

NATIONAL STUDENT ATTENDANCE,  
ENGAGEMENT, AND SUCCESS CENTER



# 2018 National Convening

May 9–10, 2018  
Baltimore, Maryland



**NSAESC**

National Student Attendance, Engagement, and Success Center

# ADDRESSING CHRONIC ABSENCE AMONG HOMELESS AND OTHER HIGHLY MOBILE AND AT-RISK STUDENTS



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**NSAESC National Convening May 2018**

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**Jane Sundius**, Attendance Works

# MEET ATTENDANCE WORKS

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- **Mission:** Advance student success and reduce equity gaps by reducing chronic absence
- **Objectives:** Build public awareness and political will, foster state campaigns and partnerships, and encourage local practice
- **Website:** <http://www.attendanceworks.org/>

# MEET NCHE

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- **NCHE** is the U.S. Department of Education's technical assistance center for the federal Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) Program.
  - Website: <http://nche.ed.gov>
  - Helpline: 800.308.2145 or [homeless@serve.org](mailto:homeless@serve.org)
  - Products: <http://nche.ed.gov/products.php>
  - Webinars: <http://nche.ed.gov/web/group.php>
  - Listserv: <http://nche.ed.gov/listserv.php>
  - Social media: <https://nche.ed.gov/social-media.php>



# SESSION OUTLINE

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- Chronic absence overview: definitions, measures, and impacts
- Homeless education 101
- “Rules of engagement”: absenteeism in statute and data-collection requirements
- Problem solving: leveraging data, policy, and practice to build solutions
- Q&A and discussion

What do  
you think?



## TRUE OR FALSE?

Chronic absence is a measure of all school absences, whether excused or unexcused.

**True**

Chronic absence is associated with lower grades and standardized test scores.

**True**

Chronic absence is associated with higher rates of grade retention and dropping out.

**True**

What do  
you think?



## TRUE OR FALSE?

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires State Education Agencies (SEAs) and Local Education Agencies (LEAs) to develop, review, and revise policies to remove absence-related barriers for students experiencing homelessness.

**True**

SEAs must include chronic absence data, disaggregated for students experiencing homelessness, in their SEA report cards.

**False**



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# CHRONIC ABSENCE OVERVIEW



## What is the impact of regular attendance?

Better academic & social skills in K-1<sup>st</sup> grade

Stronger reading skills by end of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade

Higher grades in middle school

Better rates of high school graduation

Greater persistence in college



## What is chronic absence?

**Chronic absence** is missing so much school, **for any reason**, that a student is academically at risk.



**EDFacts Definition:** The unduplicated number of all K–12 students who were enrolled in the school for at least 10 school days at any time during the school year, and who missed 10 percent of the school days in which they were enrolled.

Chronic absence is different from **truancy** (unexcused absences) and **average daily attendance** (percent of students in attendance, on average).



## How big of a problem is chronic absence?

In 11 percent of U.S. schools, 30 percent or more of students are chronically absent.

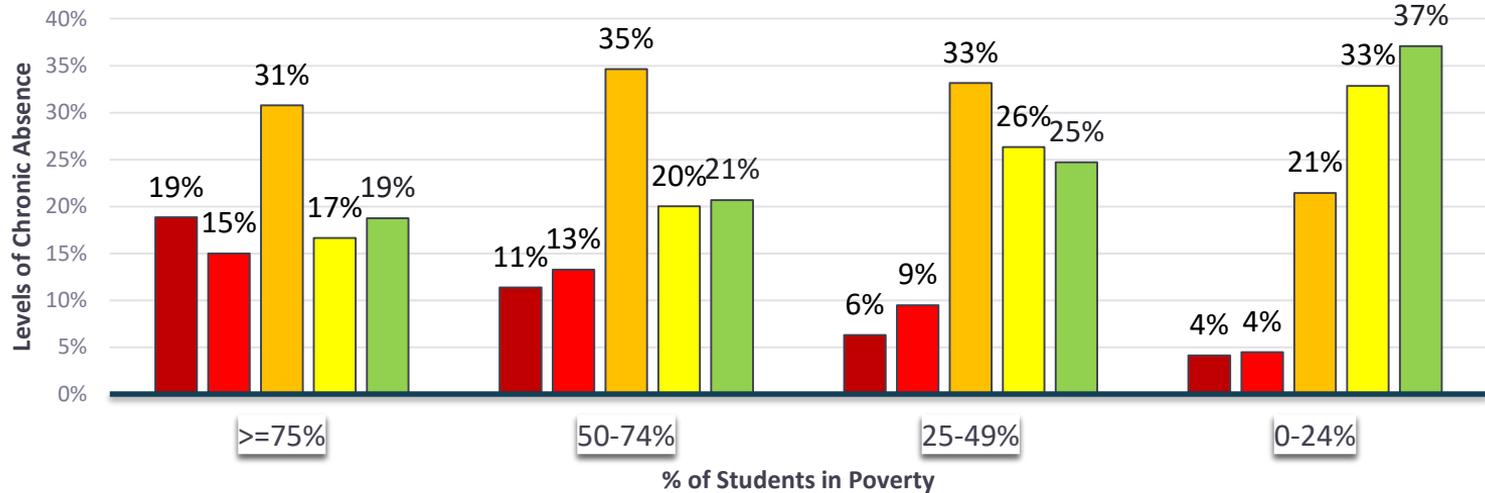
In 53 percent of U.S. schools, 10 percent or more of students are chronically absent.

Percent of Schools' Students who Are Chronically Absent:	Number of Schools	Percent of Schools
Extreme Chronic Absence (30%+)	9,921	11%
High Chronic Absence (20–29%)	10,330	11%
Significant Chronic Absence (10–19%)	28,320	31%
Modest Chronic Absence (5–9%)	21,190	23%
Low Chronic Absence (0–4%)	22,572	24%
Total Schools	92,333	



## How much does chronic absence vary by poverty level?

The average proportion of chronically absent students in high-poverty schools is **four times** that of low-poverty schools.



■ Extreme Chronic Absence (30%+)

■ High Chronic Absence (20-29%)

■ Significant Chronic Absence (10-19%)

■ Modest Chronic Absence (5-9%)

■ Low Chronic Absence (0-4%)



## Additional Considerations

- Absenteeism is more likely during certain parts of a student's K–12 educational career (↑ in early elementary, ↓ in later elementary, ↑ in middle, ↑ [highest level] in high)
- Florida's Department of Education data indicate that chronic absence is concentrated in a subset of schools (half of chronically absent students concentrated in 15 percent of schools, 29 percent in 5 percent of schools )
- Chronic absence affects not only student performance but also that of broader school systems, with negative effects on student proficiency levels and possibly on district funding levels
- The more times a student changes schools, the greater the likelihood of becoming chronically absent



## What do we know about chronic absence among homeless students?

- The U.S. Department of Education estimated that **one in seven students (14 percent)** was chronically absent during the 2013-14 school year

### **By comparison, initial findings on homeless students conclude:**

- Students experiencing homelessness are chronically absent at a rate that is **at least double** that of the overall student population
- Among students staying in a shelter who transferred schools twice or more, 80 percent were chronically absent
- Download NCHE's *In School Every Day: Addressing Chronic Absenteeism Among Students Experiencing Homelessness* at <https://nche.ed.gov/pr/briefs.php>.



**Questions?**



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# HOMELESS EDUCATION 101

# ESSA BASICS



- The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) was signed into law in December 2015.
- ESSA reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and the education subtitle of the McKinney-Vento Act.
- The McKinney-Vento Act establishes the definition of *homeless* used by U.S. public schools and the education rights of students experiencing homelessness.
- ESSA amendments to McKinney-Vento provide new opportunities for schools to help students experiencing homelessness succeed in school.
- For more information, visit <https://nche.ed.gov/legis/mv.php>

# HOMELESSNESS CREATES BARRIERS

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- Students experiencing homelessness may:
  - Be unable to meet standard school enrollment requirements
  - Move around and change schools a lot
  - Be hungry, tired, and stressed
  - Lack school supplies or a quiet place to study
  - Lack access to reliable transportation
  - Lack a parent or guardian to help them (unaccompanied youth)

# HOMELESSNESS AFFECTS EDUCATION

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- Students experiencing homelessness are more likely to:
  - Be chronically absent from school
  - Get lower grades
  - Have special education needs
  - Score poorly on assessment tests
  - Drop out of school

# THE PREVENTIVE VALUE OF EDUCATION

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- Children in quality preschool programs are more likely to graduate from high school and own homes.
- High school graduation is associated with an array of positive life outcomes (↓ unemployment, ↓ criminal justice involvement, ↑ income, ↑ health outcomes, ↑ life span).
- More than 95 percent of the jobs created since the Great Recession have gone to workers with at least some postsecondary education

# THE PREVENTIVE VALUE OF EDUCATION

Particular subpopulations are at higher risk for homelessness



**346%**

Youth with less than a high school diploma or GED had a 346% higher risk

**120%**

LGBT youth had a 120% higher risk

**162%**

Youth reporting annual household income of less than \$24,000 had a 162% higher risk

**33%**

Hispanic, non-White youth had a 33% higher risk

**83%**

Black or African American youth had an 83% higher risk

**200%**

Unmarried parenting youth had a 200% higher risk



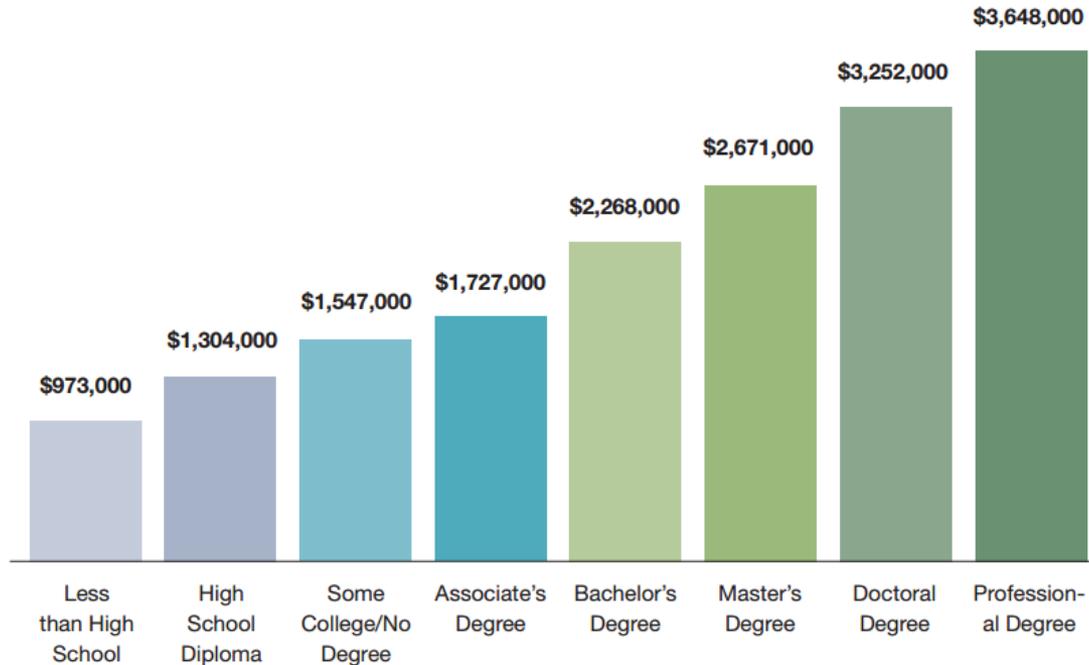
 Findings from Voices of Youth Count, an initiative of Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago | [voicesofyouthcount.org](https://voicesofyouthcount.org) 

VOICES OF  
YOUTH COUNT



# THE PREVENTIVE VALUE OF EDUCATION

FIGURE 1: MEDIAN LIFETIME EARNINGS BY HIGHEST EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT, 2009 DOLLARS



# MCKINNEY-VENTO DEFINITION OF *HOMELESS*

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- Children or youth who **lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence**, including children and youth:
  - Sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason
  - Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to a lack of alternative adequate accommodations
  - Living in emergency/transitional shelters or were abandoned in hospitals

# MCKINNEY-VENTO DEFINITION OF *HOMELESS*

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- Living in a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings
- Living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings
- Migratory children living in the above circumstances

[42 U.S.C. § 11434a(2)]

- The term ***unaccompanied youth*** includes a homeless child or youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian [42 U.S.C. § 11434a(6)].

# DETERMINATIONS OF ELIGIBILITY

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- The **local liaison** has the authority and responsibility to ensure that eligible students are identified; this should be a collaborative effort with school personnel and through outreach and coordination activities with other entities and agencies [42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(6)(A)(i)].
- Eligibility determinations should be made on a **case-by-case basis**, considering the circumstances of each student.
- Pay close attention to the **legislative wording**, as it may provide needed clarity.
- Download *Determining Eligibility for McKinney-Vento Rights and Services* at <https://nche.ed.gov/pr/briefs.php> for more information.



**Questions?**



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# “RULES OF ENGAGEMENT”

# Increased Focus on Chronic Absence

## No Child Left Behind Act

Success measured by academics

Federally set goals & interventions

Data and results matter for student sub-groups

States set compulsory attendance laws and define truancy; responses involve courts

## Every Student Succeeds Act

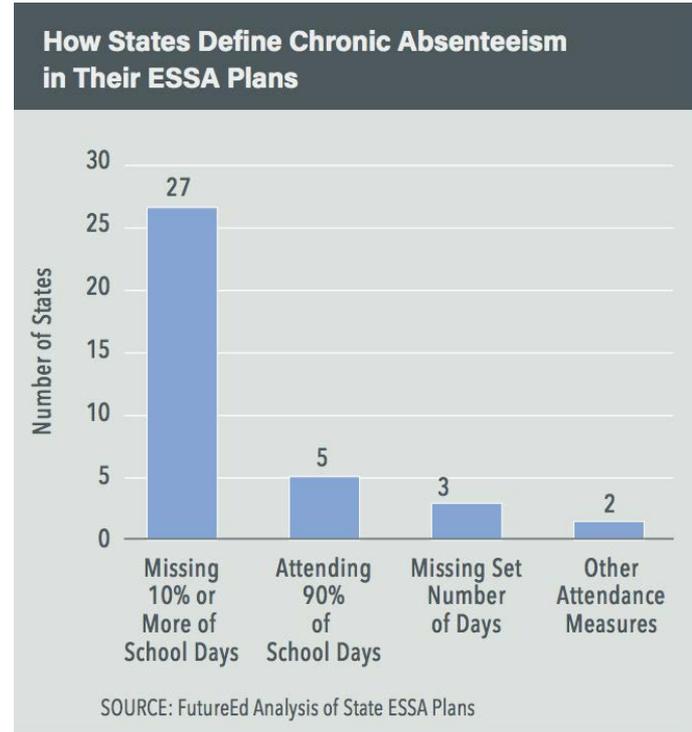
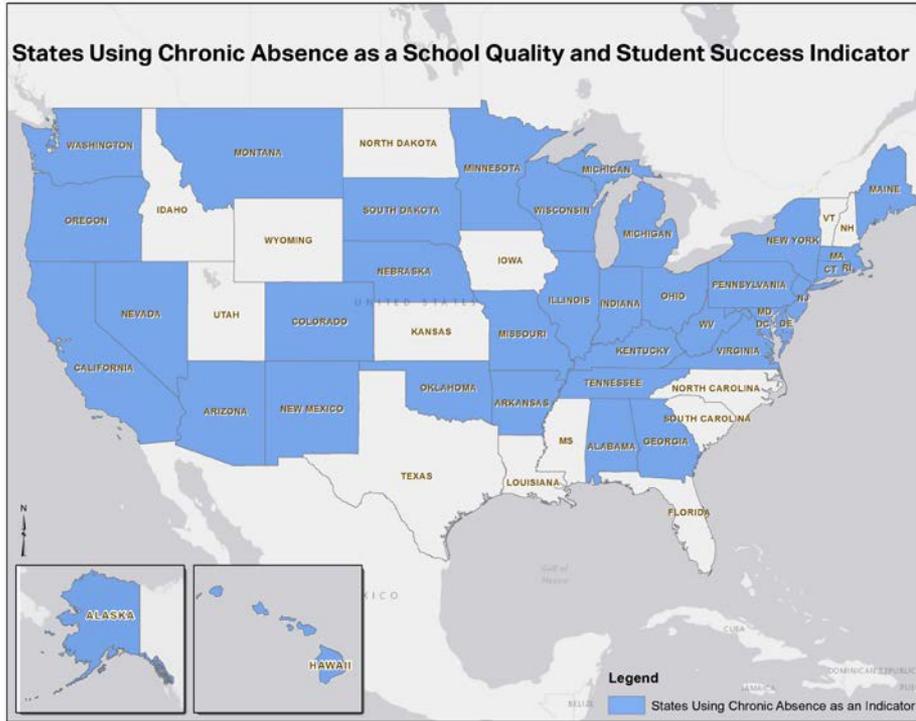
Success measured by academics and other measures

States set goals and interventions

Data and results matter for student sub-groups

Chronic absence reporting required by feds; states can choose it as school quality metric. Responses are school based.

# Increased Use of Chronic Absence: 36 States + DC



# REPORTING CHRONIC ABSENCE DATA

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- Beginning with SY2016-17, states must report rates of chronic absence among their student populations, disaggregated by race, disability status, Limited English Proficiency (LEP) status, and homeless status, to the U.S. Department of Education
- Currently not included in the Consolidated State Performance Report (CSPR)
- Not a mandated item in SEA or LEA report cards; SEAs may choose to include it as an “other academic indicator” but currently are not required to do so
- Included in the Department of Education’s Civil Rights Data Collection beginning in SY2013-14, but defined differently from *EdFacts*; visit <https://ocrdata.ed.gov/> or <https://www2.ed.gov/datastory/chronicabsenteeism.html>.

# NEW MCKINNEY-VENTO LANGUAGE IN ESSA

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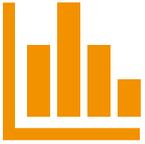


McKinney-Vento state plans must demonstrate that the SEA and LEAs within the state have developed, and shall review and revise, policies to remove barriers to the identification, enrollment, and success in school of students experiencing homelessness, including barriers due to absences.

42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(1)(I)

# MCKINNEY-VENTO CHRONIC ABSENCE DATA

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- Newly required data element on chronic absence among McKinney-Vento students as of the 2016-17 school year
- Collected via EdFacts File Spec C195, available at <https://www2.ed.gov/print/about/inits/ed/edfacts/file-specifications.html>.
- Collected at the school level only; this differs from other homeless education data elements, which are usually collected at the district and state levels
- A student must attend the school for at least 10 days before being included in the count; a student is counted absent if 50 percent or more of the school day is missed

# MCKINNEY-VENTO CHRONIC ABSENCE DATA

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- The public reporting of chronic absence data is likely to be affected by data quality (in the short term) and data suppression requirements for privacy reasons
- After quality checks, NCHE will share the Department of Education–cleared data with State Coordinators for Homeless Education for program planning and technical assistance purposes
- As data quality improves, NCHE may incorporate chronic absence data into its annual national data summary report



**Questions?**



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# LEVERAGING DATA, POLICY, AND PRACTICE TO BUILD SOLUTIONS



## Pay Attention to the Details

- Who counts in attendance accountability measures?
- What are the enrollment and disenrollment criteria?
- How and how much will chronic absence measures affect accountability ratings?
- What data on chronic absence will be available? Who will have access—SEAs, LEAs, the general public?
- How will data be audited for accuracy?
- How can SEAs and LEAs leverage data insights to target interventions?



## Understand the Reasons for Absences

### Barriers

- Physical and mental health issues
- Housing/material instability
- Lack of transportation
- School mobility
- Competing responsibilities
- Suspensions
- Court, DJJ, DSS involvement

### Negative Experiences

- Bullying / harassment
- Personal stress
- School failure and stress
- Poor school climate
- Safety/conflict

### Lack of Engagement

- Classes are irrelevant, boring
- No school or student relationships
- Can't see a path to success
- Prefer non-school activity
- Absent teachers, substitutes

### Misconceptions

- Only unexcused absences matter
- Two absences a month won't hurt
- Absences only matter in older grades
- There's no need to keep track of my/my student's absences
- School doesn't matter



## Develop and Share Strategies for Reducing Absences

1. **Determine the flags for student intervention.** What level of absence requires a response? How should responses differ?
2. **Analyze chronic absence data to uncover concentrations, patterns, and causes.** Are there differences by type of nighttime residence? What other circumstances might explain absences? Can you draw on the insights of students and families to understand absences?
3. **Develop prevention and interventions strategies to improve attendance.** What prevention strategies can you offer? What works for early intervention? What are best practices for improved coordination between shelters, schools, public agencies, and supportive services?
4. **Determine who has a role and responsibility for developing strategies and for responding.** What structures are needed in SEAs and LEAs to solve attendance problems? Who should participate?



## Sample Strategies

### Student-level strategies

- Pair students with mentors who provide encouragement and follow-up.
- Follow up promptly with parents and/or students when absences occur to understand reasons and propose solutions.

### District-level strategies

- Offer before- and after-school activities that increase students' desire to attend school.
- Incentivize school attendance by rewarding students with excellent attendance records.
- Provide school-based dental and health services for students who may not otherwise have access.
- Revise punitive policies that may inadvertently decrease student attendance.



## Sample Strategies

### Leverage community support through partnership with local agencies, including

- **Homeless shelters:** Shelters can partner with schools, providing a space for students to do homework and encouraging families to send their children to school every day
- **Social services:** Local social service agencies can support school attendance by encouraging families who receive public benefits to send their children to school every day (e.g., a Colorado community incorporated school attendance into its TANF personal responsibility contracts)
- **Local public transit and media:** Communities can partner with local transit authorities and media through public relations campaigns (e.g., NYC uses automated phone calls to student homes from celebrities encouraging regular school attendance and signs on subways and busses reminding parents about the importance of school attendance)



**Questions?**

# Reflection and Discussion

## Turn to the people next to you and discuss:

- What strategies is your SEA and/or LEA using to track chronic absence among students and support regular school attendance?
- How is your SEA and/or LEA targeting attendance-focused supports to at-risk student groups?
- What is a practical next step you can take based on information you learned in today's session?

## Group debrief

# THANK YOU FOR JOINING US!

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