THE TIP OF THE ICEBERG:
IDENTIFYING AND ADDRESSING BARRIERS TO SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

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By Treva Haugaard, Brigid Howard, Rebecka Theurer, and Shelley Boyd
Icebreaker/Introductions
Today’s Agenda:

1. What is the problem?
2. What causes this problem?
3. What can be done?
4. What are WE doing?
5. How well does it work?
6. How can you use this?
7. What can you learn from our experiences?
What is the problem?
Average Daily Attendance

Truancy

Problematic Absenteeism

Chronic Absenteeism
National Data on Absenteeism

About 30 percent of U.S. schools have significant rates of chronic absenteeism; more than 20 percent more have high or extreme absenteeism.

11 percent of elementary students were chronically absent

Nearly 20 percent of high school students were

And 14 percent (or 1 in 7) students overall
Impact of Chronic Absenteeism

- Grade-level reading
- Achievement gaps
- Risky behavior
- Dropout rates
What causes chronic absenteeism?
Myths
- Absences are only a problem if they are unexcused
- Sporadic versus consecutive absences aren’t a problem
- Attendance only matters in the older grades

Barriers
- Chronic illness
- Lack of access to health or dental care
- Poor transportation
- Trauma
- Unmet basic needs
- No safe path to school

Aversion
- Child struggling academically
- Poor school climate, ineffective school discipline
- Parents had negative school experience

Lack of Engagement
- Lack of relevant instruction
- No meaningful relationships with adults at school
- More exciting to be out of school than in
Community Factors
School Factors
Peer Factors
Family Factors
Parent Factors
Child Factors
Reasons for Chronic Absenteeism Report

- 93 percent cited health issues
- 53 percent cited transportation
- 42 percent cited personal stress
- 41 percent preferred activity out of school
- 39 percent questioned the value of school
ATTENDANCE ICEBERG

- mental health
- avoidance/refusal/truancy
- attitude toward education
- transportation
- physical illness
- student behavior at school
- work (parent or student)
- parent engagement
- trauma
- lack of health care
- parent work schedules
- lack of resources
- child abuse/neglect
- mobility
- learning problems
- juvenile justice involvement
- mental health
- safety in neighborhood
- caring for siblings
- nutrition issues
- single parent
- divorce
- foster care
- poverty
- school phobia
- bullying
- unemployment
- substance abuse (student or parent)
- parenting skills
- lack of engagement
- homelessness
What can be done?
Multi-Tiered Intervention Strategy:

- **Tier 1**: Universal prevention efforts
- **Tier 2**: Targeted interventions for those with moderate chronic absenteeism
- **Tier 3**: Intensive intervention for severe absenteeism
Intervention Strategies

- Monitor data
- Engage students and parents
- Recognition for good or improved attendance
- Personalized outreach
- Remove barriers
What are we doing?
Nebraska State Education Association Districts
Eleven Districts in Two Counties

The six voting districts and the 11 school districts that make up the learning community.

School boundaries:

1. Bennington
2. Douglas County West
3. Elkhorn
4. Gretna
5. Millard
6. Omaha
7. Ralston
8. Westside
9. Bellevue
10. Papillion-La Vista
11. Springfield Platteview

SOURCE: Douglas County Election Commissioner's Office
Greater Omaha Community Pyramid of Intervention

- District- or Building-Level Intervention
- Referral to GOALS
- Targeted Interventions
- Community Interventions
GOALS Center Service Model

Identification of At-Risk Students/Referral

Comprehensive Assessment

Service Planning and Ongoing Service Provision

Continued Assessment, Service, and Closure
Working with Community Providers

- Ensuring financial ability to connect to resources
- Resources are culturally competent and respectful
- Family voice and choice important when connecting families to resources
How well does it work?
GOALS Center Key Outcomes

Prevention of Involvement with Juvenile Justice/Child Welfare

Increase in Attendance for Students Served

Other outcomes measured:
- Academic performance at referral and closure
- Involvement with community resources at closure
- Consumer satisfaction
- Ohio Scales assessment protocol
Outcomes Data (Dec 2014–March 2018)

Successful closures (n=131) demonstrated dramatic improvement in the proportion of days attended; Neutral closures (n=74) saw some improvement; Unsuccessful closures (n=130) did not improve.

58% of all served showed improvement of at least two days a month.

82% were not involved with the court for truancy.

98% those completing the service plan were passing all or most classes at closure.
What can you learn from our experience?
Fill Out Your Pyramid

For each tier, fill in the activities/supports currently in place.

School District/ School Name:

How many students are in each tier?

Tier 3

Tier 2

Tier 1

TIER 3: missing more than 20% of school (4+ days per month)

High Cost

TIER 2: missing more than 10% but less than 20% of school (2-3 days per month)

TIER 1B: missing between 5% but less than 10% of school (1+ days per month)

Low Cost

TIER 1A: missing less than 5% of school (< 1 day per month)
Anecdotal Impact

“Knowing there was someone on my side and who had my back was reassuring. He gave us great suggestions and was able to guide us to better school years.”

“This lady right here was a huge part in the success and him graduating...She was a tremendous help to him and to myself! Thank you so much for all you did for my son and family!”
Questions? Takeaways? Next steps?

Presenters:

Treva Haugaard, MSW & MPA,
Executive Director
Treva.Haugaard@goals-center.org

Brigid Howard, MA,
Quality Assurance Coordinator
Brigid.Howard@goals-center.org

Rebecka Theurer, MPA,
Lead Family Advocate
Rebecka.Theurer@goals-center.org

Shelley Boyd, LCSW,
School Social Worker, Millard Public Schools
sboyd@mpsomaha.org
References


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