

NEBRASKA EVERY DAY COUNTS!



During the 2024-2025 school year, nearly 65,000 students were chronically absent.

This absenteeism disproportionately affects students of color, students with disabilities, English learners, and economically disadvantaged students. There are many steps educators can take to address chronic absence within their schools.

How does Nebraska define chronic absenteeism?

A student is chronically absent when they miss 10% of their time in membership.

Examples:

- 1) Blake is enrolled in his school for 50 days, and misses 5. He is chronically absent.
- 2) Mona misses 18 days of school out of her district's 175. She is chronically absent.
- 3) Cora misses 3 days of her 130 enrolled days. She is not chronically absent.

How is chronic absence different from truancy?

Truancy

- Counts only unexcused absences
- Emphasizes compliance with school rules
- Relies on legal and administrative solutions

Vs.

Chronic Absence

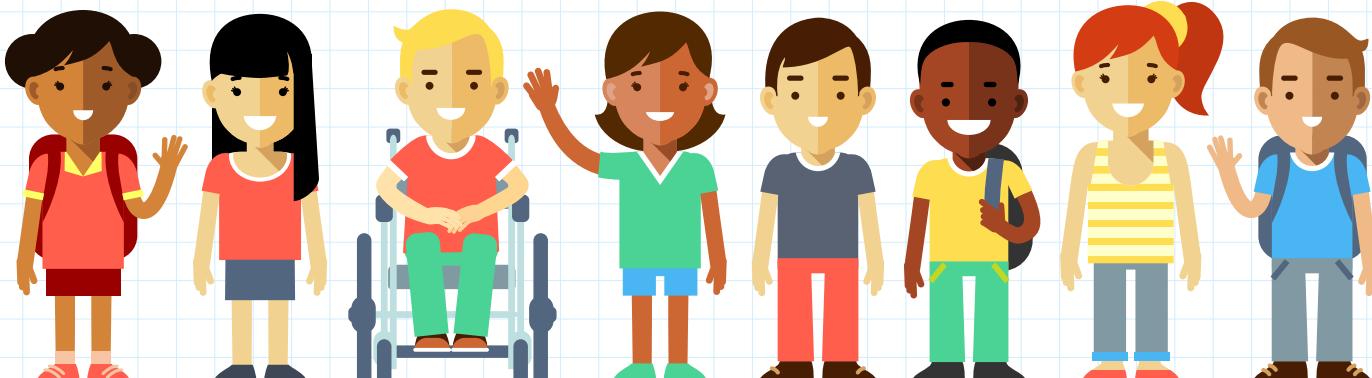
- Counts all absences: excused, unexcused, and suspensions
- Emphasizes academic impact of missed days
- Uses community-based, positive strategies

What resources are available to help me accurately record and report students who are chronically absent?

We know each student situation is unique. The NDE provides guidance around this topic. Search the NDE website at education.ne.gov for:

- Rule 2: Uniform System of Accounting
- ADVISER: Who Reports What
- ADVISER: Data Elements

When in doubt, contact the Nebraska Department of Education Help Desk for guidance. They can be reached at ADVISERHelp@Nebraskacloud.org or 888.285.0556.



How is chronic absenteeism included in the accountability system?

AQuESTT, Nebraska's accountability system, uses a reduction in chronic absenteeism approach. Prior to 2020, the NDE analyzed three years of chronic absence data to determine a baseline for each school. Using 2021-2022 chronic absence data, targets will be set for each school to reduce chronic absenteeism by half in 10 years. Schools meeting and exceeding the yearly reduction benchmarks may be eligible for a classification adjustment. For more information, see the AQuESTT Classification Rules on the AQuESTT Resources webpage: aquestt.com/resources.

Why was chronic absenteeism chosen as an indicator in the AQuESTT system?

Chronic absenteeism is a measure of disproportionate access to educational opportunities. Research shows that students who miss 10% or more of their school days perform worse academically, and have worsened life outcomes (jail time, unemployment, etc). In Nebraska, like most other places, students of color, students with disabilities, English learners, and economically disadvantaged students are more likely to be chronically absent. As such, the NDE selected reduction in chronic absenteeism as an indicator.

What can we do about chronic absence? Isn't student attendance out of our control?

There are a number of factors contributing to chronic absence within the direct control of schools. The first step to addressing the problem is understanding it better.

Factors Contributing to Chronic Absence (Attendance Works, 2019)

Barriers	Negative School Experiences	Lack of Engagement	Misconceptions
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Illness, both chronic and acute• Lack of health, mental health, vision, or dental care• Trauma• Unsafe path to/from school• Poor transportation• Frequent moves or school changes• Involvement with child welfare or juvenile justice systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Struggling academically or socially• Bullying• Suspensions and expulsions• Negative attitudes of parents due to their own school experience• Undiagnosed disability• Lack of appropriate accommodations for disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lack of culturally relevant, engaging instruction• No meaningful relationships with adults in school• Stronger ties with peers out of school than in school• Unwelcoming school climate• Failure to earn credits/no future plans• Many teacher absences or long-term substitutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Absences are only a problem if they are unexcused• Missing two days per month doesn't affect learning• Sporadic absences aren't a problem• Attendance only matters in the older grades

Strategies for School Sites (Attendance Works, 2019)

- Engage students and parents
- Recognize good and improved attendance
- Monitor attendance data and practices
- Provide personalized, early outreach
- Develop programmatic response to barriers



For more information, visit attendanceworks.org.