



# Counselor's Corner

March/April 2020

## School Attendance, Truancy & Chronic Absenteeism: What Parents Need to Know

How many days has your child been absent from school over the past 4 weeks? Was it just one sick day or two? What about the day he left early for the dentist? Or the days you took off to extend a vacation? It's hard to always keep track.

Missing two days a month—excused or unexcused—can add up to a child being considered chronically absent.

What is chronic absenteeism?

Chronic absenteeism means missing too much school—for any reason—excused or unexcused. Experts and a growing number of states define chronic absenteeism as missing 10% (or around 18 days) during a school year).

Chronic absenteeism affects as many as 6.5 million students nationwide. That's 13% of our total student population! You may think this is just high school students skipping school. But in fact, this problem starts early. **At least 10% of kindergarten and first-grade students miss a month or more of the school year. Chronic absenteeism becomes more common in middle school, and about 19% of all high school students are chronically absent.**

Students are chronically absent for many reasons.

There are some reasons for absenteeism that cannot be avoided. Life happens. Common illness causing high fevers and fatigue happen. But, if your child is missing many days of school, or a few days every single month, it's important to consider the reason for the absenteeism.

Don't underestimate the harm of these school absences.

Missing just two days a month of school—for any reason—can be a problem for kids in a number of ways.

**Children who are chronically absent in kindergarten and first grade are less likely to read on grade level by the**

third grade. For older students, being chronically absent is strongly associated with failing at school—even more than low grades or test scores. When absences add up, these students are more likely to be suspended and **drop out** of high school. Chronic absenteeism is also linked with teen substance use, as well as poor health as adults.

Here are 10 practical tips to getting your child to school on time, every day:

1. Set attendance goals with your child and track your child's attendance on a calendar
2. Help your child get a good night's sleep.
3. Prep the night before to streamline your morning.
4. Try to schedule dental or medical appointments before or after school hours.
5. Schedule extended trips during school breaks..
6. Don't let your child stay home unless he or she is truly sick..
7. Talk with your child about the reasons why he or she does not want to go to school.
8. If your child has a chronic health issue such as asthma, allergies, or seizures, talk with your pediatrician about developing a school action plan.
9. Follow the school rules to report absence.
10. Keep track of your child's attendance and investigate reasons when the days missed add up.

To read the full article at [healthychildren.org](https://healthychildren.org):

<https://healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/gradeschool/school/Pages/School-Attendance-Truancy-Chronic-Absenteeism.aspx>

For further details or information, please contact your child's guidance counselor:

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