



CONNECTICUT STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

# Talk Tuesdays

Student Attendance, Engagement, and Support Series

January 24, 2023

Developed by the CSDE in collaboration with Attendance Works & SERC



STATE EDUCATION RESOURCE CENTER

EQUITY | EXCELLENCE | EDUCATION

# Today's Agenda

## **Welcome**

Stephen Proffitt and Christine Kuehlewind, State Education Resource Center (SERC)

## **What's New at CSDE and Partners**

Kari Sullivan Custer, Attendance & Engagement Consultant, CSDE

## **Educational Neglect and Truancy**

Lisa Daymonde, LMSW, the Carline Director at the CT Department of Children and Families

Ed Eckert, CT-Kind, CT Department of Children and Families

Michele Laboy, MSW, CT Department of Children and Families

## **Positive Interventions for Addressing Truancy**

Susan Lauria, Stamford Youth Services

Mathew Laskowski, Executive Director of Access and Opportunity, Stamford Public Schools

## **Upcoming Attendance & Engagement Meetings**

Christine Kuehlewind, SERC



# What's New at CSDE

January 23, 2023

• [Special Education Excess Cost Grant \(SEECG\) and One-Time Data Collection for Special Education Costs](#)

January 19, 2023

• [CSDE's Ground-Breaking Research Collaborative Issues New Report Showing Positive Effects of Home Visits on Student Attendance](#)

• [OPTIONAL: Customizable Alternative Income Form Template for Districts Not Collecting School Meals Applications](#)

• [Ihealth Rapid Antigen Tests Receive Extensions of Expiration](#)

• [Schools: Contact Your Nearest CT Regulated Waste Facility to Handle Disposal of Expired COVID-19 Test Kits](#)

[Superintendent's Digest  
\(ct.gov\)](#)



# What's New at CSDE

January 17, 2023

- [Model Enrollment Policy](#)
- [2023-24 State Board of Education Student Member Search](#)
- [Connecticut Students Selected for United States Senate Youth Program \(USSYP\)](#)

January 9, 2023

- [New Year — New Look! CSDE Launches New Bureau of Certification Website](#)
- [OCR Releases New Fact Sheet on Title VI Protection from Discrimination Based on Shared Ancestry or Ethnic Characteristics](#)
- [On behalf of the Department of Children and Families: Human Trafficking Prevention Month - January 2023](#)
- [On behalf of the CT Department of Motor Vehicles: Annual Teen Safe Driving Video Contest](#)

[Superintendent's Digest](#)  
[\(ct.gov\)](#)





# Talk Tuesday



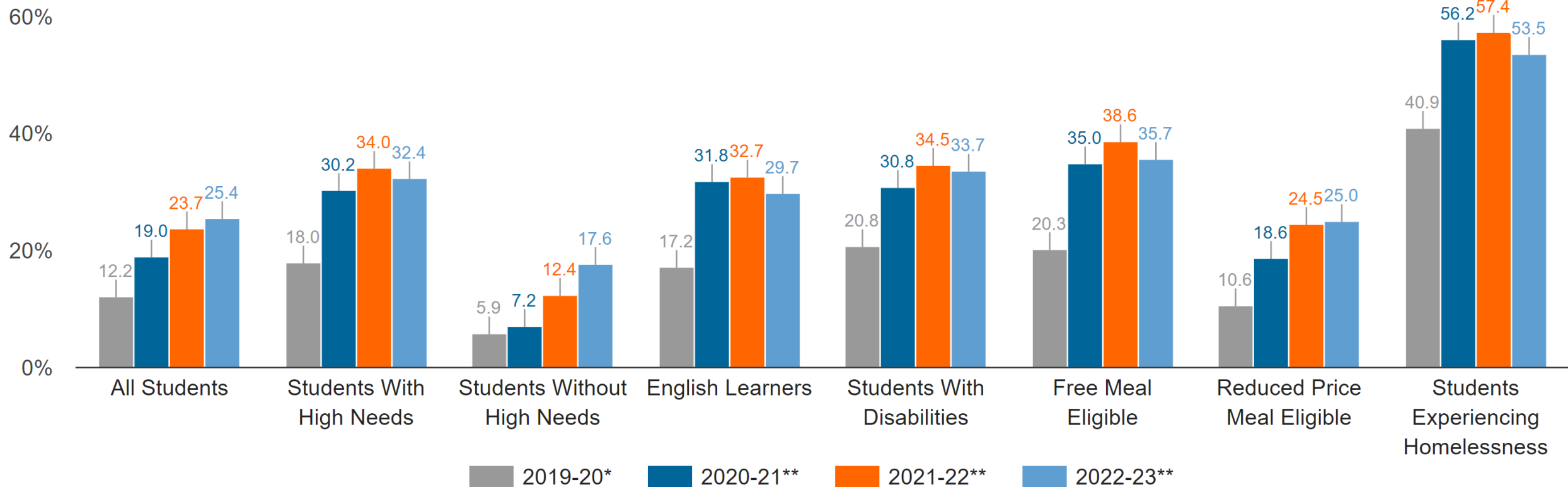
## Chronic Absence Data



# Statewide Trends in Chronic Absence



Percentage of Students Chronically Absent by Student Group (YTD as of November 2022 compared to 2021-22, 2020-2021, and 2019-20)

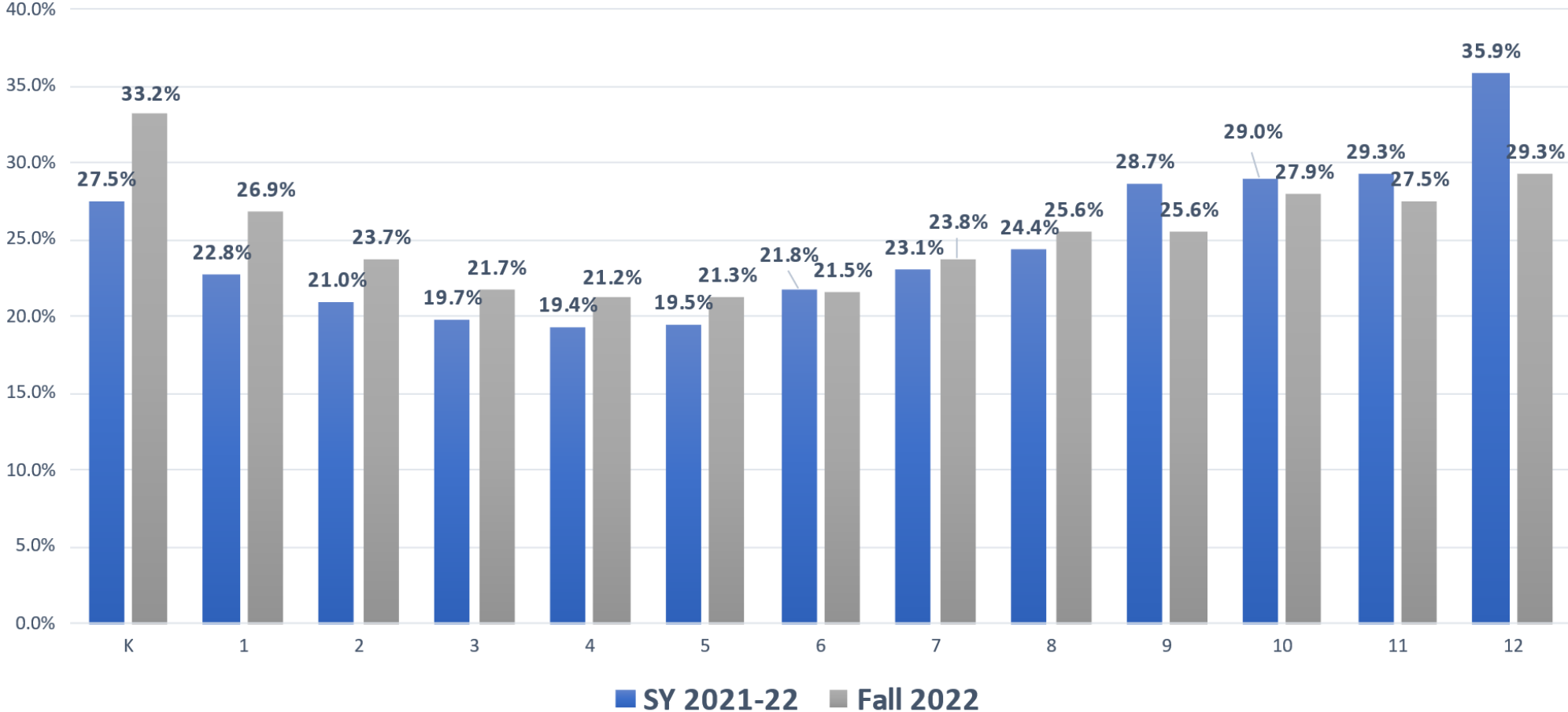


\*Calculations are based only on in-person school days until mid-March 2020. \*\*Calculations include both in-person and remote days.

# CT data shows that Chronic Absence remains high this Fall especially for younger learners



### Chronic Absence By Grade In Connecticut





# Talk Tuesday



## Learner Engagement and Attendance Program (LEAP)





# Building Trusting Relationships



**Relationships first!** – before talking about grades, behavior, or attendance.

- LEAP home visits are targeted, tier 2 supports for students and families who are disengaged from school
- Home visits are scheduled opportunities for two members or community partners to go the home (or other location)
- The conversation is focused on families' strengths and capabilities, as well as their aspirations for their child.
- Families receive multiple home visits that support building relationships over time.
- Credible messengers are key to the success



# LEAP Evaluation Findings



## Key Highlights in the LEAP Report

- For most students examined in this study, **attendance rates increased by four percentage points in the month immediately following the first LEAP visit.**
- Nine months after the first LEAP visit, students in grades **PK – 5 experienced approximately an eight-percentage point increase in attendance.**
- Students in grades **6-12 experienced approximately a sixteen-percentage point increase in attendance rates** relative to similar students who were not served over the same time period, suggesting that the impact of LEAP was significantly larger in later grades.
- **Results did not differ based on the type of personnel, school or community-based, conducting a LEAP home visit.** Nine months after the initial LEAP visit, attendance rates increased by between approximately 15 and 20 percentage points regardless of who conducted the visit.
- **LEAP visits that occurred at a student's home or a student's school had significantly larger impacts** on attendance than LEAP visits that occurred virtually or on the phone.



# Attendance Works



## Effective Messaging with Families



## Forging Partnerships with Families to Support Engagement and Attendance

- ✓ Communicate supportive messages (*Stay Connected and Keep Learning*) throughout the school year
- ✓ Provide tailored, personalized and caring messages to students and families who are chronically absent
- ✓ Offer actionable steps to improve attendance
- ✓ Make sure families know what resources are available for basic needs as well as learning at home



## Utilize Research about Effective Attendance Messaging to Improve Your Communications

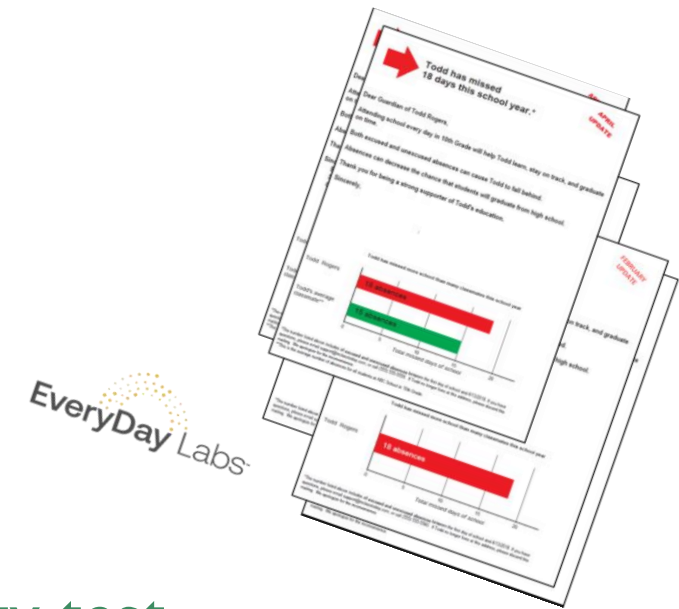
### 1. Readable

- Fewer words
- Accessibility: [Flesch-Kincaid readability test](#)
- Skimmability: bullets, format reinforces message

### 2. Programmatic

- Planned (*personalized to audience*)
- Timely
- Routinized

### 3. Easy to locate and multiple modes



# Better Truancy Notifications

- ✓ Started with positive language and moved punitive language to the end
- ✓ Fewer words
- ✓ Written at 5<sup>th</sup> grade reading level
- ✓ Formatted to help readers skim
- ✓ Makes connection between absences and achievement

**Condition A (Control)**  
Standard Notice

School Name  
Address  
City, State Zip

Date:

Parent Name  
Parent Address  
R.E. Student Name  
City, State Zip

Student ID#: XXXXX

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Good attendance is required for academic excellence. [STATE] Education Code determines what types of absences are excused or unexcused. When a child is absent from school and/or tardy in excess of 30 minutes on three (3) occasions in one school year without a valid excuse, the law considers that child to be truant. The law and district policy requires all schools to notify parents when this occurs. The [district name] central office automatically sends these letters based on school records so that parents are aware of absences and can address these concerns.

School records indicate that your child was absent from school without a valid excuse on occasions, beginning with the following dates:

---

Thursday, September 12, 2015  
Thursday, September 19, 2015  
Thursday, September 27, 2015

---

Our goal is to partner with families to ensure that students are attending school every day. Although the following consequences may appear harsh we are mandated by Education Code Article 48260.5 to inform you of the following:

- That the parent or guardian is obligated to compel the attendance of the pupil at school.
- That parents or guardians who fail to meet these obligation may be guilty of an infraction and subject to prosecution pursuant to Article 6 (commencing with Section 48290) of Chapter 2 or Part 27.
- That alternative education programs are available in the district.
- That the parent or guardian has the right to meet with appropriate school personnel to discuss solutions to the pupil's truancy.
- That the pupil may be subject to prosecution under Education Code Section 48264.
- That the pupil may be subject to suspension, restriction, or delay of the pupil's driving privilege pursuant to Section 13202.7 of the Vehicle Code.
- That it is recommended that the parent or guardian accompany the pupil to school and attend classes with the pupil for one day.

Please recognize that we are required to monitor attendance and notify parents of potential problems with student attendance. If you have concerns about your child's attendance, or if you believe there is an error in this notice, contact the school at «SCHOOL\_PHONE\_NUMBER». The designated attendance personnel will work with you to resolve this issue. We look forward to assisting you.

Sincerely,

Principal Signature

Principal Name

**Condition D**  
Add-up Notice

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] missed school (or was more than 30 minutes late) without a valid excuse on:

*Thursday, September 12, 2015*  
*Thursday, September 19, 2015*  
*Thursday, September 27, 2015*

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
- Have poor relationships with parents and teachers

We are required by [STATE] law to send you this letter and to warn you of the consequences of additional unexcused absences (see sidebar).

Please remember that every absence matters and just a couple days each month adds up. **You are key to improving [STUDENT NAME]'s attendance.**

Sincerely,  
Principal X

Truancy - [STATE] Education Code School administrators determine what types of absences are excused or unexcused based on state law and on the facts of the pupil's circumstances. When a child is absent from school and/or tardy in excess of 30 minutes on three (3) occasions in one school year without a valid excuse, the law considers that child to be truant.  
Education Code Section 48260.5 requires us to inform you of the following:  
• That the parent or guardian is obligated to compel the attendance of the pupil at school.  
• That parents or guardians who fail to meet these obligation may be guilty of an infraction and subject to prosecution pursuant to Article 6 (commencing with Section 48290) of Chapter 2 or Part 27.  
• That alternative education programs are available in the district.  
• That the parent or guardian has the right to meet with appropriate school personnel to discuss solutions to the pupil's truancy.  
• That the pupil may be subject to prosecution under Education Code Section 48264.  
• That the pupil may be subject to suspension, restriction, or delay of the pupil's driving privilege pursuant to Section 13202.7 of the Vehicle Code.  
• That it is recommended that the parent or guardian accompany the pupil to school and attend classes with the pupil for one day.

If you have concerns about your child's attendance or if you believe our records are inaccurate contact the school at «SCHOOL\_PHONE\_NUMBER».

## Writing Truancy Notices That Can Improve Attendance

## Using Behavioral Insights to Improve School Administrative Communications: The Case of Truancy Notifications

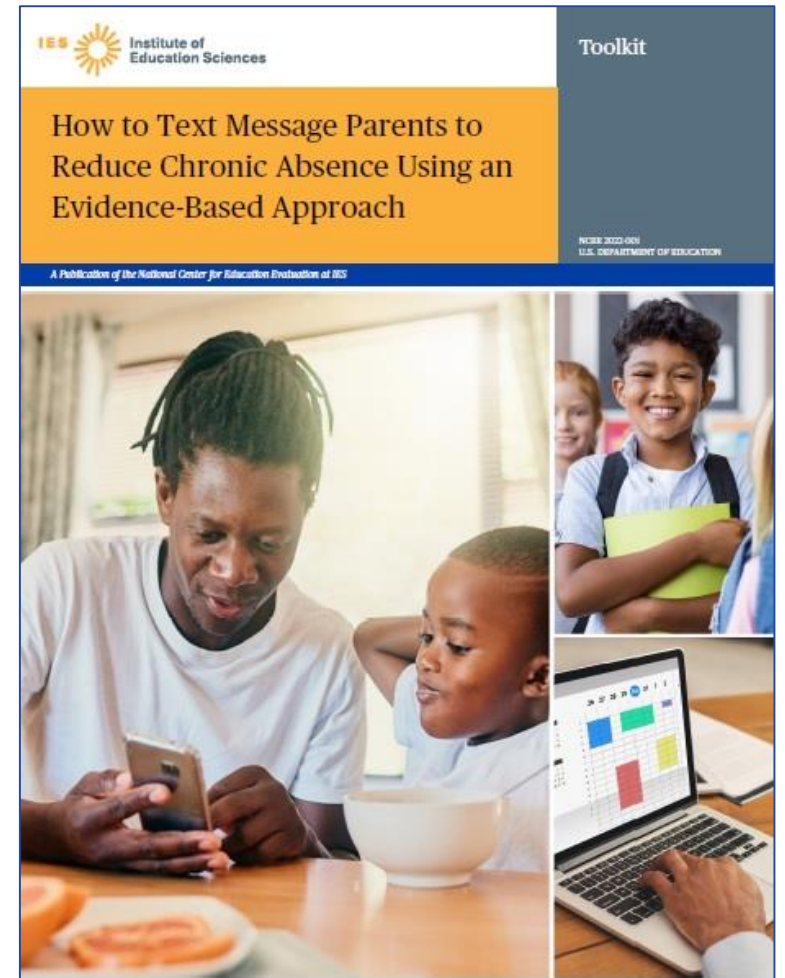




## Communicating with Families

**Use these resources to help your communications with families be clear and supportive:**

- ❖ Chronic Absence letter updated for Covid-19  
<https://www.attendanceworks.org/resources/welcome-students-to-school/>
- ❖ Stay the Course - Winter Messaging  
<https://www.attendanceworks.org/resources/messaging/stay-the-course-a-winter-messaging-toolkit/>
- ❖ How to Text Message Parents to Reduce Chronic Absence Using an Evidence-Based Approach  
<https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/pubs/2022001/pdf/2022001.pdf>



# DCF Careline

Educational Neglect  
&  
Truancy

1/2023





# Educational Neglect - Criteria

## Criteria:

- **For children school-aged to age 12** excessive absenteeism may be indicative of the parent's or caregiver's failure to meet the educational needs of the student.
- **For children older than age 12** excessive absenteeism, coupled with a failure by the parent or caregiver to engage in efforts to improve the child's attendance, may be indicative of educational neglect.

**Note:** For children older than age 12, excessive absenteeism through the child's own intent, despite the parent's or caregiver's efforts, is not educational neglect. Rather this is truancy which is handled through the school district.

Considerations in determining the criteria for excessive absenteeism, the following characteristics of the child shall be considered by the Social Worker:

- age;
- health;
- level of functioning;
- academic standing; and
- dependency on parent or caregiver.

In determining the criteria for **excessive absenteeism**, the **following characteristics of the parent or caregiver** shall be considered by the Social Worker:

- rationale provided for the absences;
- efforts to communicate and engage with the educational provider; and
- failure to enroll a school-aged child in appropriate educational programming (including home schooling).



# Educational Neglect



- Age of student and/or dependence on a caretaker to ensure participation in educational activities remains a significant factor. Operational Definitions notes for a general difference at the age of 12, children older should be considered for truancy, while those younger, or functionally younger, have a dependency on a parent. This expectation should be maintained.
- Efforts still need to be made by educational provider to engage a parent. Efforts should be progressively more aggressive and documented. Demonstrated efforts, without any response, **may be neglect**.
- Parent/Caregiver/Guardian's response should be considered. Some examples for consideration:
  - A parent's disagreement with an educational plan is **not neglect**.
  - A parent indicating that the family is in crisis and not prioritizing educational needs currently, but has plans to once stabilized, is **not neglect**.
  - A parent that has told the school they are home schooling with their own curriculum while schools are closed is **not neglect**.
  - A parent that has all the necessary resources, has provided no explanation for their elementary aged students lack of participation or attendance and is not engaging with the school regarding the reasons for their lack of involvement, **may be neglect**.



## When to make a referral to the DCF Careline

Mandated reporters are required to report or cause a report to be made when, in the ordinary course of their employment or profession, they have reasonable cause to suspect or believe that a child under the age of 18 has been abused, neglected or is placed in imminent risk of serious harm. (CGS§17a-101a)

### EMERGENT SITUATIONS- Call the CARELINE

**800-842-2288 (General Line)**

**860-352-9261 (back up line)**

If the victim or another similarly situated minor is presenting in:

- Immediate harm
- With the need for emergent medical or mental health care
- With a realistic fear of further abuse or neglect within the next 24 hours
- That they will be inaccessible within the next 24 hours

### NON-EMERGENT SITUATIONS- Online Referral

<https://portal.dcf.ct.gov/>

If the victim or another similarly situated minor is not presenting in need for an emergent response:

- Complete the online report in full, with as much detail and information as possible (failure to provide detailed information may result in a non-accept)
- Upon successful submission you will receive a confirmation email
- Online reporting is available 24 hours a day

All 3 components are required for referral to be accepted:



FOR FAMILIES THAT DO NOT MEET THE ABOVE ACCEPTANCE CRITERIA WHO MAY BENEFIT FROM SERVICES, CONTACT THE INFOLINE @ 211.

\*Age limitations are not considered for children currently receiving services from DCF or if allegations involve sexual abuse of a student by school personnel.

### Educational Neglect

\*Occurs when a school-aged child has excessive absences from school through the intent or neglect of the parent or caregiver.

\*For children older than 12, excessive absenteeism through the child's own intent, despite the caregiver's efforts, is truancy which is handled through the school

# Mandated Reporter Portal Enhancements

1. Ability for multiple attachments to now be included with online CPS reports.
2. Improved questions and additional information pop-ups to help elicit improved responses and details.
3. Upgraded hard stops to force urgent reports to be called directly to the DCF Careline
4. One-time opportunity to download a copy of the submitted CPS report.
5. Dashboard view to see previous submissions with reference numbers.
6. Ability to save in-progress reports and resume at a later time (up to 12 hours).



# Thank You

## **Lisa R. Daymonde, LMSW**

Careline Director

Office: 860-560-7001

Cell: 203 675-3413

Hours: Monday-Friday 7:30am-4:00pm

## **Vanessa Hudson**

Careline Program Supervisor

Cell: 860-305-2820

Hours: Tuesday-Friday 10:00am-6:30pm &  
Saturday 8:00am-4:30pm

## **Michele Laboy, MSW**

Careline Program Supervisor

Cell: 860-371-5076

Hours: Sunday-Thursday 7:30am-4:00pm

## **Edward Valentin, MSW**

Careline Program Supervisor

Cell: 860-455-5434

Hours: Monday-Friday 2:00pm-10:30pm



# Talk Tuesday

## Positive Interventions for Addressing Truancy and Chronic Absenteeism

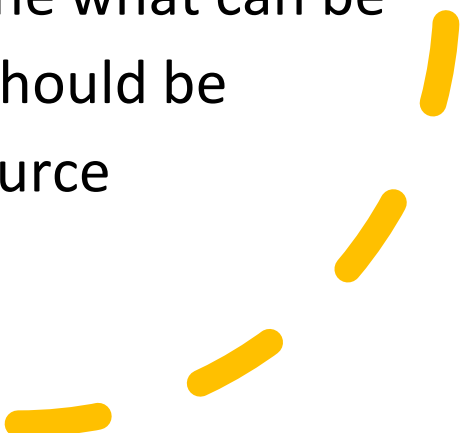
Susan Lauria

Program Coordinator  
Youth Services Bureau

Matthew Laskowski

Executive Director of Access and  
Opportunity  
Stamford Public Schools

# Early Intervention Initiative

- Assemble Engagement Team at each school
  - Identify Focus Group Students
  - Assign Students to Team Members
  - Conduct Reasons for Chronic Absence Inventory (RCA)
  - Analyze Results
  - Implement support for individuals as needed as well as groups that fall into similar buckets
  - Consider sphere of influence to determine what can be supported at the school level and what should be referred to Here to Help or another resource
- 



## Reasons for Chronic Absenteeism (RCA)

For additional information on the hardcopy version or survey administration and scoring contact:  
Amber Brundage, Coordinator for Research & Evaluation, [abrundage@mail.usf.edu](mailto:abrundage@mail.usf.edu)

**Preferred Citation:** Brundage, A., & Castillo, J. (2017). *Reasons for Chronic Absenteeism (RCA)*. Florida's Problem Solving/Response to Intervention Project, University of South Florida

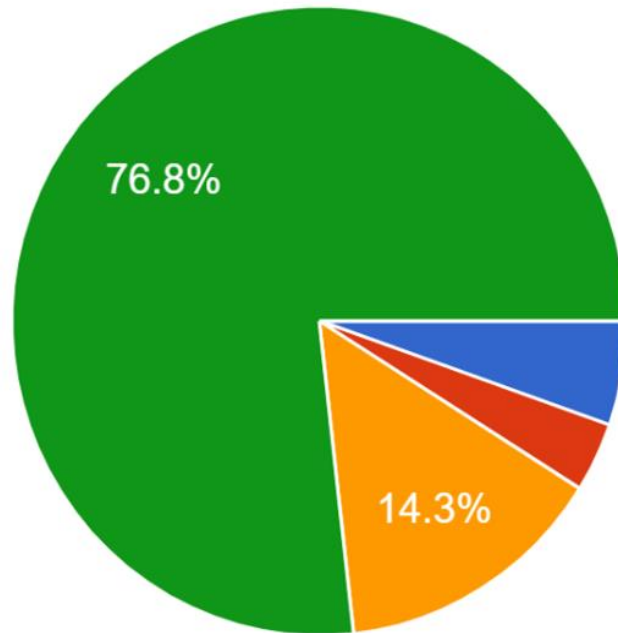


<b>12. I did not feel safe at school.</b>				
<b>13. There was no reason for me to go to school.</b>				
<b>14. I had to take care of or help a family member (child, sibling, relative, etc.).</b>				
<b>15. No one misses me when I don't come to school.</b>				
<b>16. I had to work.</b>				
<b>17. I did not want to walk in bad weather.</b>				
<b>18. My parents don't care if I miss school.</b>				

# Analyzing the Data by Question

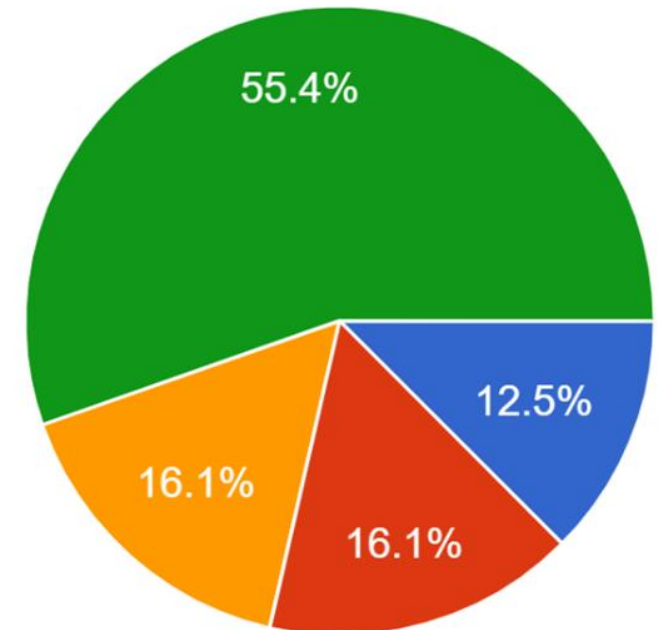
I did not feel safe attending school

56 responses



No one misses me when I don't attend school

56 responses



# Overall RCA Analysis

## Population

- 56 responses, 60.7% Hispanic, 80% non-EL
- 57% takes the bus, 38% does not take the bus
- 45% of the population thinks their absences are comparable to other students

## Trends

- Short term medical - Usually 41%, Sometimes 39%
- Sense of belonging - U 14%, S 21%
- Staying up late - U+S 26%
- School is boring - U 25%, S 32%
- No one misses me - U 12.5%, S 16%

## Ideas

- Sense of belonging and No one misses me - work with admin team and staff on connections initiative (in progress)
- Short term medical - connect families with school based health center
- Staying up late
  - Work with families to establish night and morning routines
  - Help students create routines using their phones
  - Work with TISS support parents setting limits on technology
  - Here to Help - home visits

# Chronic School Absenteeism Shows Sharp Decline After Home Visitation Program

— Emilia Otte, 1.19.2023



Katia Pazmino speaks about the home visiting program in Stamford (CT Examiner)

**Share**



Edwin, a second grader, has leukemia. Kelly, a 13-year-old just arrived in the United States, was pregnant. Both students were living in Stamford. Both were missing school regularly.

# TRUANCY

Counts only unexcused absences.

Emphasizes compliance with school rules.

Relies on legal and administrative solutions.

VS.

# CHRONIC ABSENCE

Counts all absences: excused,  
unexcused, and suspensions.

Emphasizes academic impact of missed days.

Uses community-based, positive strategies.

# Why Now

In 2016 the Connecticut General Assembly passed Public Act 16-147, *An Act Concerning the Recommendations of the Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee*

- **Eliminates truancy** cases from being processed through the **juvenile court**
- As of August 15, 2017 the Court Support Services Division (CSSD) of the judicial branch no longer accepts FWSN referrals for truancy or defiance of school rules

# Why Was the Law Changed

- Court referrals for truancy were eliminated in order to remove the link between truancy and the school-to-prison pipeline.
- Judicial involvement for non-criminal matters such as truancy has been documented to increase the likelihood of future engagement in criminal acts, dropping out of school and incarceration.
- National research shows that students who are truant benefit from school and community based interventions designed to identify and address the reasons for missing school. Community-based solutions are a better fit for the variety of needs of children and families facing issues related to truancy

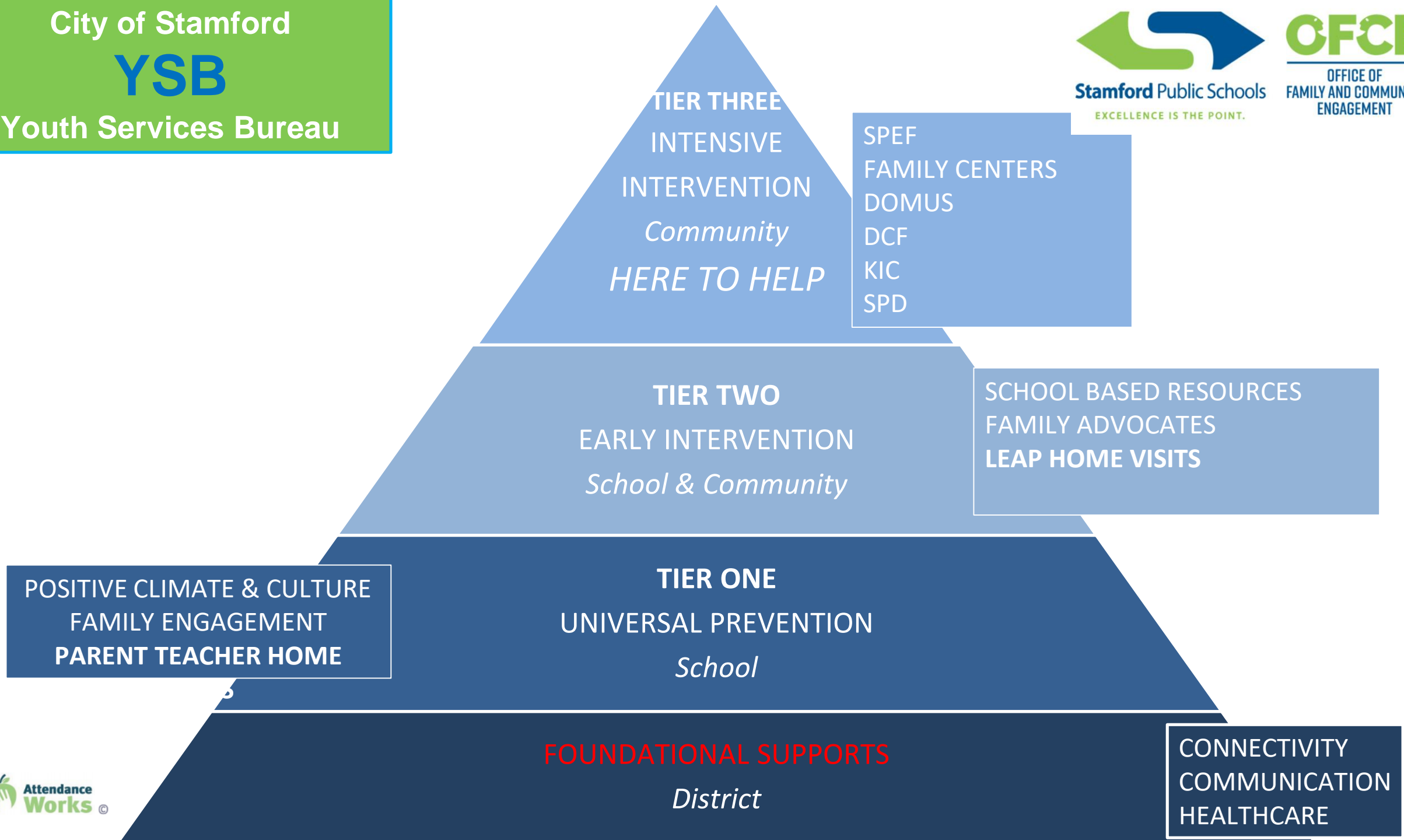
# Youth Service Bureaus

- C.G.S. Section 10-19m defines the role of a YSB as “*the coordinating unit of community-based services to provide comprehensive delivery of prevention, intervention, treatment and follow-up services.*”
- A formal referral to a community-based partner for support services can help the student and/or family access a system of coordinated care.



# Who Are We?

- Stamford Youth Services Bureau (YSB) Community Referral Center
- We are a community-based coordinating hub
- Our goal is to weave together **a system of supports and services that are individualized and developmentally appropriate for the child/youth and their family**
- We serve as a partner outside the school system that may be especially helpful when schools have exhausted their resources and/or if the relationship between the family and school is frayed



# Collaboration in Stamford

OFCE

YSB

SPEF

Domus

Family Centers

Kids in Crisis

DCF

SPD

School Staff

- Provide additional outreach capacity

Outside Agencies

Families

H2H Referral

H2H Online Form

Family requests assistance directly from H2H.

Schools or outside agencies make referrals based on needing additional bandwidth to reach families and/or needing additional community supports for the referred family.

H2H will contact the school or agency staff member who made referral and then contact family. Please see next page for referral details.

H2H will contact family. Family describes their needs. H2H connects family to beneficial resources in school and community.

H2H Staff

DOMUS

Family Centers

H2H will connect eligible families to DOMUS or Family Centers for case management and home visiting as necessary.

\*Attempts to connect with families will be made through 3 communication modalities - phone call, text, and email.

# H2H Program Flow



# HERE<sup>2</sup>HELP

What does your family need to succeed?  
**WE RECOGNIZE EVERYONE'S NEEDS ARE DIFFERENT**

SPEF's Here-to-Help network can help families with needs such as:



Childcare Support



Tutoring



Groceries & Nutrition



Housing Assistance



Technology Assistance



School Communication

... and more

**CONTACT US** for a free consultation via phone, email, text, or WhatsApp.  
Learn what free community resources may be available for your family.

**Call or text (we're available on WhatsApp too):**

programs@spefct.org

475-259-5871



For more information visit [spefct.org/here2help](https://spefct.org/here2help) or scan the QR Code

# H2H-School Referral Process

Additional Community Support

School Staff Fills Out H2H Referral

H2H staff begins outreach to family. H2H staff uses “3-2-3” outreach model to primary contacts:

- An attempt to connect will be made through 3 communication modalities - phone call, text, and email.
- If there is no response after 2 days, H2H staff will try all 3 methods of contact again.
- If primary contact information is not working or primary contacts have not responded to outreach H2H staff will initiate the 3-2-3 protocol with the emergency contacts continue this process by moving on to the next listed emergency contact.

If no connection is made, family will be marked non-responsive and school will be notified. Further collaboration with district personnel will be used to assist in finding further successful methods of communication for the family.

If a family declines support, family will be marked as “did not need services” and school will be notified.

If connection is made, the family will be connected to school and resources needed.

# Upcoming Attendance & Engagement Meetings

## Talk Tuesdays 2022-23 School Year

- Winter sessions will continue to focus on *strategies that worked in 2021-22* and feature districts that improved attendance across the district, in a school, particular grade or group of students.
- **February 7<sup>th</sup>**
- **February 21<sup>st</sup>**
- **March 7<sup>th</sup>**
- **March 21<sup>st</sup>**



# KEEP IN TOUCH!

**Kari Sullivan Custer, CSDE**

[Kari.Sullivan@ct.gov](mailto:Kari.Sullivan@ct.gov)

860-807-2041

**Christine Kuehlewind, SERC**

[Kuehlewind@ctserc.org](mailto:Kuehlewind@ctserc.org)

860-632-1485, ext. 371

**Stephen Proffitt, SERC**

[proffitt@ctserc.org](mailto:proffitt@ctserc.org)

860-632-1485, ext. 322

