias between individuals

INTERNALIZED:

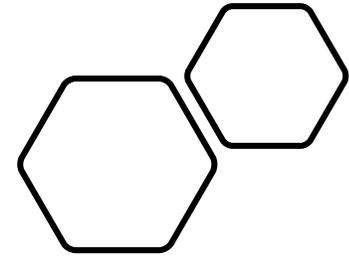
Beliefs within individuals, including stereotype threat

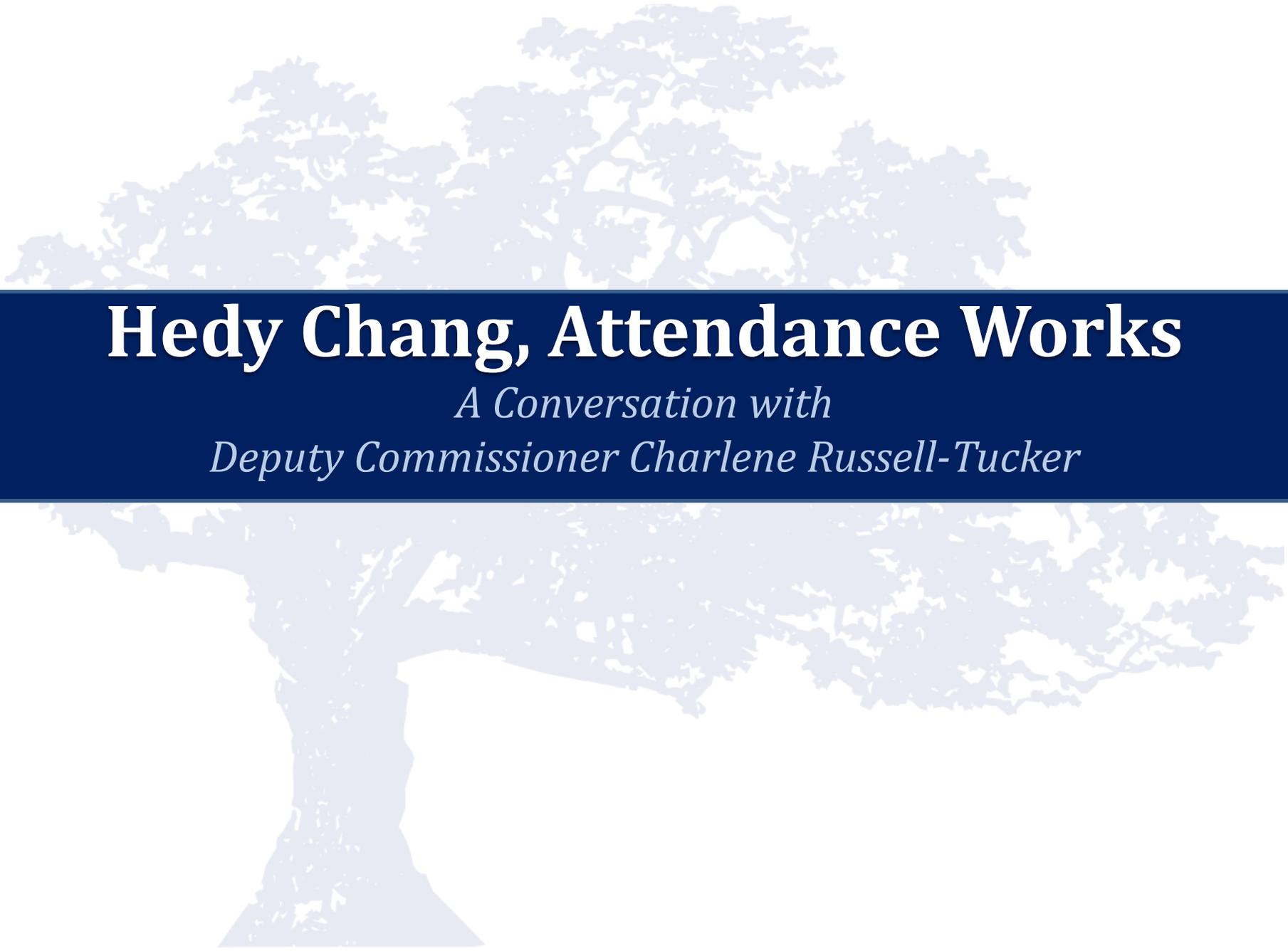


Opportunity for institutional adjustments to how we interact with those we serve...

[https://www.racialequitytools.org/resourcefiles/Powell Systems Thinking Structural Race Overview.pdf](https://www.racialequitytools.org/resourcefiles/Powell_Systems_Thinking_Structural_Race_Overview.pdf)

VIRUS.





Hedy Chang, Attendance Works

*A Conversation with
Deputy Commissioner Charlene Russell-Tucker*

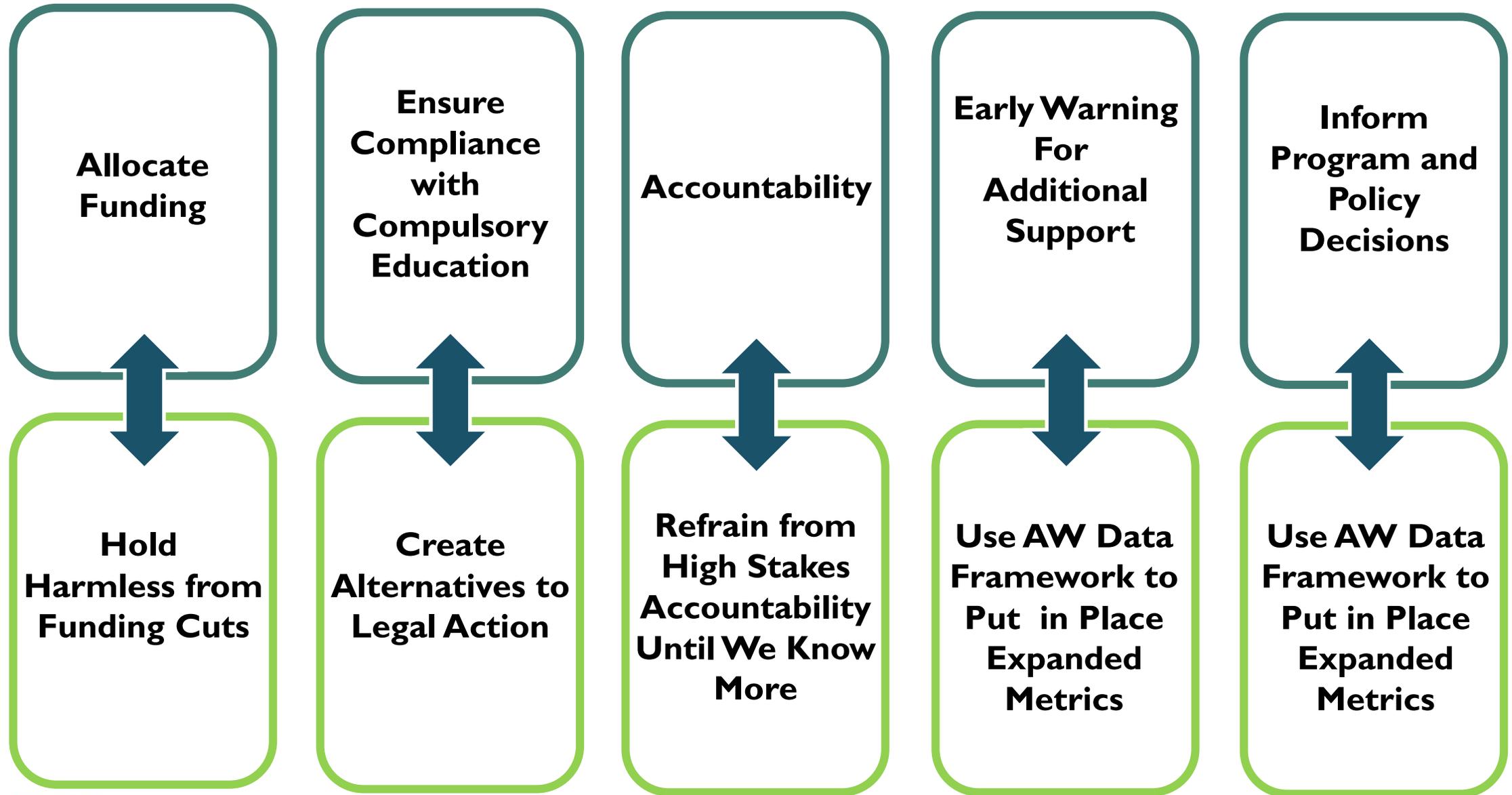
Monitoring Absenteeism During COVID-19

Attendance Works

October 29, 2020

**Why should we care about
attendance and absenteeism?**

The Multiple Purposes for Attendance Data Should Guide Action During Covid 19

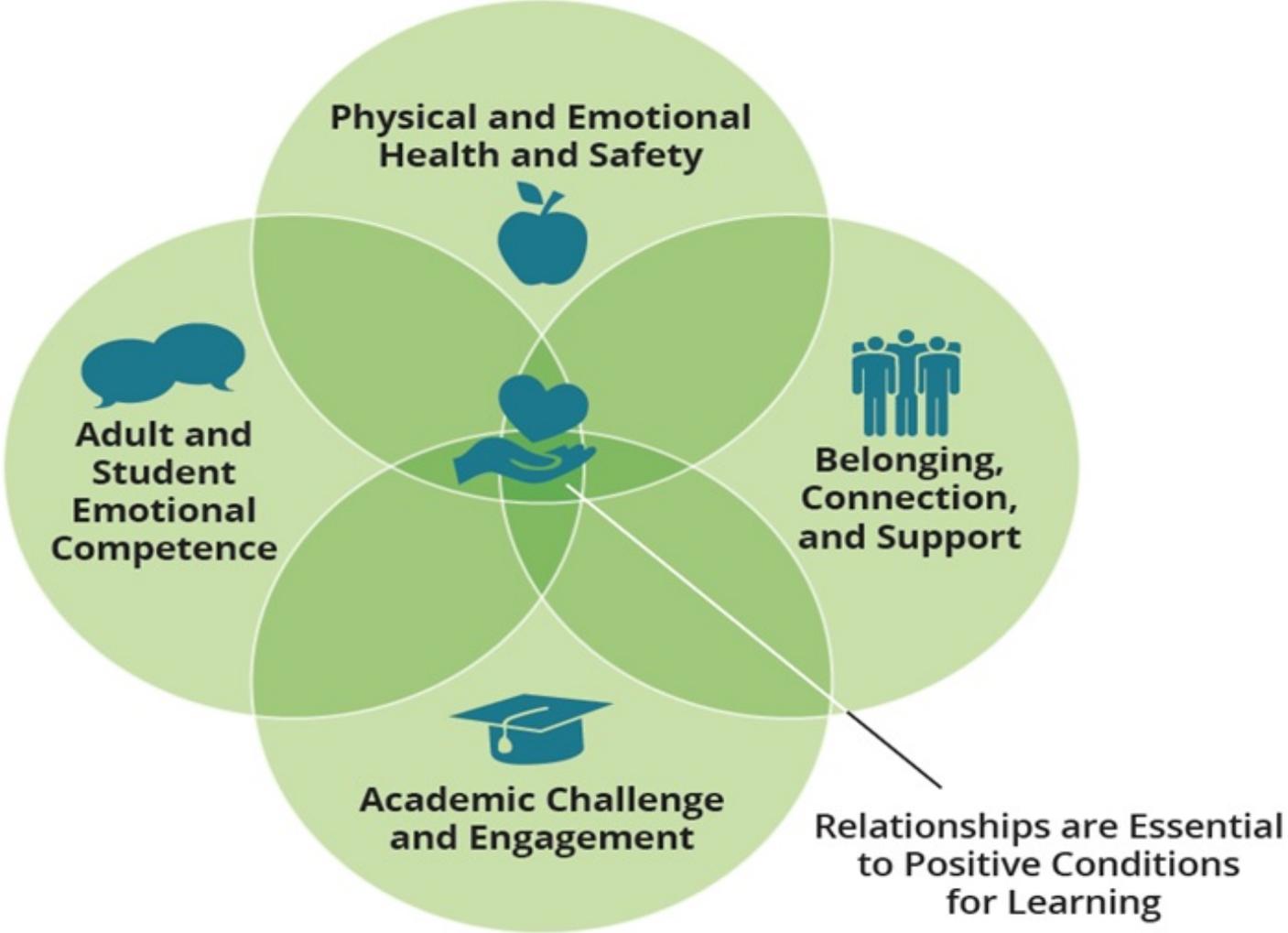




Why Should We Care?

**Absenteeism is a *leading* indicator
and a *cause* of educational
inequity**

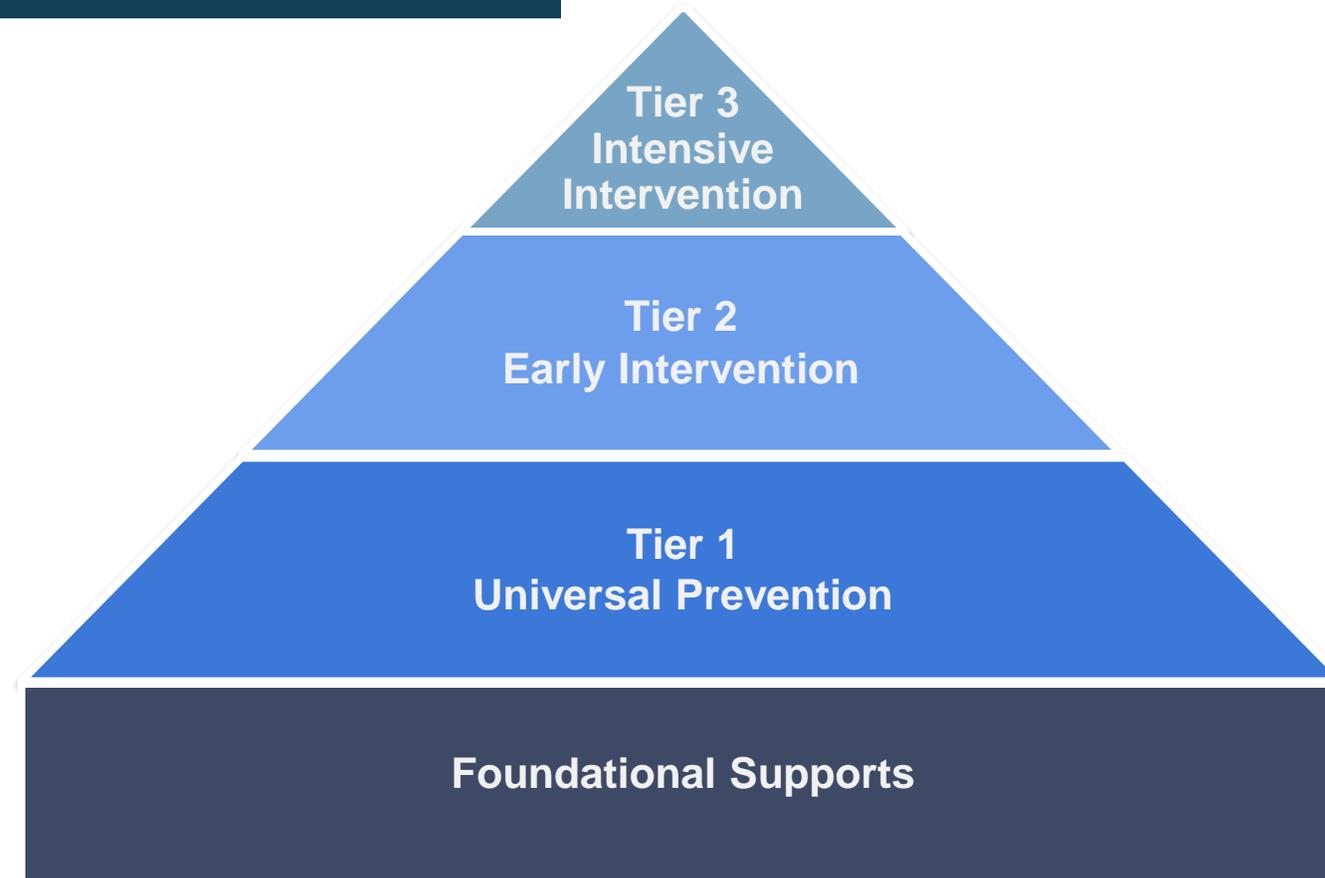
Absenteeism is an Early Warning that Positive Conditions for Learning Are Missing = Whether Classes Are In Person, Distance or Blended



What can we do to
improve attendance?



Use Data to Support an Integrated Multi-tiered System of Support





Foundational Supports are Building Blocks of Good Schools that Promote Attendance

Physically healthy learning environment	Enrichment activities and clubs (with virtual options)	Positive relationships between school staff, students and families	Support for all families to facilitate learning at home
Access to tech equipment and connectivity	Access to Learning Supports	Predictable daily/weekly routines, rituals and celebrations	A culture of continuous improvement
Welcoming, socially-emotionally safe, trauma-informed school climate	Home rooms and/or Advisory (with virtual options)	A schedule of classes and where/how they are held	Active engagement of parents and students in planning and problem solving
Foundational Supports			



Which Tier	Examples of Tiered Distance / Blended Learning Practices
Tier 3 Intensive Intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Intensive outreach to locate student and family and assess situation• Coordinated case management with multiple systems including child welfare, mental health, health, housing/homelessness and juvenile justice (as a last resort)
Tier 2 Early Intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Using absenteeism data to activate targeted supports• Virtual/physically distanced family meeting or home visit when absences add-up• Individual attendance plan developed with families and students• Additional tech support and training for families and students• Mentoring (in-person and virtual)• Tailored physical and mental health supports• Prioritizing participation in expanded learning
Tier 1 Universal Prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Clear, concise and consistent communication about schedules and expectations• Community building to create belonging and connection• Taking attendance in a caring manner• Personalized outreach and communication to families when students are absent• Recognition of good and improved attendance• Individual wellness check and connectivity assessments• Facilitate access to food, health/telehealth and supports for other basic needs• Regular monitoring of attendance data to activate supports and identify trends



Which Tier

What activates support? When?

Tier 3 Intensive Intervention

What activates intensive intervention? Suggested criteria:

- Missing 20% or more of school in prior school year before closure (severely chronically absent)
- Missing 20% or more of distance learning opportunities during closure in spring 2020 (this is assuming the school district took attendance)
- Missing 20% or more of learning opportunities in a month during current year
- Students who already qualify for McKinney-Vento services, who are in foster care, or involved in juvenile justice
- Non-responsive to Tier 2 interventions and efforts of re-engagement

Who coordinates? Who is involved? Social Workers? Staff of public agencies, etc.?

Tier 2 Early Intervention

What activates early intervention? Suggested criteria:

- Missing 10-19% of school in prior school year before closure
- Missing 10-19% of distance learning opportunities during closure in spring 2020 (this is assuming the school district took attendance)
- Missing 10% of learning opportunities in a month during current year
- Lost contact with student/family – wellness check (Immediate action required)
- *Note that your state may also set a threshold for outreach, e.g. California mandates tiered interventions when students miss 60% in a week.*

Who coordinates? Who is involved? Attendance staff? Counselors? Nurses? Community partners? Advisory Teachers? Social work interns?

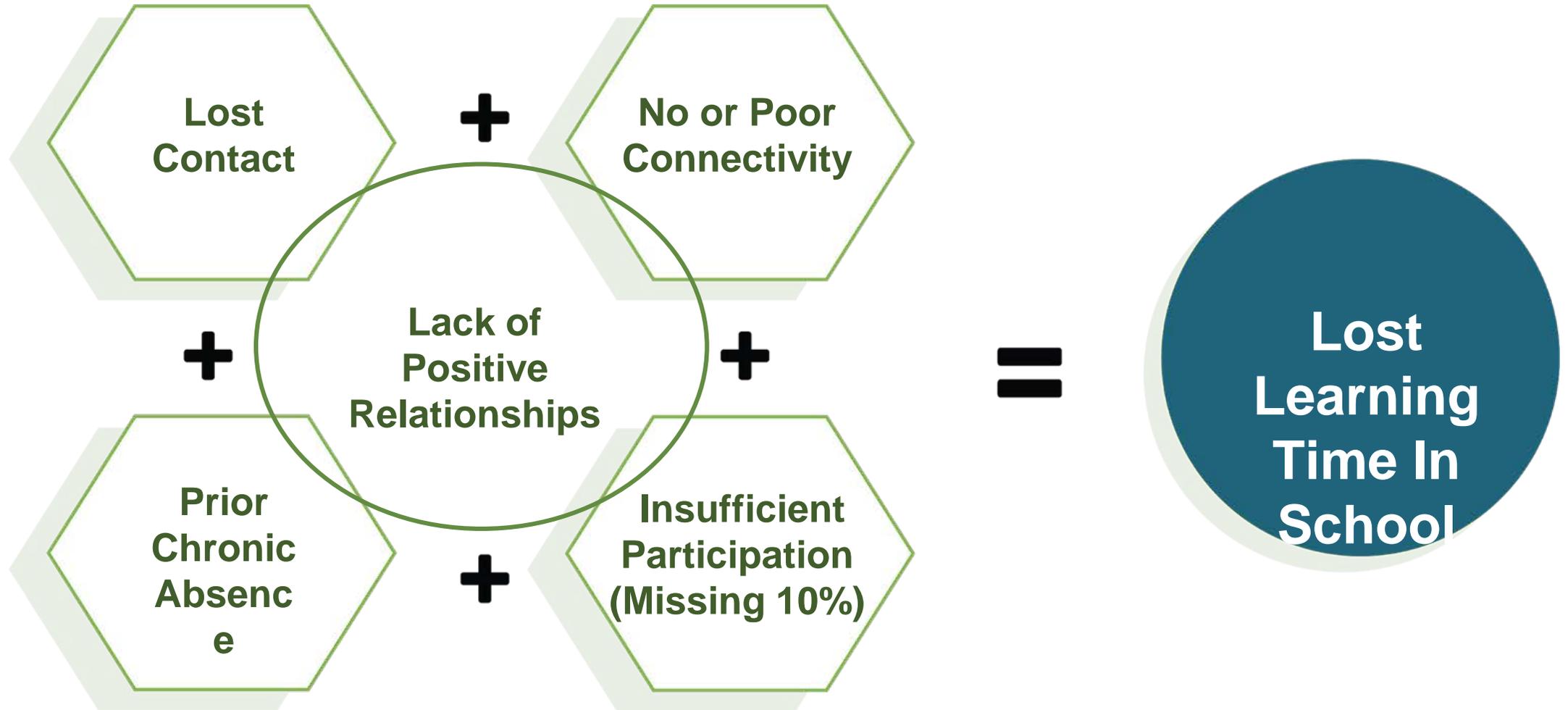
Tier 1 Universal Prevention

What activates universal prevention? All students enrolled in school and district

Who coordinates? Who is involved? District, School administrators/leaders, Teachers/staff with the support of technology, Expanded learning partners, Local businesses?

How can we use data to identify
who needs support?

Identifying Students At Risk Due to Lack of Opportunity to Learn



Additional Metrics for Ensuring Attendance/ Opportunity To Learn

Contact

Working contact information exists for each enrolled student and their family.

Connectivity

Students and families have access to technology (computer, software and internet access) and school staff are equipped to support digital literacy.

Relationships

Students and families feel connected, supported and engaged in reciprocal, problem-solving relationships.

Participation

The extent to which students show up and complete learning activities.



Use Data to Identify and Address Inequities

- Analyze contact, connectivity, relationships and participation data overall, broken down by school, grade, race/ethnicity, home language, disability and zip code.
- Track participation (attendance and absence) by mode of instruction: in person, synchronous and asynchronous.
- Use qualitative information, especially drawing upon the perspectives of students and families, to deepen an understanding of the contributing factors and how they might be addressed.
- Determine how to address unequal access to resources.



Examining Data During The First Months Of School

1. What does data for attendance, participation, connectivity **and** chronic absence reveal for the first month of school? Overall and disaggregated by ethnicity, student population, grade and school?
2. How is attendance being defined ? What allows a student to be counted as present especially in remote learning whether it is synchronous or asynchronous? (If it is a low bar, it can mask a lack of a meaningful opportunity to learn. If data is confusing, it could reflect problems with data collection)
3. How often is attendance taken? Is it daily?
4. How many absences activate early intervention and prevention?



Ajit Gopalakrishnan

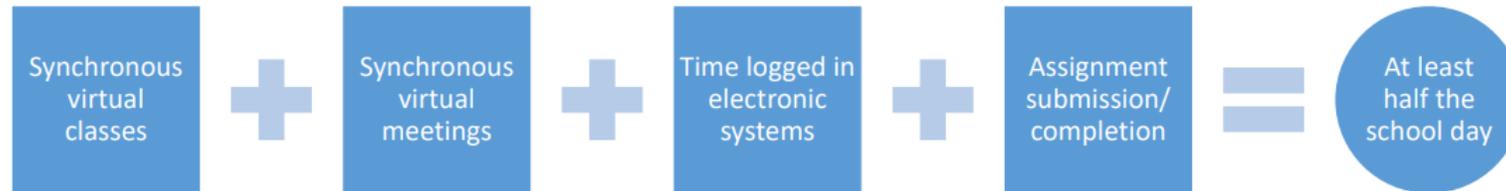
Chief Performance Officer

Tracking Daily Attendance on Remote Days in 2020-21

State Board of Education Policy (2008):

“A student is considered to be ‘in attendance’ if present at his/her assigned school, or an activity sponsored by the school (e.g., field trip), for at least half of the regular school day.”

A remote student can be considered as being ‘in attendance’ on a particular day if the total time spent on one or more of the following activities equals at least half the school day.



Synchronous virtual classes are live classes that are streamed real time to students using a videoconferencing platform like Google Meets, Zoom, Microsoft Teams, etc.

Synchronous virtual meetings may be with a teacher, counselor, social worker, paraprofessional, etc. using a videoconferencing platform or via telephone. They may be homeroom opportunities, daily routine check-ins, or other synchronous conversations.

Time logged in electronic systems can be used to identify *any time over and above the synchronous virtual classes and meetings* that the student may have participated in during the school day.

Assignment submission/completion time can be determined by the teacher by starting with an estimate of time it will take for a typical student to submit/complete that assignment, and using that estimate to gauge the attendance time for the day that should be allotted to each student.

Notes:

- If a student is absent on a given day (either in-person or remote), they cannot make up for that absence on another day.
- Districts should track membership and attendance *separately* for a student’s in-person vs remote days.

This guidance is on the CSDE website at:

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Digest/2020-21/Tracking-Attendance-On-Remote-Days-For-State-Reporting.pdf>

Frequently Asked Questions

This FAQ pertains to data collection and state reporting of attendance data. Regular school attendance and overall student safety and well-being are vital for laying a foundation for success during the school year. See Addendum #14 for guidance regarding support student attendance and engagement during hybrid or remote learning.

1. *Is attendance in synchronous virtual classes required by the CSDE for a student to be counted as being “in attendance” on remote days?*

No. The CSDE does not require that a student be present in synchronous virtual classes to be counted as “in attendance” on remote days for state reporting purposes. This flexibility is designed to allow students and families who may have difficulty attending synchronous virtual classes to demonstrate presence through other means (e.g., meetings with teachers, assignment submission/completion). Students receiving special education or support under a Section 504 Plan may participate in classes in a manner determined appropriate by the student’s planning and placement team or Section 504 Team.

2. *Can a district require that students attend synchronous virtual classes in order to be considered as “in attendance”?*

No. While the district may adopt such a general expectation, the CSDE expects districts to allow for legitimate exceptions where a student may be unable to attend synchronous virtual classes (e.g., parent work-life responsibilities, power outage, Internet bandwidth, documented disability).

3. *Does a student need to complete some time in all four approaches, every day, to be considered as “in attendance”?*

No. For example, one remote student may meet the ½ day threshold entirely with synchronous classes without submitting/completing any assignment, while another remote student may meet the ½ day threshold entirely based on assignment submission/completion without attending even a single synchronous class. The total time spent on all four components on a remote day should equal at least ½ day for the student to be reported as “in attendance” for state reporting. Students with disabilities may have modified/flexible attendance requirements as part of their IEP, Learning Model IEP Implementation Plan, or Section 504 plan.

4. *When should attendance be recorded for remote days?*

Since students may demonstrate presence through asynchronous methods (e.g., assignment submission/completion) at any time during the day including after school hours, and given that some students may not be able to participate in synchronous virtual classes, it is strongly recommended that attendance on remote days be recorded on the following day so all students have a chance to submit/complete work.

5. *Can a student who otherwise should have attended school in-person on a given day, be permitted to participate remotely and counted as being “in attendance” for that specific day?*

Yes, but within reason. Knowing which students will attend in-person or remotely on any given school day is critical for educators to plan instruction and for the school building to effectively manage health and safety protocols. However, there are legitimate situations when an in-person student can be permitted to switch to learning remotely for one or more school days. For example, the student may need to quarantine for two weeks due to potential contact with a positive COVID case, or the student may have a concerning symptom making it reasonable for the parent to determine that it is best to keep the student home for monitoring. In such situations, the district may authorize a switch to remote learning for that student for a specific day or days; such a student who meets the ½ day attendance threshold on those remote days can be reported as “in attendance.” Such flexibility will allow the student to remain engaged with the learning. However, the CSDE recommends that districts construe this flexibility narrowly and establish clear protocols for situations that warrant such a shift (e.g., district required quarantining, written authorization from parent regarding illness symptoms). Districts may choose to offer this flexibility to students for reasons beyond health/safety and illness symptoms; however, in those instances, districts are strongly advised to establish clear, quantifiable limits on such flexibility (e.g., no more than three instances during the year) so as to not create a situation where students are choosing the days they wish to attend school in-person.



Questions

Connect with Us!

Learn more about attendance and engagement:

Adapt, Advance, Achieve: Connecticut's Plan to Learn and Grow Together
[Addendum 14: Supporting Student Attendance and Engagement during Hybrid or Remote Learning](#)

[CSDE Chronic Absence Webpage](#)

Connect with CSDE for more information on student attendance and engagement:



[Facebook.com/ctdepartmentofeducation](https://www.facebook.com/ctdepartmentofeducation)



<http://www.ct.gov/sde>



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