

# Educators Can Partner with Healthcare Providers to Keep Kids in School



Chronic absenteeism—**defined as missing 10% or more of the school year**—can affect any student, in any grade. It can also put the health of students at risk.

**What if educators and healthcare providers could work together to keep kids in school?**



**Healthcare providers and schools serve the same kids.** And healthcare providers can help identify and manage the very conditions that often keep kids from being able to go to school.

That makes healthcare providers **key partners** for schools in efforts to prevent chronic absenteeism and intervene when it happens.

If your school district or school is challenged by high absenteeism rates, engaging healthcare providers in efforts to combat chronic absenteeism can enhance your capacity to meet student needs.

## 3 Things Educators Need to Know

- ✓ Students who do not graduate high school have greater health risks as adults. The less education adults have, the more likely they are to smoke, be overweight, have diabetes, and die prematurely of certain chronic conditions.<sup>1</sup>
- ✓ Youth who attend school regularly are less likely to engage in behaviors associated with poor health outcomes such as substance use or high-risk sexual behaviors.<sup>2</sup>
- ✓ Not earning a high school diploma is associated with increased mortality risk or lower life expectancy.<sup>3</sup>

Research shows youth of color, youth from low-income backgrounds, and youth who have experienced trauma are **four times** more likely to experience chronic absenteeism.

1. Telfair J., Shelton T.L., Reynolds H.R. Educational Attainment as a Social Determinant of Health Positive Behavior Intervention and Support, 2012; 73(5):358–65.  
2. Eaton DK, Brener N, Kann LK. Associations of Health Risk Behaviors With School Absenteeism. Does Having Permission for the Absence Make a Difference? Journal of School Health. 2008;78(4):223–229. doi:10.1111/j.1746-1561.2008.00290.  
3. Lawrence, E. M., Rogers, R. G., & Zajacova, A. (2016). Educational Attainment and Mortality in the United States: Effects of degrees, years of schooling, and certification. Population Research and Policy Review, 35(4), 501–525.

# Steps to Reduce Chronic Absenteeism

The Chronic Absenteeism Reduction Effort (CARE) project, piloted in Washington, D.C., builds partnerships between the health and education sectors and informs healthcare providers about chronic absenteeism. **The CARE Playbook** can help guide you in setting up a school attendance data-sharing project in your community.



There are also other steps you can take. Educators can start by identifying and reaching out to a clinic or healthcare practice that serves families in the same area and include these community clinicians on local school health councils. Educators can also **engage family and youth** in planning and discuss the barriers students and families face and how to tackle them.



Other opportunities for schools and healthcare providers to strengthen their partnership include **regular sports physicals, back-to-school immunizations, flu shot clinics and now COVID-19 testing and vaccines.**



## Watch: Collaborating Across Sectors

### Top Health Reasons Kids Miss Too Much School<sup>4</sup>

- > **Asthma**
- > **Oral health and dental pain**
- > **Influenza**
- > **Anxiety**
- > **Depression**
- > **Parents' physical or mental health**
- > **Type I and II diabetes mellitus**
- > **Seizure disorders**
- > **Obesity**

Over **80% of health outcomes** are driven by the impact of socioeconomic and environmental factors—such as being exposed to trauma, not having stable housing, or not having access to food, transportation and healthcare.



4. Mandy A. Allison, Elliott Attisha, Council On School Health (2019). The Link Between School Attendance and Good Health. Pediatrics Feb 2019, 143 (2) e20183648; DOI: 10.1542/peds.2018-3648.

**If our students aren't well in body and mind,  
they can't benefit from instruction.**

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