



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION



TO: Superintendents of Schools

FROM: Dr. Dianna R. Wentzell, Commissioner of Education *DW*

DATE: April 19, 2017

SUBJECT: Reducing Chronic Absence in Connecticut's Schools: A Prevention and Intervention Guide for Schools and Districts

The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) is pleased to announce a new guidance document, [*Reducing Chronic Absence in Connecticut Schools: A Prevention and Intervention Guide for Schools and Districts*](#). The Prevention and Intervention Guide is developed, in collaboration with the Interagency Council for Ending the Achievement Gap, in response to Public Act 15-225 (codified as Connecticut General Statutes, Section 10-198d). Its purpose is to support the work in districts, schools, and communities to develop and implement effective strategies to reduce chronic absence. This work directly aligns with the Connecticut State Board of Education's Five-year Comprehensive Plan, [*Ensuring Equity and Excellence for All Connecticut Schools*](#).

The state is making progress reducing chronic absence rates. This is a clear sign that all of our collaborative efforts to keep students across Connecticut in school and engaged are having a positive impact. The latest data show that the number of chronically absent students dropped to 9.6 percent in 2015-16, down from 10.6 percent the year before and down from a high of 11.5 percent in 2012-13. The decline in Connecticut's chronic absence rate means that over 10,000 more students are attending school on a daily basis than four years ago.

There is still much work to be done. In 2015-16, there were 50,376 students who were chronically absent, many from subgroups that research has shown to underperform academically. The data show that:

- Chronic absence rates for students eligible for free meals is more than three times that of those who are ineligible for lunch subsidies; and
- English Language Learners and Students with Disabilities continue to exhibit substantially higher chronic absence rates when compared to their general education peers.

Organized in an easy-to-read manner, this guide is rich with links to research, resources, and toolkits. It answers the following questions:

- What is chronic absence?
- Why are students chronically absent?
- Why is chronic absence an important issue for Connecticut?
- How do we know if chronic absence is affecting learning in our district?
- What can a district do to improve attendance?
- What can schools do to improve attendance?
- Who else can be involved with reducing chronic absence?

It also provides examples of local strategies, state and national resources and a multi-tiered approach to addressing chronic absence. A future webinar opportunity on the guide is being planned.

The Connecticut State Department of Education extends its thanks to the contributors and reviewers of the Prevention and Intervention Guide including Attendance Works, members of the Chronic Absenteeism Strategic Action Group, local education officials, and parent and community organizations.

Additional information to improve attendance can be found on the CSDE [Chronic Absenteeism webpage](#). If you have questions or need additional information, please contact:

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