



INDIANA
DEPARTMENT *of*
EDUCATION

Indiana Absenteeism Resource Guide

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Indiana Department of Education
Office of Innovation

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Introduction

The Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) strives for the goal of ensuring every student receives high-quality education, to support and elevate Indiana’s educators, and to create efficient, effective, and aligned support systems across the state.

One element of this goal is the understanding that students need to be present and engaged. Student attendance is critical to academic achievement, literacy, and future success in the workforce. Today, there are a number of barriers and challenges to student attendance. This document is designed to assist school corporations, buildings, and families develop strategies to enhance the conditions that promote student attendance and achievement.

Attendance and Chronic Absence

In Indiana, a student is considered chronically absent after missing 10 percent or more of enrolled school days. This includes both excused and unexcused absences. Chronic absenteeism and habitual truancy are important predictors of school performance, including high school graduation.

The State of Indiana is dedicated to reducing this number by interrupting this pattern and cultivating habits of good attendance early, so that all students have the opportunity to learn and succeed in school. Attendance is one highly important indicator that will be used to determine which students are considered at risk.

Research provides several recommendations to prevent and reduce chronic student absenteeism. These solutions show considerable promise; however, evidence that these programs are effective at scale remains limited. This research summary is meant to organize and share information to help inform local decisions and strategies, but should not be considered an endorsement or recommendation by IDOE. To begin, effective student attendance programs generally consist of three central activities: monitoring, prevention, and intervention.

- **Monitoring** activities should provide schools with accurate and timely information to effectively identify students who are most at risk of becoming chronically absent.
- **Prevention** activities should be broad-based and designed to educate students, parents, families, teachers, and communities about the importance of consistent school attendance, while also creating conditions that incentivize perfect or near-perfect attendance.

- **Intervention** activities should be strategically focused on students whose attendance is not improving. These interventions should include immediate communication with guardians about their student's attendance, as well as follow-up support that effectively assists students in arriving at school on-time and ready-to-learn.

Truancy and legal intervention often represents the final step in a school or district's effort to improve student attendance. This step requires a combination of efforts from families, schools, school corporations, as well as the juvenile justice system and juvenile courts.

Impact of Chronic Absenteeism In Indiana

Chronic absenteeism has profound impacts on student achievement. The percentage of students who are chronically absent and passed IREAD is 74%. However, 89% of students who are not chronically absent passed IREAD. This notable difference is shown below.

	% of Students Passing IREAD (testing in 2023)	% of Students Passing IREAD (testing in 2024)	% of Students Passing IREAD (testing in 2025)
Chronically Absent	66.0%	67.2%	74.0%
Not Chronically Absent	84.4%	84.2%	89.0%

Students who are chronically absent also scored lower on both ILEARN ELA and Math.

	% of Students At or Above Proficiency in ELA (testing in 2023)	% of Students At or Above Proficiency in ELA (testing in 2024)	% of Students At or Above Proficiency in ELA (testing in 2025)	% of Students At or Above Proficiency in Math (testing in 2023)	% of Students At or Above Proficiency in Math (testing in 2024)	% of Students At or Above Proficiency in Math (testing in 2025)
Chronically Absent	23.5%	22.9%	23.5%	18.7%	18.2%	19.5%
Not Chronically Absent	43.5%	43.7%	43%	44.4%	44.1%	45.3%

Lastly, chronic absenteeism substantially impacts college readiness. Graduates from the 2025 class who were chronically absent scored 20.8 percentage points lower at College Ready Benchmark.

	% of 2023 Graduates At College-Ready Benchmark (testing in 2022)	% of 2024 Graduates At College-Ready Benchmark (testing in 2023)	% of 2025 Graduates At College-Ready Benchmark (testing in 2024)
Chronically Absent	19.8%	17.5%	20.7%
Not Chronically Absent	44.5%	41.1%	41.5%

Chronic Absenteeism v. Truancy

Chronic absenteeism occurs when a student misses 10 percent of their enrolled school days and is inclusive of both excused and unexcused absences. Habitual truancy is defined to include students absent from school for 10 or more days within a school year without being excused or being absent under a parental request filed with the school (unexcused absence).

Chronic Absenteeism	Habitual Truancy
Students miss 10 percent of their enrolled school days and include both excused and unexcused absences.	Includes students absent from school for 10 or more days within a school year without being excused under local policy.

Before a prosecuting attorney files an affidavit, the prosecuting attorney may do the following (IC 20-33-2-26(c)):

- Conduct a meeting with the child, the child’s parent, school officials, and any relevant service providers.
- In preparation for a meeting, collaborate with the involved parties to develop an intervention plan to address the child’s truancy. The plan may include referrals to support services, counseling, academic assistance, or other resources that reduce the likelihood of further truancy.
- Make reasonable efforts to secure appropriate support services, including mental services, family counseling, or educational support for the child and child’s family, as applicable, for the purpose of addressing the root cause of truancy.
- Upon completion of the development of an intervention plan and meeting, the prosecuting attorney shall provide written notice to the child’s parents summarizing the following: outcome of the meeting, services or other resources offered, and conditions for avoiding prosecution, if applicable.

How Can Attendance be Improved Through Data?

Tracking student level attendance data is vital to understanding your local attendance and absenteeism landscape. IDOE provides resources for schools and families to see the attendance picture in their community.

Attendance Insights Dashboard

The Attendance Insights Dashboard provides a summary of student attendance by corporation, school, grade, and date from school year 2022 through the most recently completed school year, with a specific focus on tracking chronic absenteeism and habitual truancy.

The dashboard defines habitual truancy as having at least 10 unexcused absences, and chronic absenteeism as being absent (excused or unexcused) at least 10% of the school year.

The Attendance Insights Dashboard can be found [here](#).

Additionally, in support of schools, IDOE has also released an authenticated view of the Attendance Insights Dashboard with near real-time data on current school attendance data submissions. This allows schools to monitor progress of attendance trends throughout the current year and prior to certification of this data and release of finalized and official attendance metrics at the end of the school year.

Indiana Graduates Prepared to Succeed Performance Dashboard

Elevates attendance by publicly displaying the percentage of students who attend school more than 94% of the time at each corporation and school.

One of the goals of the Graduates Prepared to Succeed (GPS) Dashboard is that it uses a broader range of measures, in addition to traditional tests, to help determine if students are on track for success after high school.

Strategic Use of Data

According to the [U.S. Department of Education](#) and [Attendance Works](#), it is important to have a deep understanding of the data being collected and utilized locally. Collecting and categorizing data beyond the statutory categories can help schools identify a variety of issues as they arise.

- Identify trends.
- Determine early warning signs of absenteeism.
- Allows for identification of root causes.
- Promotes specific and targeted interventions and supports for students and families.

The identification of trends in the data can help assist in knowing how best to distribute limited resources. For example, a school can look to determine why a grade level has more absences than another and could point to further factors that can help shape local policy.

Indiana's Attendance Laws

Attendance and absenteeism in Indiana are guided by Indiana law and administrative rules. This section will explore several of the most critical laws and regulations to Indiana schools.

When is a child required to be in school?

A child is required to attend school beginning with the school year in which the child becomes seven years of age (IC 20-33-2-6). A child who will attend a nonaccredited, nonpublic school is required to attend school no later than the date on which the child becomes seven years of age (IC 20-33-2-8). Note that the starting age for kindergarten (age given by August 1) does not affect the starting age for first grade. There is no requirement that a child must be six years old by August 1, in order to attend first grade.

Who has responsibility for a child's attendance in school?

Students, parents, and the school corporation administrator and the administrator of any other educational, correctional, charitable, benevolent institution, or training school having children under the institution's authority are responsible for a child's attendance in school (IC 20-33-2).

Can a child withdraw from school before age 18?

In most cases, a child is required to attend school until the child graduates or becomes 18 years of age (IC 20-33-2-6). A child who is at least 16 but less than 18 may not withdraw from school before graduation unless the withdrawal is due to financial hardship, and the child must be employed to support the child's family or a dependent, illness, or an order by a court that has jurisdiction over that child (IC 20-33-2-9).

Are excused and unexcused absences treated the same?

For truancy, these absences are not treated the same, IC 20-33-2-14(b) requires the governing body of each school corporation to have a policy outlining the conditions for excused and unexcused absences. As such, each school district has the ability to set their own attendance policies and define what will count as an excused absence. Schools are not required to intervene with an accumulation of excused absences, but can under than local policies.

Indiana law allows for up to 10 unexcused absences during the school year. Schools must report habitually truant students to the local prosecuting attorney. Before filing an affidavit, prosecutors may do the following:

- Conduct a meeting with the child, the child's parent, school officials, and any relevant service providers.
- In preparation for a meeting, collaborate with the involved parties to develop an intervention plan to address the child's truancy. The plan may include referrals to

support services, counseling, academic assistance, or other resources that reduce the likelihood of further truancy.

- Make reasonable efforts to secure appropriate support services, including mental services, family counseling, or educational support for the child and child's family, as applicable, for the purpose of addressing the root cause of truancy.
- Upon completion of the development of an intervention plan and meeting, the prosecuting attorney shall provide written notice to the child's parents summarizing the following: outcome of the meeting, services or other resources offered, and conditions for avoiding prosecution, if applicable.

However, for the purposes of State Accountability, they are treated the same. Please see the [Attendance Measures in School Accountability](#) section of this document.

What is an exempt absence?

Under certain circumstances, the statute requires the school to authorize the absence and excuse of a student. In each of the following circumstances, the student is excused from school and is *not* to be recorded as absent, and is not to be penalized in any way by the school (IC 20-33-2-15):

- Serving as a page or honoree of the Indiana General Assembly;
- Serving on the precinct election board or as a helper to a political candidate or party on the day of a municipal, primary, or general election;
- Subpoenaed to testify in court;
- Serving as an active-duty member of the armed forces, including the National Guard, for at least 15 days in a school year;
- Serving with the Civil Air Patrol for up to five days;
- Approved Educationally Related Non-Classroom Activity;
- The student or member of the student's household exhibits or participates in the Indiana State Fair for educational purposes; or
- The student participates in a scheduled competition, exhibition, or event offered by the National FFA Organization, Indiana FFA Association, or 4-H Club.

Are there different types of excused absences?

Yes, IC 20-19-3-12.4 required IDOE to develop categories of excused absences. A student's excused absence must fall into one of the following categories:

- **Excused Medical:** Student is excused absent per local policy due to any medical reasons including: Illness, Sick, Doctor/Dentist Appointment, Hospitalization, Surgery, etc.
- **Excused Death/Funeral:** Student is excused absent per local policy due to a death or funeral.

- **Excused Religious:** Students are excused absent per local policy for any religious reason.
- **Excused Family Planned:** Student is excused absent per local policy for a planned family event.
- **Excused Family Unplanned:** Student is excused absent per local policy for an unplanned family event or emergency including: No Power/Water, Car/Transportation Issues, etc.
- **Excused Administrator Approved:** Student is excused absent per local policy for any Administrator approved reason.

Are there specific requirements for students who may be hospitalized or homebound?

Yes, 511 IAC 7-42-11, 511 IAC 7-32-45, and 511 IAC 4-1.5-9 outline these requirements. If the student is hospitalized for an indefinite period of time or the student is on homebound instruction and receiving instruction from a licensed teacher through the school district or a third party contract or agreement.

- The student would be considered in attendance; see 511 IAC 7-32-45, 511 IAC 7-42-11, and 511 IAC 4-1.5-9.
- Homebound instruction under the provisions of 511 IAC 4-1.5-9 has a distinct requirement of a statement provided by a licensed healthcare provider with prescriptive authority. If the parent **has not** completed the request for homebound instruction and you **have not** implemented a homebound program, then the student is absent.
- Report an accurate daily Attendance Event Record of “In Attendance” for each day the student is expected to and receives in-person homebound or hospitalized instruction from a teacher.
- Report an accurate daily Attendance Event Record of “Virtual” for each day the student is expected to and receives homebound or hospitalized instruction ‘virtually’; meaning, the student and teacher are separated by time, space, or both.
- Report an accurate daily Attendance Event Record of “Excused Absence or Unexcused Absence” if the student is unable to receive expected homebound or hospitalized instruction for that day.

Are there special requirements for students who attend school virtually?

Below are the reporting guidelines for virtual students. Additional information can be found on [IDOE’s Knowledge Hub](#).

- Report a daily Attendance Event Record(s) of “VIRTUAL” for each day the student is enrolled and expected in attendance.
 - The daily attendance should equal “1” day for each enrollment day which may require two records if the student is “VIRTUAL” .5 (half) day and then another attendance event the other .5 (half) of the day.
- Report “Virtual” for those virtually educated students participating in a field trip activity scheduled and approved by the education organization utilizing the internal comment of ‘field trip’ to manage where those students are located during the school day.
- The beginning date is the first day of the school calendar and the ending date is the last day of the school calendar.
- Virtual schools must comply with the same instructional time requirements (5 or 6 hours to count as a day of instruction). As with traditional schools, how the instructional time gets recorded is a local determination.

Attendance Measures in School Accountability

Both state and federal accountability models use attendance data to understand how well schools support students and keep them engaged. Attendance and chronic absenteeism are key indicators used to calculate a school’s overall performance rating.

Indiana Graduates Prepared to Succeed (GPS)

GPS has five key characteristics and measures 17 indicators across student grade bands. Attendance is a measured indicator included in the **Work Ethic** characteristic focusing on student readiness beyond just test scores.

The **GPS Attendance Indicator** includes:

- The number of students with at least 94% attendance rate divided by the total number of students enrolled in the school (all absences count, excused or unexcused).

State Accountability A-F Grades

The new state accountability model will calculate individual student points using academic mastery and additional success indicators addressing the individual needs of

students and ensuring that students' unique knowledge, skills, and experiences are transparently reflected in a school's accountability grade (A-F). Points will be awarded for the **Regular School Attendance** success indicator in all student grade bands. Enrollment is also used to determine if a student is an eligible student.

The **Regular School Attendance** success indicator includes a student that attends 94%+ of instructional days during the year (all absences count, excused or unexcused).

Additional information can be found on the [Accountability website](#).

Indiana Diploma Requirements

The new Indiana diploma, effective for all students beginning with the class of 2029, includes the opportunity to earn readiness seals aligned with a student's unique graduation path. Students must meet an attendance goal in order to receive the employment and enlistment honors seals.

Employment Honors and Honors Plus Seal

Must meet attendance goal of:

- At least one school year with no more than three days of unexcused absences; or
- At least 150 hours of work-based learning experience with no more than three unexcused absences.

Enlistment & Service Honors and Honors Plus Seal

Must meet attendance goal of:

- At least one school year with no more than three days of unexcused absences.

Postsecondary Readiness Waiver

Must maintain a school attendance rate of:

- At least 95% (excused absences do not count against the student's attendance).

This applies to:

- Current graduation pathways diploma ending with the 2028 cohort.
- New Indiana Diploma (base) starting with the 2029 cohort.

Guidance and Considerations

As we continue to address the issue of chronic absenteeism, it is important to remember that students can be missing school for a number of reasons and that our response to this problem reflects the individuality of circumstances. Attendance policies benefit from considering those circumstances - in students, families, and the communities served.

Rethinking Attendance and Instructional Time in the 21st Century

As Indiana sets out to re-think and re-design the high school experience, schools also should think about how attendance and instructional time are defined and utilized to promote a learning experience that meets the needs of students now and in the future.

While Indiana's attendance and absenteeism laws do provide the guardrails and requirements for students, they also offer the ability to re-think attendance and instructional time. Student learning can take place anywhere and everywhere. This can occur in a classroom, the home, a museum, a lab, and many more. Without *reducing* instructional time, consider how the time is being used.

Instructional Time and Attendance

Indiana Code 20-30-2-1 says that instructional time is time during which students participate in an approved course, curriculum, or an educationally related activity under the direction of a teacher, which includes a reasonable amount of passing time between classes. Instructional time does not include recess.

Indiana Code 20-30-2-2 requires that the instructional day for grades one through six consist of at least five hours of instructional time, and the instructional day for grades seven through 12 consist of at least six hours of instructional time.

As schools explore opportunities for students that extend beyond the physical classroom to meet the needs of a changing workforce, these requirements should not be thought of as limiting factors. Consider, only as an example, field trips. Field trips are useful educational opportunities that occur *outside* the classroom or school building. These students are counted as in-attendance for these purposes.

Corporation Level Guidance

[Attendance Works](#) promotes the practice of school corporations creating or utilizing an existing team, tasked with addressing chronic absenteeism. It is possible, and recommended, to utilize existing teams wherever possible to reduce the impact on the time of school administrators. Additional considerations for the development and implementation of a corporation level chronic absenteeism team can be found below:

- Identify or create a chronic absenteeism team tasked with leading the efforts to increase student attendance.
- Actively monitor corporation wide attendance data.
- Create capacity to act on attendance data.
- Develop consistent messaging across the school corporation for internal and external audiences.
- Build and maintain relationships with community stakeholders.
- Allocate local resources according to data driven needs.
- Participate in a continuous improvement process involving all stakeholders.

School Building Level Guidance

School building leaders should begin with identifying existing attendance efforts underway within the school building (MTSS, Social Work, School Resource Officers, individual teachers, etc). An internal survey could help this effort. Determinations could then be made on if a new attendance-focused team should be created or if an existing team could be utilized to address attendance in the building. Additional recommendations can be found below:

- Identify or create a chronic absenteeism team tasked with addressing attendance related issues in the school building.
- Develop a multi-tiered approach to attendance that is data driven and utilizes an early warning system for students who are showing signs of chronic absenteeism.
- Consistently review disaggregated attendance data and review for potential contributing factors to chronic absenteeism (grade level, discipline, truancy, etc.).
- Collaborate to identify any barriers to attendance.
- Monitor and track interventions and review for effectiveness.
- Utilize a process that emphasizes the importance of monitoring progress and effectiveness.

Engagement Resources

Leading experts, such as Attendance Works, suggest schools work with their existing attendance/absenteeism teams to identify (or create new) and implement engagement strategies to help promote regular attendance habits. Some considerations can be found below:

- Communicate with families early and often. It is recommended to keep communications friendly and less threatening. Collaborative efforts can help ensure student attendance.

- Understand your audience. Each target group (facilities, parents, transportation, etc.) may need to be reached in a different manner. What works for students may not work for staff or community partners.
- Know the “why.” Track as many reasons for absences as feasibly possible. Knowing that students are missing class is not the same as knowing why students are absent.
- Invest time, energy, and resources into improving school culture and climate. Student engagement will increase as school becomes a place students *desire* to be.
- When engaging and collaborating with your community, be willing to be changed by your audience. It is critical that communication flows both ways.

Funding Resources

To better facilitate the implementation of absenteeism resources and strategies, schools will seek funding. Below are some avenues for potential funding opportunities:

- [SchoolSafety.gov](https://www.schoolsafety.gov)
 - This website contains a grant finder tool and links to potential opportunities surrounding engagement, school climate, and more.
- [Indiana Secured School Safety Grant Program](#)
 - The Parent - Student Support Services Program could provide an opportunity to receive funding to help build engagement and support programs.
- Federal Programs
 - Titles I, II, III, and IV, under the Every Student Succeeds Act, have allowable uses that would help to support absenteeism programs in school districts. Schools would need to review programs for eligibility.

Appendix A - Important Links and Numbers

Organization / Service	Contact Information
Indiana 211	#211
IDOE - State Attendance Officer Website	https://www.in.gov/doe/students/school-safety-and-wellness/state-attendance-officer/
IDOE - Chronic Absenteeism Website	https://www.in.gov/doe/chronic-absenteeism/
IDOE - English Learners	https://www.in.gov/doe/grants/english-learning-and-migrant-education/
Attendance Works	https://www.attendanceworks.org
Johns Hopkins University Center for School Health	https://schoolhealth.jhu.edu/
US Department of Education	https://www.ed.gov/teaching-and-administration/supporting-students/chronic-absenteeism