

TN

**Tennessee
State Government**

**TENNESSEE
ACHIEVES
ACADEMIC SUCCESS**

THE LAW

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM/TRUANCY

INTERVENTION

WHO DOES WHAT & HOW

SUCCESSFUL MODELS

RESOURCES

ATTEND TODAY

ACHIEVE TOMORROW

K-12



August 2016

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

This booklet was created to encourage your assistance and involvement in addressing an issue that is of great importance to our schools and communities – school attendance.

Governor Haslam's Public Safety Subcabinet has identified the reduction of truancy as a vitally important step in preventing young Tennesseans from entering the juvenile justice system. The Subcabinet specifically charged the Department of Safety and Homeland Security and Department of Education with identifying successful models for reducing truancy.

We are increasingly aware of the negative impact that missing available instructional time has on educational outcomes for students. Third graders who have missed as little as 10 percent of instructional days are significantly less likely to be reading on grade level. If the pattern continues these same students are much less likely to graduate or to successfully transition to post-secondary opportunities.

Getting every student to school every day will require us to work together. This booklet provides an outline for steps that each of us – community leaders, educators, law enforcement, child advocates, judges, parents and other responsible citizens – can take to ensure the future prosperity of our state.

Please join us in this important endeavor.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Candice McQueen".

Candice McQueen, Commissioner
Tennessee Department of Education

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bill Gibbons".

Bill Gibbons, Commissioner
Tennessee Department of Safety and
Homeland Security;
Chair, Governor's Public Safety
Subcabinet

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Community leaders, teachers, principals, superintendents, judges, law enforcement, and district attorneys can use this guide, along with attendance data, to identify chronic absenteeism and truancy within a school district, within a specific school, and within a specific classroom.

Under each of these tabs, administrators and teachers will find helpful information to identify chronic absenteeism and truancy. There is also information about what actions can be taken by school administrators, juvenile court officials, law enforcement, and prosecutors once a student has been identified.

Community groups or agencies can be identified and involved in joining efforts to support school attendance.

This resource was developed and produced by the Governor's Public Safety Subcabinet in conjunction with the following state departments and local agencies:

TN Department of Education
TN Department of Children's Services
TN Department of Safety & Homeland Security
TN Department of Mental Health & Substance Abuse Services
Governor's Children's Cabinet
TN Attendance Supervisors Conference
Metro Nashville Public Schools
Metro Nashville Juvenile Court
Shelby County District Attorney's Mentoring Program
National Governor's Association Center for Best Practices
Shelby County Schools
Shelby County Attendance Task Force

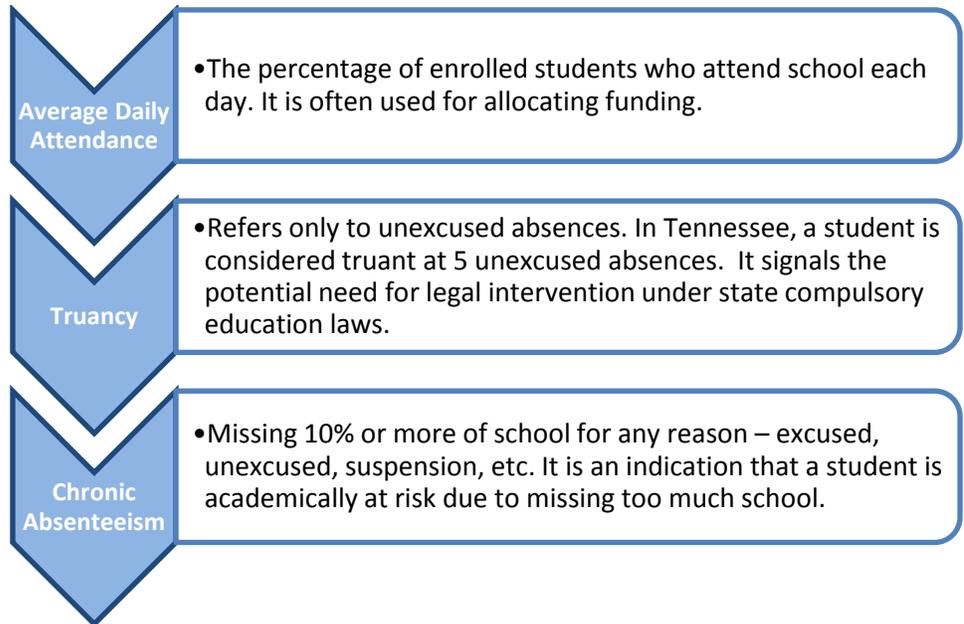
Note: This is a public document and is not intended for, or to be construed as, legal advice.

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Unpacking Attendance Terms



Expulsion - The removal from school attendance for more than ten(10) consecutive days or more than fifteen (15) days in a month of school attendance.

Remand - Assignment to an alternative school.

Suspension - Dismissal from attendance at school for any reason not exceeding ten (10) consecutive days.

Withdrawal - More than ten (10) consecutive or fifteen (15) days total unexcused absences during a single semester.

Satisfactory academic program -

A passing grade in at least three (3) full unit subjects at the conclusion of any grading period.

THE LAW

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

State Laws Related to Student Attendance and Truancy

State laws related to student attendance and truancy are sometimes long and confusing, and it is difficult to ensure that you are in compliance with all laws set forth by the State of Tennessee. Here is a quick summary of the laws related to truancy and chronic absenteeism followed by a description.

T.C.A. means Tennessee Code Annotated. Each Tennessee law is given a T.C.A. number. If you are referencing a law, you can find it by this number or by searching subject matter.

State Laws

T.C.A. 49-6-3001. School age – Entrance – Attendance – Withdrawal.

- Every child between six (6) and seventeen (17) years of age must attend school.
- It is the child’s parent, guardian, or legal custodian’s responsibility to make sure this requirement is met.

T.C.A. 49-6-3002. State attendance guidelines – No penalty for period of hospital or homebound instruction.

T.C. A. 49-6-3005. Children excused from compulsory attendance.

- Under certain circumstances, children between the ages of six (6) and seventeen (17) can be temporarily excused from attendance laws.

T.C.A. 49-6-3006. Attendance officers.

- Part-time or full-time officers can be employed by schools to enforce compulsory attendance laws.

T.C.A. 49-6-3007. Attendance and truancy reports – Enforcement of compulsory attendance.

- On or before the school year, each teacher shall be furnished the names of students and their parents or guardians.
- It is the duty of every principal or teacher of a public school to report to the director of schools, immediately after the opening of school, the names of all children on their list who have not appeared for enrollment.

- Within thirty (30) days after the beginning of the school year, it is the duty of the principal or teacher of all schools (public, private, or parochial) to report in writing to the director of schools of the system in which the school is located the names, ages, and residences of all pupils in attendance.
- It is the duty of the principal or teacher of each public, private, or parochial school to report promptly to the director of schools, or the director's designee, the names of all children who have withdrawn from school, or who have been absent five (5) days without adequate excuse. These are aggregate days and not necessarily consecutive days. Each successive accumulation of five (5) days unexcused absences must also be reported.
- Upon a child accumulating five (5) unexcused absences, the director of schools shall send a written notice to the parent or guardian. An additional notice should be sent after another five (5) unexcused absences.
- If the parent or guardian has failed to comply within three (3) days of receipt of the written notice, the director of schools shall report the facts to law enforcement, the district attorney general, or foreman of the grand jury, who shall proceed against the parent or guardian unless the child is at once placed in school.
- The director of schools may issue a list of truant students to local law enforcement for the purpose of allowing the law enforcement agency to take the student into temporary custody if the student is found away from school during school hours in a public place without an excuse.

T.C.A. 49-6-3011. Disposition of fines.

- All moneys collected as fines for violations will be placed in public school funds in the local school system where the child resides. Fines may be recovered by rule or in any way that a court of law enforces its orders or decrees.

T.C.A. 49-6-3012. Truancy schools.

- A board of education in charge of any school system with a student population of ten thousand (10,000) or more may establish truancy schools. These schools are for habitual truants or for students who are "incorrigible, vicious, immoral, or who habitually wander or loiter."

T.C.A. 49-6-3017. Minors withdrawn from secondary school – Denial of motor vehicle license or permit.

- The Tennessee Department of Safety and Homeland Security may deny a license or learner's permit to any person under the age of eighteen (18) who is not making satisfactory progress in school or has withdrawn from school.

T.C.A. 49-6-3018. Children serving as pages for general assembly.

- Students serving as pages during general assembly sessions during the school year may be excused from classes. However, the principal must approve these absences prior to the student serving the session.

T.C.A. 49-6-3019. Excused absences for deployment or return from deployment of parent or guardian in armed forces.

- Students may be excused on the day their parent or guardian is deployed or returns from deployment. They may be excused up to ten (10) days when the parent or guardian is home from deployment on leave.

T.C.A. 49-6-3022. Excused absences for participation in a non-school sponsored extracurricular activity.

- Students may be excused at the discretion of the principal if the student provides documentation as proof of participation and the parent or guardian requests the absence in advance. The request must be in writing and include specific information.

T.C.A. 49-6-3301. Department supervises census and attendance.

- The commissioner of the Tennessee Department of Education is authorized to appoint a supervisor of census and attendance to enforce attendance laws.

T.C.A. 49-6-3302. Withholding state funds for noncompliance.

- The commissioner of the Tennessee Department of Education may withhold or forfeit school funds if that school district refuses or neglects to comply with or enforce the census or compulsory school attendance laws.

The complete text of all laws can be found at LexisNexis which is accessible at tn.gov.

<http://tn.gov/revenue/article/tennessee-code-and-revenue-rules>

<http://www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/tncode/>

Chronic Absenteeism

What is chronic absenteeism?

While there is no legal definition of chronic absenteeism, in Tennessee a student is considered chronically absent if she or he has missed at least 10% of school days. In Tennessee approximately 10% of K-3 students were chronically absent during school year 2014-2015. This means that approximately 45,000 students in grades K-3 missed at least 18 days of school, almost a full month, annually across the state.

In contrast to truancy's traditional focus on unexcused absences, chronic absenteeism calculates excused and unexcused absences, including suspensions, and emphasizes the academic consequences of missed instructional time. States are giving increasing attention to chronic absenteeism as a key strategy in reducing truancy and improving educational outcomes for students. (Source: *Research from the National Governors Association.*)

“Chronically absent” students present a particular problem for schools that are charged with developing foundational literacy and math skills, as missing so many days means an uphill battle to help students regain lost ground. Chronic absenteeism is a challenge faced by most Tennessee schools. In fact, the vast majority of the approximately 900 elementary schools in Tennessee have at least 5% chronically absent students.

- Almost all elementary schools serve chronically absent students, even schools with the highest average daily attendance rates.
- Economically disadvantaged students are three times more likely to be chronically absent in elementary schools than their non-economically disadvantaged peers.
- On average, by the end of third grade, a student who is chronically absent in kindergarten misses 80 days of school, while a student who is not chronically absent misses 30 days of school. This 50-day gap means that a chronically absent student misses more than a quarter of a school year more than his or her non-chronically absent peers over those first four years in public school—making it more difficult to help these students reach proficiency in the classroom.
- A student who is chronically absent in third grade is significantly less likely to be reading on grade level (as measured by the TCAP English language arts exam) than a demographically similar peer who is not chronically absent.

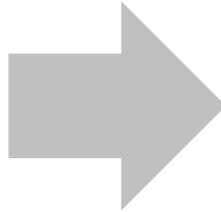
Source: www.attendanceworks.org; see <http://tn.gov/education/topic/research-and-policy-briefs>

New York City data indicates that helping students exit chronic absenteeism is one of the strongest dropout prevention strategies available and suggests that chronic absenteeism is not only a good predictor of dropping out, but also a leading cause.

Truancy

Chronic Absenteeism

- Counts all absences including suspensions
- Emphasizes academic impact of missed days
- Uses preventive strategies, positive messaging



Truancy

- Counts all unexcused absences
- Emphasizes compliance with school rules
- Focuses on punitive, legal solutions

What is habitual truancy?

Truancy is defined by state law, which also outlines the responsibility of various officials in response to it.

In Tennessee, a child who is absent five days without adequate excuse is considered a habitual truant. This means an aggregate of five days, not necessarily five consecutive days. T.C.A. 49-6-3007(e)(1).

It is the **duty** of each school to report to the director of schools, or the director's designee, the names of children who have been absent five days without excuse. Each successive accumulation of five unexcused absences **must** also be reported. (This includes private schools as well as public schools.) T.C.A. 49-6-3007(e)(1).

Upon a child accumulating five unexcused absences, the director of schools **shall** be responsible for the parent or guardian being served written notice of the absences and that attendance at school is required. T.C.A. 49-6-3007(e)(2).

If it appears that, within three days after receiving notice, there is a failure to comply by school attendance, the director of schools **shall** report the facts of the unlawful absences to the sheriff, a city police officer, the district attorney general, or the foreman of the grand jury, who **shall** proceed against the parent or guardian, unless the child is at once placed in school. T.C.A. 49-6-3007(e)(2).

States are increasingly focusing their efforts to address truancy through preventive and non-punitive interventions. Many states are increasingly turning to pre-court diversion programs, support for parents, and connecting families to wraparound services. Pre-court diversion programs connect families with social workers, case managers, or attendance advocates to address absenteeism.

Source: Research from the National Governors Association

Risk Factors Contributing to Truancy

The broad range of risk factors related to truancy has important implications for programs and activities. A literature review commissioned by the U.S. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) found correlations between truancy and four categories of risk factors:

1. Family Factors
 - Lack of supervision
 - Poverty
 - Alcohol or drug abuse
 - Lack of understanding attendance laws
 - Attitude towards education
 2. School Factors
 - School size
 - Attitudes of students, staff, & teachers
 - Inflexibility toward meeting different learning styles
 - Inconsistent procedures for dealing with chronic truancy
 3. Economic Factors
 - Employed students
 - Single parent homes
 - High mobility
 - Parents with multiple jobs
 - Lack of transportation
 4. Student Factors
 - Drug & alcohol abuse
 - Lack of understanding of attendance laws
 - Lack of social competence
 - Mental & physical health problems
 - Bullying
- Studies show that victims of bullying become less engaged in school and more likely to cease attending school.

Why We Intervene-Consequences of Truancy

Truancy has a number of consequences - not only for students, but also for schools and communities.

Compared to non-truant students, students who are truant...

- Have lower grades
- Need to repeat grades more often
- Have higher rates of expulsion
- Have lower rates of high school graduation

The literature review also concludes that truancy is a risk factor for other problems, including:

- Substance abuse, delinquency, gang activity
- Serious criminal behavior (theft, burglary)
- Suicidal thoughts and attempts
- Early sexual activity
- Dropping out of school

INTERVENTION

Teachers and early education providers play a key role in reducing chronic absenteeism by teaching children – and reinforcing to parents – the value of attendance. Teachers witness how absences can disrupt learning, not just for the absent student but also for the entire classroom. They can emphasize attendance from day one, use parent teacher conferences to talk about attendance and promote a culture of attendance.

Understanding the Progression of Chronic Absenteeism/Truancy In School Intervention



Tier I - Prevention

Strategy	Actions
Recognize Good & Improved Attendance	School communities can send a clear message that going to school every day is a priority by providing regular recognition and rewards to students and families who have good and improved attendance.
Engage Students & Parents	Attendance improves when a school community offers a warm and welcoming environment that engages students and families and offers enriching learning opportunities.
Monitor Attendance Data & Practice	<p>Data Analysis and Tools</p> <p>The best way to identify students with poor attendance is to calculate the data that schools are already collecting. In addition to looking at school-wide averages, as most schools do, shift the data to see how many students are missing 10 percent of the school year.</p>
	<p>Attendance Teams</p> <p>Each school should have a team in place that meets regularly to review the school’s attendance data and coordinate efforts to reduce chronic absence.</p>
Provide Personalized Early Outreach	Perhaps the most critical strategy is using data to trigger early caring outreach to families and students who are already missing too many days of school. Outreach is essential for identifying barriers to attendance — hunger, health, shelter, transportation or other challenges — and the supports or resources that would help improve attendance.

Tier II - Early Intervention

Stage	Criteria	Actions	Parent/Student Actions
1	1-2 Unexcused Absences	Teachers talk to students and inquire about absences.	Ask students to bring note from home to explain absence.
2	3 Unexcused Absences	Teachers make personal contact with parent(s) and document on S&I page in the Student Management System.	Call, email, or parent to inquire about absences.
3	4-6 Unexcused Absences	Teacher refers students with 4+ unexcused absences to School Attendance Team 5 Day Letter Notification is mailed home	School Attendance Team will work with parents and the student to develop a Student Attendance Plan.
4	7+ Unexcused Absences	School Attendance Team will refer students with 7+ absences to the assigned Truancy Intervention Specialist.	Truancy Intervention Specialist will investigate truancy and determine proper student intervention and resources for parents.

Tier III - Legal Intervention

Stage	Criteria	Actions	Parent/Student Actions
5	10+ Unexcused Absences	Truancy Intervention Specialist will consult with school attendance team and school level administrators to determine students who will be petitioned to Juvenile Court.	Truancy Intervention Specialist will work with MNPS Court Liaison and Juvenile Court staff to notify students and guardians to appear in court.



WHO DOES WHAT & HOW

In the battle against chronic absenteeism and truancy, everyone can help. There are changes and plans that can be put in place across almost every level of leadership from city leaders, to teachers, to parents. Find the section below that most applies to your position and see how you can help!*

*Source: www.attendanceworks.com

COMMUNITY LEADERS

Community leaders are well positioned to bring together school and community resources to improve school attendance. Research and common sense tell us that school attendance has a direct bearing on student achievement. Too often we think of reducing absences as the job of parents or school clerks in the front office. Community leaders across the country have started to show leadership in addressing chronic absenteeism and truancy recognizing that they can build public awareness and leverage community resources to address a problem that we can solve.

10 Steps Community Leaders Can Take to Reduce Chronic Absenteeism/Truancy

- 1. Find out how many students and schools are affected by chronic absenteeism/truancy.** The first step to reducing absences is understanding the depth and scope of the problem in your community. Community leaders can ask school districts to conduct an analysis of chronic absence—the number of students missing 10 percent of the school year. Or, if needed, ask districts for attendance data and then city data offices can crunch the numbers themselves. For help, ask Attendance Works for its free data tools.
- 2. Convene a task force on student attendance** to ensure that it becomes a priority across the community. The task force should bring together senior leadership from across city, school and community agencies from a range of disciplines: Early childhood, K-12 education, family engagement, social services, public safety, afterschool, faith-based, philanthropy, public housing, and transportation.
- 3. Launch a public awareness campaign to convey that every day counts.** Community leaders can use the bully pulpit to send a clear message about the importance of school attendance and the adverse impact of missing too much school for any reason. Speeches, proclamations, billboards and special recognition events can reinforce that message to parents and children, as can parent summits at the start of the school year and public service messages.
- 4. Recognize and appreciate good and improved attendance.** Simple rewards—recognition from peers and the school through certificates, assemblies, stickers, extra recess or ice cream parties—go a long way toward motivating students. Community leaders can help link schools to businesses that can provide incentives, such as sports tickets, backpacks or movie tickets.

5. **Use chronic absenteeism data to shape budget priorities.** Chronic absenteeism at a school can often signal a community in distress. Use the data when deciding where to invest in child care, early education and afterschool programs, all of which can help families build good habits and bring absenteeism under control.
6. **Use chronic absenteeism as an accountability metric.** Make sure data on chronic absenteeism is regularly shared with you and your agency chiefs and ideally included in data dashboards. Ask programs applying for funding to explain what they will do to improve attendance. Use evidence of reduced chronic absenteeism to identify which programs should continue to receive funding in tight budget times.
7. **Partner with schools and community agencies to address health concerns.** Asthma and dental problems are leading causes of chronic absenteeism in many communities, especially when students have little access to health care. Use the community's health department to provide preventative care in targeted communities or at school-based clinics.
8. **Work with public transportation** to ensure that students and parents can get to school safely. Adjust bus lines and provide passes for students who use public transit. Work with police and community groups to develop safe routes to schools or "walking school buses" in neighborhoods where street violence is a concern.
9. **Recruit an extra shift of adults to mentor chronically absent students.** National Service programs such as City Year and Experience Corps can provide mentors to monitor attendance, reach out to families and make sure students are showing up for school. Community leaders can also build partnerships with community service organizations that deploy volunteers to reach out to students and their parents, make phone calls or host information sessions for parents.
10. **Don't forget the parents.** Parents are on the front line of the attendance battle. Don't assume that they even know about the negative effects of too many student absences, especially in the early grades. Make it easy for them to access data and find resources that will help them improve their children's attendance.

For more information see [Toolkit for City Leaders](http://www.attendanceworks.org/about/what-can-i-do/city-leaders/) at <http://www.attendanceworks.org/about/what-can-i-do/city-leaders/>

SCHOOL DISTRICTS

School district leaders are in an especially good position to work on attendance and chronic absenteeism. Your school district can provide:

- **Leadership:** Set attendance goals and district policy.
- **Data:** Ensure attendance data is accurately entered and reports are produced, widely available, and regularly reviewed.
- **Attendance incentives:** Promote effective school wide approaches to recognizing good and improved attendance. Some examples are:
 - Positive comments to children
 - Positive notes home to parents
 - Extra time at the computer or PE
 - First-in-line privileges for lunch or dismissal
 - Team certificates for the best record or most improved record
 - Name on the "Attendance Wall" in the classroom
 - Chance to act as teacher's assistant
 - Recognition during morning announcements
 - Certificate/award at student assembly
 - Parking space near a building for student with most improved attendance

- **Parent education & mutual support:** Engage parents in their children's academic success.
- **Individual and programmatic intervention:** Use both individual intervention and systemic problem solving.
- **Community partnerships:** Help schools identify and forge partnerships with community agencies.
- **Peer learning & professional development:** Create opportunities for school staff to learn about the importance of attendance and share effective strategies for improving student attendance.

For more information check out *for more detailed information, guides, and handouts, see the [Tools for School Districts](http://www.attendanceworks.org/about/what-can-i-do/school-districts/) at <http://www.attendanceworks.org/about/what-can-i-do/school-districts/>*

SCHOOLS

Schools and communities can work together to promote regular attendance and reduce chronic absenteeism. Schools can:

- Ensure teachers take roll regularly so students know someone cares when they miss school.
- Ensure all classrooms are nurturing and engaging so children want to come to school every day.
- Invest in accurate collection and entry of attendance data into student data systems.
- Calculate and analyze chronic absenteeism and good attendance to discern patterns for students and schools.
- Partner with families and community groups to develop and address attendance challenges affecting large numbers of students (e.g. unreliable transportation, lack of access to health care, unstable and unaffordable housing).
- Educate parents and children about the importance of attendance starting in the early years.
- Develop and implement a school-wide system of incentives and rewards for good attendance such as:
 - **Attendance incentives are most effective when part of a comprehensive approach** that includes outreach to families with more significant challenges to attendance. Incentives should be part of creating a school-wide culture and emphasis on attendance and accompanied by a deep commitment to ensuring students are engaged in the classroom once they show up.
 - **Incentives don't need to be costly.** Simple rewards—recognition from peers and the school through certificates or assemblies, extra recess time, homework passes even dancing in the hallways—go a long way toward motivating students. Ask students what they consider a meaningful incentive.
 - **Interclass competition is a powerful motivator.** The sense of competition between classes (for example, a pizza party for the class with the best monthly attendance) can be a powerful motivator. Such strategies encourage students to feel accountable to each other for attending class.
 - **Avoid recognizing only perfect attendance.** Perfect attendance is not always the goal since it is not wise to encourage children to come to school when they're sick. Students should be rewarded for improved attendance, not just perfect records. Offering weekly perfect attendance awards can allow students to still have a chance to succeed the next week if they are absent.
 - **Reward timeliness, not just showing up to school.** Since tardiness also has an adverse impact on learning, many schools only count on-time attendance toward rewards.

- **Send home information highlighting both the value of attendance and incentives and the consequences of poor attendance.** Ensure families know about the incentive program, know why school attendance matters for academic success, and understand school policies about when poor attendance can result in failing a course or being retained. Sanctions should never be used without incentives.
- **Offer incentives for families, not just students.** Often, families appreciate access to resources such as food baskets, transportation passes, etc.
- **Implement incentives school wide.** To foster a culture of attendance, every classroom needs to participate!!
- Reach out to frequently absent students to find out in a supportive manner why they are missing school and what would help them attend more regularly.
- Invest in professional development to help teachers and administrators understand chronic absenteeism.

For more detailed handouts and information, check out the [Tools](http://www.attendanceworks.org/about/what-can-i-do/schools/) section at <http://www.attendanceworks.org/about/what-can-i-do/schools/>

TEACHERS

Teachers are the first line of defense against chronic absenteeism. Teachers can:

- Take roll regularly showing students that you care when they miss school.
- Reach out to frequently absent students to find out in a supportive manner why they are missing school and what would help them attend more regularly.
- Work with parents to stress the importance of early education and to learn about any barriers to good attendance.
- Create a nurturing, engaging classroom that will encourage children to come to school.
- Work with colleagues to develop and implement a school-wide system of incentives and reward for good attendance.

For more information go to <http://www.attendanceworks.org/about/what-can-i-do/teachers/>

A. Emphasize attendance from day one.

Research and experience indicate that attendance improves when a school community offers a warm and welcoming environment that engages students and families and offers enriching learning opportunities. Teachers are essential to creating that environment and conveying the importance of attendance.

HERE ARE 4 THINGS TEACHERS CAN DO

1. Talk with parents early in the school year or, if possible, during the summer to share the value of good attendance and let them know that you are there to support them.
2. Send home handouts and infographics with information and tips about attendance.
3. Consider showing a video, using an exercise to demonstrate the importance of attendance, or asking parents to sign a pledge card.

4. Get involved in Attendance Awareness Month. Throughout the month of September, 40 national organizations come together to celebrate Attendance Awareness Month. Join the schools and communities hosting events, launching contests or spreading the word. For more information go to:

<http://www.attendanceworks.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/AWTeacherToolkit-August-2014-new2.pdf>; <http://awareness.attendanceworks.org/resources/toolkit/>

B. Use parent-teacher conferences to talk about attendance.

Parent-teacher conferences are an ideal time to talk to parents about the importance of regular attendance (starting as early as kindergarten and even in prekindergarten). Use this one-on-one time to update families on their child's attendance and make sure they are aware of programs in place, or school activities that promote attendance. Since most teachers already hold conferences with parents and families once or twice a year, this approach helps teachers infuse attendance into their work without adding in a new activity. It helps make talking about attendance as normal as discussing academic performance and classroom behavior.

It's important to help families learn about the positive impact of good attendance and the negative effects of chronic absenteeism on realizing their hopes and dreams for their children. Parents may not realize that even excused absences, if they accumulate, can cause their children to fall behind and that building the habit of attendance in the early grades can influence their children's chances of graduating from high school.

Teachers can help families brainstorm how they can establish habits and routines at home that will put them on the right track to good school attendance, such as having a regular bedtime and laying out clothes and backpacks the night before.

Teachers can use parent-teacher conference meetings to help establish and maintain ongoing two-way communication with parents to recognize good and improved attendance as well as identify barriers – such as transportation issues, job loss, unstable housing arrangements or health concerns. If appropriate, they can connect families with the school social worker or community partners who can help.

C. Promote a culture of learning all year long.

Teachers, in partnership with other adults in a school and the community, can help build a culture of attendance by communicating about it throughout the year and showing students that they are valued members of the class. If students continue to struggle with attendance, teachers can partner with the school's attendance liaison and attendance teams to find out what is going on and identify what might help a child get to school.

When parents realize that you are paying attention to attendance – and that teachers really do want to see their children in school every day and enjoy teaching them – they will want their children to be there as often as possible to learn from you. And when students know teachers and their classmates miss them when they are out, they will feel special and want to be there more often.

This Teaching Attendance Toolkit was made possible by generous financial support provided to Attendance Works by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, Campaign for Grade-Level Reading, San Francisco Foundation and W.K.

<http://www.attendanceworks.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/AWTeacherToolkit-August-2014-new2.pdf>

PARENTS

Suggestions for parents

- Establish and stick to the basic routines (preparing for the next day in the evening, going to bed early, waking up on time, etc.) that will help children develop the habit of on-time attendance.
- Talk to children about why going to school every day is critical and important unless they are sick. If a child seems reluctant to go to school, find out why and work with the teacher, administrator or afterschool provider to get him or her excited about going to school. Attendance problems are easier to resolve early.
- Come up with back up plans for who to turn to (another family member, a neighbor or fellow parents) to help get a child to school if something comes up (e.g. another child gets sick, your car breaks down, etc.).
- Reach out for help if experiencing tough times (e.g. transportation, unstable housing, loss of a job, health problems) that make it difficult to get a child to school. Other parents, the child's teacher, principal, social worker, school nurse, afterschool providers or community agencies can help problem solve or connect a parent to a needed resource.
- If a child is absent, work with the teacher to make sure she or he has an opportunity to learn and make up for the academics missed.

<http://www.attendanceworks.org/about/what-can-i-do/parents/>



Help Children Succeed in School
Build the Habit of Good Attendance Early
School success goes hand in hand with good attendance!

SUCCESSFUL MODELS

Tennessee Youth Courts

What is a youth court?

Youth courts, also known as teen or peer courts, are an alternative sentencing option for first-time non-violent juvenile offenders. Juries of teens determine the sentence for the offenders. Research has shown a consistent reduction in recidivism as a result of these programs.

Why do they exist?

Youth courts have numerous benefits for all parties involved. Some of the benefits of these programs include holding juvenile offenders accountable for their actions, promoting restorative justice principles, educating youth on the legal system, reinforcing and empowering youth to be active participants in community problem solving, and building good character traits in young people. They also provide many community service hours, a low-cost alternative for courts, and the opportunity for government and community to partner together to benefit young people.

Who runs a youth court?

Youth courts are sponsored and run by a variety of groups – juvenile courts, police departments, schools, and community organizations. In Tennessee, a youth court must operate with the consent of the county juvenile court judge.

Where are they?

There are over 1,400 youth courts nationwide. These courts exist in 49 states and the District of Columbia. In Tennessee, there are youth courts in Blount, Crockett, Davidson (Cane Ridge High School, McGavock, and Whites Creek High Schools), Hamilton, Haywood, Lake, Madison, Montgomery, Memphis/Shelby, Sullivan (Bristol), Sumner, Williamson (Centennial High School), and Wilson counties. Counties developing programs include Marshall, Rutherford, and Tipton.

How do you know they work?

A study released in April 2002 by the Urban Institute found that juveniles whom experienced youth court rather than traditional juvenile court had a recidivism rate of 6-9%, and those who went through traditional juvenile court had a recidivism rate of 18%.

Tennessee Statistics

- Youth court programs in Tennessee have heard over 1,900 cases.
- Youth re-offending after successful completion of the program to date is less than 7% (over a period of more than 10 years).
- The approximate taxpayer savings are well over \$1 million.

How are these teenagers trained?

The young people who volunteer with youth courts are trained by members of their community – the juvenile court judge, attorneys, licensed counselors, teachers, police officers, and civic leaders. They learn how courts are structured, proper courtroom protocol, how to prepare for a case, question a witness, and determine a fair sentence.

Source: Tennessee Office of Criminal Justice Programs



Metro Student Attendance Center in Nashville-Davidson County/Juvenile Court Intervention

The Metro Student Attendance Center (MSAC) is a program operated by the Metropolitan Nashville & Davidson County Juvenile Court in partnership with Metro Nashville Public Schools and the Metro Police Department. Its goal is to decrease truancy rates in Nashville schools by addressing the root causes of truancy through a coordinated, strategic intervention process. MSAC seeks to enhance and strengthen the positive long-term outlook for school-aged youth and their educational, social and economic opportunities.

MSAC opened in 2008. Representatives from police, schools and juvenile court came together to develop formal agreements on how to reduce student truancy.

Students are brought to MSAC after being detained by police for loitering during school hours, or they can also be referred by Metro Schools because of truancy concerns that have not been resolved through the school's prevention efforts. MSAC will also focus on both prevention and intervention for truancy and loitering matters.

Under the leadership of Judge Sheila Calloway, MSAC has undergone changes in its operations. MSAC is now staffed by probation officers, social work techs, support staff, and a magistrate/director who handles and hears all of the truancy, educational neglect, and loitering cases. Also, three (3) staff members of the community partners, Metro Nashville Public Schools, and the Metro Police Department report to MSAC daily as well.

If a student is brought to MSAC for loitering, a probation officer will talk to the student and parent to determine the reasons for the student being out of school. The students have an educational resource room where they are able to access computers and complete school work while waiting on their parents to arrive to pick them up from MSAC. Intervention plans are developed by the probation officer, the student, and the parent(s)/guardian(s). The student's compliance with the compulsory school attendance law and loitering ordinance is monitored over a period of six to twelve weeks by MSAC staff with the collaboration of Metro School Truancy Intervention Specialists. Cases are handled using a tiered system that provides for families to access the resources that will help in resolving any issues that lead to truancy without court intervention initially.

If there is a lack of compliance or a lack of improvement by families, cases will be escalated to community court or Juvenile Court.

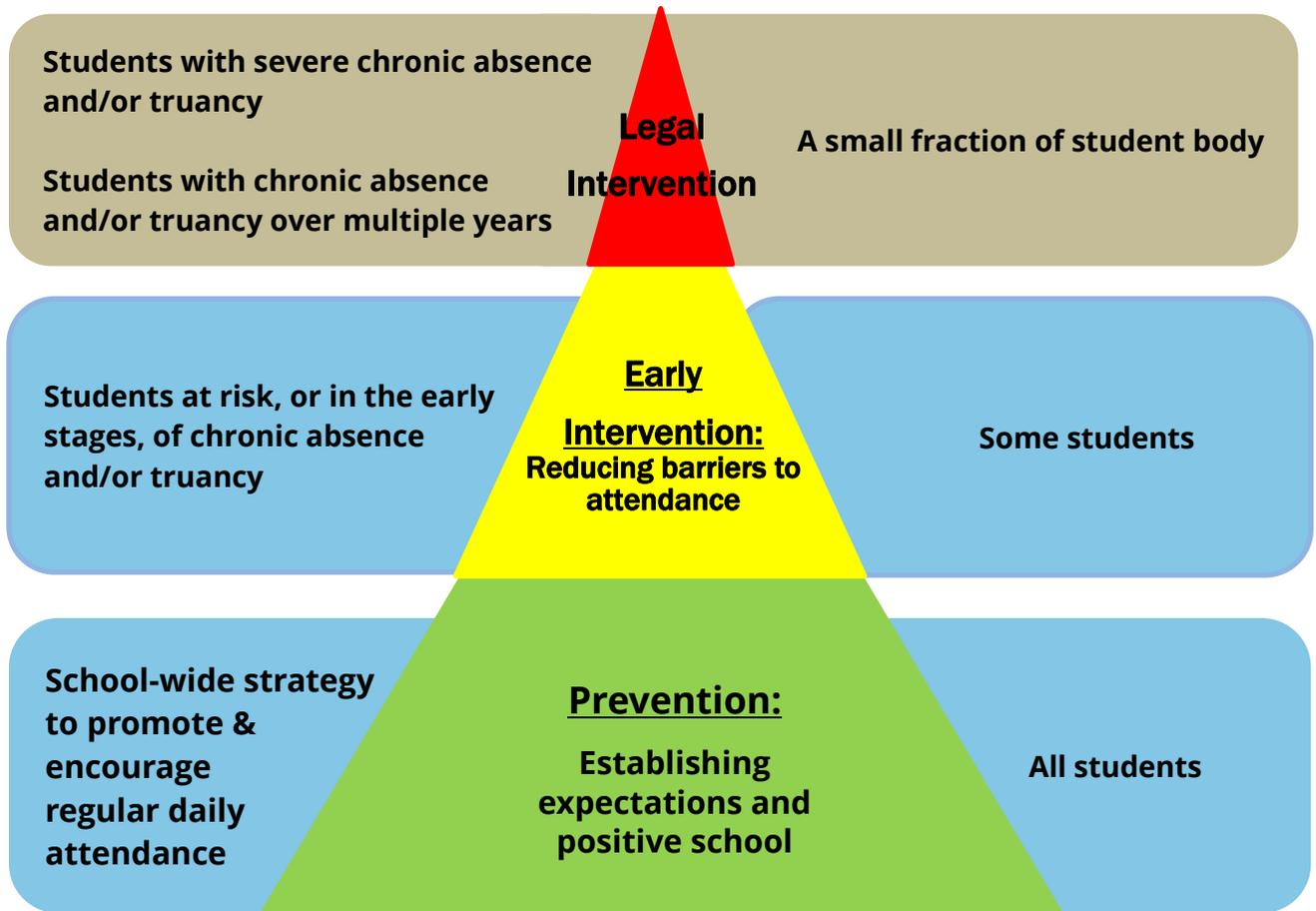
Community court is a court hearing that will be scheduled for children with a slight history of attendance issues to attend court at one of the cluster schools. Court is held right in the community at the school. This gives the child and the parent(s) an opportunity to receive the assistance that they need without being required to attend a formal court setting. They also have a review session about a month after community court.

The MSAC process represents the first tier of Metro Nashville's approach. If the student continues to miss school, after various intervention steps, a petition is processed requiring appearance in juvenile court. All cases are addressed through the tier system. Tiers are as follows:

<u>Tier 1</u>	Early intervention cases	Few number of days missed Little to no court history for truancy, status offenses, or delinquent matters	No petition processed Case handled informally as a divert for 8 weeks
<u>Tier 2</u>	Medium Risk Cases	10-20 days of school missed 3-4 previous court petitions for truancy, delinquency or status offense	Petition processed Parties appear to court and case monitored for at least 12 weeks
<u>Tier 3</u>	High Risk Cases	Children have generally missed more than 20 days of school. Low student and/or parent engagement History of non-compliance History of truancy, delinquency and/ or status offenses	Petition and violation processed. Case monitored for at least 16 weeks
<u>Soon to Be 18 Cases</u>	Cases in which the youth is within 6 months of turning 18 years old and is at risk of not graduating on time due to attendance issues.	Case will be monitored informally and the case manager will equip the youth with educational options that they will best fit them. Case will be monitored until the child is 18 years old.	No petition filed Case handled as a divert Case monitored until the child's eighteenth birthdate

For more information, please call (615-862- MSAC (6722)).

Metro Nashville School 3 Tier Approach to Attendance Intervention



SUPPORT SERVICES DEPARTMENT
SUPPORT TODAY... SUCCESS TOMORROW

Cluster Support Team Structure

The purpose of the cluster support team structure is to provide direct services to students, families, and schools in an attempt to improve daily attendance and behavior through the use of programs and practices that support the learning needs of students.

Truancy Intervention Specialists

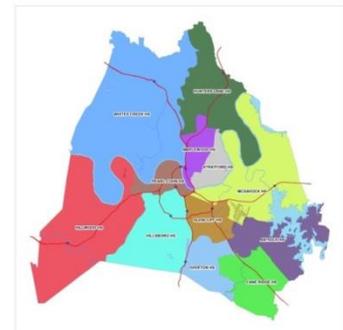
Truancy Intervention Specialists are responsible for monitoring attendance. They are tasked with much of the compliance requirements for attendance dictated by state law. They must make sure parents/guardians of truant students are notified of the compulsory attendance law and that their children are in violation of the law. The Truancy Intervention Specialists are responsible for investigating any truancy and filing all petitions with Juvenile Court as needed. The Truancy Intervention Specialists work directly with the Court Liaison to ensure the petitions are accurate and credible.

Family Involvement Specialists (FISs)

The Family Involvement Specialist (FIS) is a position that identifies parent, family, and student needs by working with families and schools. They provide trainings to families on a wide range of topics and assist schools in providing opportunities to engage families to support students. They also offer professional development to school staff on partnering with parents. The FISs also work closely with the Cluster Support Team to address family and school needs through parent engagement, securing community partners, connecting to the faith based community, and building relationships with non-profit organizations and government agencies. The Family Involvement Specialists support the Cluster Team by designing and offering events and programming to support the unique needs of each school community.

School Social Workers

Social workers provide multiple levels of service to students, school staff, and families in an effort to eliminate non-academic barriers to student success, both academic and non-academic. Most often the social worker assesses the student and determines the intervention required. The social worker will then provide the intervention or refer the student to another provider for intervention. The interventions provided are as broad as the needs of the student. Social workers provide counseling individually and in groups. They consult with teachers and administrators, conference with parents and students, work with parents and students in crisis, assist homeless students with obtaining basic needs, assist students in obtaining medical care, assist administrators and teachers with student behavior, and provide various other needs. The support and intervention meetings serve as a forum for the social workers to report back to school staff on the needs of students and interventions provided.



Behavior Analyst

The Behavior Support Team (BST) provides a range of consultative and professional development services aimed at building capacity in schools to improve student behavior and achievement. They provide consultation on primary and secondary interventions in addition to the development of effective Functional Behavior Assessments (FBAs), Behavior Intervention Plans (BIPs), and Safety Plans are available upon request.

For more information, contact: Department of Support Services | Metro Nashville Public Schools
www.mnps.org.

Shelby County District Attorney's Mentoring Program – an Alternative to Juvenile Court Action

The Shelby County District Attorney's office has implemented a mentoring program available to truant students in certain designated schools. Background checks are conducted by the D.A.'s Office on each mentor candidate, including, but not limited to, sex offender registry checks. Upon completion of orientation and training, mentors are certified.

Mentoring arrangements are expected to last one year. Criteria include the number of personal contacts (a minimum of 8 hours) with the youth per month, etc. Mentors are expected to identify family problems and needs. With the help of the D.A.'s assigned case advocate, mentors should reach out to available social services, especially those in each student's neighborhood and near his or her school.

Mentors also encourage the students to participate in after-school group activities, which include tutoring and sports activities in a supervised environment. They should encourage youth to participate in after-school and summer activities in nearby community centers.

For more information, call 901-222-1300 or email mentor@scdag.com.

Shelby County Attendance and Truancy Task Force (ATTF)

The Attendance and Truancy Task Force was established in the spring of 2015 in response to the high absenteeism and truancy rates that impact student achievement in Shelby County. In addition to Shelby County Schools and the District Attorney's office, the multi-agency task force includes Juvenile Court, the Memphis Police Department, the Shelby County Sheriff's Department, TN Department of Children's Services, the Achievement School District (ASD), Memphis Tomorrow, and the Memphis/Shelby County Crime Commission. The task force seeks to:

1. Improve satisfactory attendance rates and decrease chronic absenteeism in SCS and ASD Schools
2. Improve attendance rates within SCS "Hot Spot" Schools (those with high rates of absenteeism).
3. Decrease the Shelby County truancy rate
4. Improve school safety and the learning climate
5. Reach students, parents and community agencies with messages relating to the importance of attendance

For the 2015-2016 the Achievement School District Schools (ASD) in Shelby County was successful in reducing chronic absenteeism by 5.7%, from 31.9% to 26.2%. ASD members of the ATTF think that their ability to implement change quickly and the presence of active community partners like Communities in Schools have made a positive difference. Shelby County Schools also opened five Truancy Centers across the county allowing the Memphis Police Department and Shelby County Sheriff's Department to take truant students to one of the centers instead of having to arrest them and take them to juvenile court.

In June of 2016, the full ATTF adopted a goal of 25% reduction in chronic absenteeism across SCS and ASD for the 2016-2017 school year. The ATTF is offering incentives to principals who reach the 25% reduction in chronic absenteeism, and a monetary incentive is being offered for successful principals to mentor principals with low attendance rates in a set of prescribed meetings and data support. Principals are being supplied the names of the chronically absent students in their schools, and attempts were made to contact those students before the 2016-2017 school year began to provide support to mitigate issues that have caused chronic absenteeism.

For more information, contact People First at 901-507-4182

RESOURCES

Statewide Resources

- Find your local health department at: <http://www.tn.gov/health/topic/localdepartments>
- Web sites for additional services:
<http://www.kidcentraltn.com/article/crisis-services-for-children>
<http://www.kidcentraltn.com/article/helping-children-through-a-difficult-time>
- If you are experiencing a mental health crisis, call 1-855-CRISIS 1 (1-855-274-7471).
- If you need a referral for substance abuse, call 1-800-889-9789.
- <http://tn211.mycommunitypt.com/index.php/component/cpx/?Itemid=3>
 - One of the easiest ways to get help is by dialing 2-1-1, Tennessee's community services help line. When you call, you'll get a real person, one who is trained to help you sort out your needs, and then give you phone numbers and addresses of the closest places where you can get help. 2-1-1 has a database of more than 10,000 health and human services programs, cross-referenced for all sorts of keywords. So don't worry if you don't know what type of service you need or the name of an agency — just talk with the specialist at the other end of the line and she or he can help you find what you need. All calls are free and completely confidential. Hours vary by location.
 - 2-1-1's in Tennessee subscribe to standards set by the Alliance of Information & Referral Systems and the statewide affiliate, TNAIRS. For more information on professional information and referral, go to <http://tnairs.org>.
- Tennessee Department of Human Services :
 - Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Program Family Assistance Service Center 615-743-2000 (Nashville area) 1-866-311-4287 (Toll free) - See more at: <http://www.tennessee.gov/humanservices/topic/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap#sthash.Gm3DRlwA.dpuf>.
 - Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) is a federally funded program that provides reimbursement for eligible meals that are served to participants who meet age and income requirements. - See more at: <http://www.tennessee.gov/humanservices/article/child-and-adult-care-food-program1#sthash.3VBdUa1v.dpuf> or **Phone:** (615) 313-4749; **email:** CACFP.DHS@tn.gov.
 - For more information see: <http://www.tennessee.gov/humanservices/article/tdhs-contact-us>.

- Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE)

For information about the ACE Questionnaire see:

<http://www.goodtherapy.org/blog/psychpedia/ace-questionnaire>

The PDF of the ACE questionnaire:

<http://www.ncjfcj.org/sites/default/files/Finding%20Your%20ACE%20Score.pdf>



Program Description: School Based Mental Health Liaisons (SBMHL) is a program that provides prevention services for children and youth in middle and high schools. SBMHLs provide face-to-face consultation with classroom teachers who will enhance learning environments for children who have or are at-risk for serious emotional disturbance, behavior problems, or substance use disorders. SBMHLs also provide training and education for the classroom teacher and serve as a link between the school and the child's family. The student must be in a middle or high school which has the SBMHL program in order to participate.

Tennessee Counties Served: Carter, Cocke, Crockett, Hardeman, Humphreys, Madison, Rutherford, Unicoi, Washington, and Williamson

West Tennessee Resources



Program Description: The Shelby County Schools Mental Health Center (SCSMHC) operates within the Department of Coordinated School Health and is licensed by the Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse to provide comprehensive outpatient mental health services, including integrated treatment services for substance use and mental health issues. It is the link between home, school, and community, providing direct as well as indirect services to students, families and school personnel to promote and support our students' academic and social successes. The SCSMHC employs over 75 mental health trained school social workers, school psychologists, supervising psychologists, alcohol and drug counselors . It offers an array of school-based services related to a student's social and emotional adjustment to school, family, community and society. Services include comprehensive psychological evaluation, evidenced-based individual and group counseling, crisis intervention and follow-up, threat assessments, integrated individual, group and family treatment for substance abuse and co-occurring mental health issues, specialized services to alternative and innovative school students, academic and behavioral consultation to parents and teachers, functional behavioral assessments and behavior intervention planning, case management services to pregnant and parenting students, parent support and training, and therapeutic summer programs.

Tennessee Counties Served: Shelby

- **Communities in Schools** : The group helps provide wrap around support services to schools and students. The state headquarters is in Nashville, but they do have a branch in Memphis. The local contact is Sonji Branch, sbranch@cistn.org
-

Middle Tennessee Resources



Program Description: Children benefit most from receiving services where challenges are actually occurring. In addition, transportation can often be a barrier to treatment. This program offers school-based counseling and care management at the neighborhood school level.

Tennessee Counties Served: Davidson

Level of Service: Intensive



Program Description: Since 1992, Vanderbilt has provided evidence based mental health treatment in school based clinics across Davidson County. In the 2014-15 academic year, it had 32 full time clinicians serving nearly 1,000 children and families in 35 sites across Davidson County, including 6 charter schools. The team of mental health therapists, nurse practitioners, and child psychiatry fellows has collaborated to provide integrated mental health services in a community school setting, thereby making a broad impact on emotional, behavioral, and academic difficulties.

Counties Served: Davidson

Level of Service: Intensive

East Tennessee Resources



Program Description: Mental Health 101 is a school based program serving middle and high schools across east Tennessee. Mental Health Association of East Tennessee staff visit more than 60 schools, serving 17,000 students during the academic year teaching the Mental Health 101 curriculum to middle and high school students.

Counties Served: East Tennessee

Level of Service: Prevention



Program Description: Cherokee Health System (CHS) will be delivering targeted mental health care and intensive interventions in Anderson County to those students who have been referred and whose parents or guardians have consented to care. Beginning in the 2016-2017 school year, CHS will have licensed social workers on-site at each location to provide comprehensive behavioral health services. Tennessee joins 19 other states, with Anderson County being one of 60 school systems to receive Project AWARE funds. CHS' model of school-based behavioral health treatment is integrated, culturally sensitive, and student-focused, a press release noted. In this multi-system approach, CHS clinicians offer valuable input designed to meet the student's unique needs, which enables students to address emotional needs so that they can flourish academically and socially.

Counties Served: Anderson County

Level of Service: Intensive



Program Description: With the help of a federal grant, the HEROES Initiative is a collaborative effort between Johnson City Schools, the Johnson City Police Department, Johnson City Juvenile Court, and Frontier Health. Its goal is to implement an integrated, comprehensive, community-wide plan designed to create a safe, respectful, and drug-free school environment and promote pro-social skills and healthy childhood development in the youth of Johnson City.

Counties Served: Johnson City



Program Description: Students who struggle with behavioral disorders, hyperactivity, depression or other difficulties are referred by school counselors to Centerstone's school-based staff members. Centerstone school-based therapists/case managers then work closely with school counselors to provide mental health counseling for students. Centerstone can also provide support for families and school personnel. Parents have the opportunity to be involved in treatment decisions, and connect with additional resources, if necessary. Additionally, Centerstone's professionals work closely with school personnel, training them to work with at-risk children.

Counties Served: Numerous

Level of Service: Intensive



**TENNESSEE
ACHIEVES
ACADEMIC SUCCESS**

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http://www.tn.gov/assets/entities/safety/attachments/tn_achieves.pdf



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