

Why is there a focus on school attendance?

When students attend school regularly, they are likely to experience higher academic achievement and build positive peer relationships. Regular school attendance also helps reduce the risk of involvement in the juvenile justice system.

Additionally, regular school attendance increases the likelihood of high school graduation, which then empowers students to plan for college or careers.

What happens if my child is not going to school?

C.G.S. 10-184 says in part, it is the duty of each parent/guardian to ensure that their child regularly attends a public school when school is in session. When students have too many absences that are unexcused, they may be considered truant. A student is truant when they have 4 unexcused absences in one month or 10 unexcused absences within one school year.

Due to a change in state law in August 2017 (*Public Act 16-147*), youth can no longer be referred to court if they are truant from school. Interventions through the school are used to encourage school attendance, but parents/guardians remain responsible for the attendance of their school-age children.

Did you know?

There are supports available to help students and families who are experiencing attendance issues. Schools will work with students and their families to determine reasons for absences and develop steps to improve attendance. If attendance does not improve, schools may refer students/families to a Youth Service Bureau (**YSB**) or other community-based organization for additional help or support. In order to refer the student to a **YSB**, the school will prepare the referral form and seek consent from a parent.

YSBs can support student attendance and provide services outside of school.

A YSB may recommend or provide:

- Academic supports which could include credit recovery and/or college prep programs
- Referral or access to individual or family mental health services and/or medical care
- Referral to other community-based intervention programs (including in-home services) targeting truancy and other behavioral concerns
- Educational advocacy
- Mediation
- Mentoring
- Parenting classes
- Positive social activities such as art, enrichment, and sports
- Referral for clean clothes, healthy food, stable housing, and/or transportation needs

What will happen when a truancy referral is made to a YSB?*

- Once the **YSB** has received a complete and signed truancy referral, they will reach out to the family via phone or send a letter to the family's home
- **YSB** staff will explain the process to the family and ensure consent to move forward.
- If the family agrees to participate, the **YSB** will arrange a time to meet with the student and the family and gather information (including demographics, family and school information as well as needs and strengths)
- The **YSB** will work with the school to address the individual needs of the student, such as assisting families with school meetings to support the student.
- The **YSB** will identify available and appropriate community supports for the student and review them with the student and their family
- Based on family input, **YSB** staff will provide programming within the **YSB** and/or make appropriate community referrals.

*This process may be different based on the needs of the family and/or the resources available in your community.

Tips for Parents for Improving School Attendance:

1. Develop and strengthen relationships with your child's teacher and administrators.
2. Make getting your child to school on time everyday a high priority in your family.
3. Talk with your child about the importance of education and the benefits of school attendance from an early age.
4. Encourage your child to discuss their reasons when not wanting to attend school regularly.
5. Have a back-up plan for getting your child to school when there are difficulties with transportation, family illness, or other challenges.
6. Schedule doctor and other appointments for after school hours whenever possible.
7. Monitor students' school attendance to make sure your child is in class every day.
8. Contact your child's school to discuss supports and services that can help your child maintain regular school attendance.

From: "Every Student, Every Day: A Community Toolkit to Address and Eliminate Chronic Absenteeism"

<https://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/chronicabsenteeism/toolkit.pdf>

CONTACT INFORMATION

For further information or if you have any questions please contact:
Westbrook Youth and Family Services
WYFS.org
www.ctyouthservices.org

RESOURCES

For resources to help your child improve school attendance:

211.org



AttendanceWorks.org/resources/handouts-for-families



Portal.CT.gov/SDE/Truancy/Truancy



Ed.gov/about/inits/ed/chronicabsenteeism/toolkit.pdf



Truancy Referral for Community-Based Services

A guide for parents/guardians

