

RESOURCE QUESTIONS

Attendance Matters

Here at Valley of the Sun United Way, we recognize the importance of preventing chronic absenteeism. In Arizona, the latest figures remain double the pre-pandemic rate.

Chronic absence is a complex but solvable problem, if we work together. Below are some helpful questions for staff at schools who frequently communicate with families about their children's absences.

These questions and talking points help attendance teams create a relationship with families and tackle the problem strategically – by providing context as to which resources are needed for each unique situation.

Scenario: Many unverified absences where a parent/guardian does not communicate with the school.

1. We are very concerned that you may not be aware that your child is missing school because our records indicate that you have not called him/her in with a reason for each absence. Is everything ok?
2. Can you tell me a bit more about what's going on?
3. We want to make sure that your child is safe and you know where they are at all times – do you need our help with this?
4. Is there anything preventing your child from coming to school?
5. Is there any support you or your child needs to attend school more regularly?
6. How can we help?
7. Can I leave some schoolwork in the office for you to pick up so your child does not get too far behind?
8. Here is the number for our attendance line _____.
 - a. Please know there is a voicemail that is available 24 hours a day/7 days a week for you to leave a message and let us know what is going on with your child.

Scenario: Lots of illness and/or doctor's appointments.

1. We noticed your child has not been feeling well lately. Is there anything we can do to help you or your child?
2. Is there a new diagnosis that is contributing to these absences?
3. Can I connect you with our school nurse to discuss this further?
4. Can I email you with any resources you could bring to your healthcare provider?

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Scenario: K-3 Specific

1. I have been taking a close look at student attendance. We noticed that _____ already has _____ (number) of absences this school year. Is everything okay?
2. Starting in kindergarten, too many absences can cause children to fall behind in school, making it hard to learn to read – an essential tool for their growth.
3. Some tips we share with parents include:
 - a. Set a regular bedtime and morning routine
 - b. Lay out clothes and backpacks the night before
 - c. Don't let your child stay home unless they have a fever, vomiting or diarrhea
 - d. Schedule medical and dental appointments on days when we have no school
4. How can we support you in getting them to school every day?

Scenario: Nurse Specific

1. Hi, I am _____, the school nurse. I was working with our attendance team today and noticed you have called your child in _____ # of times for illness. I am reaching out to see how I can support your child here at school. Can you tell me a little bit about what is going on with their health?
2. Can I provide a form with you to help alleviate the stress of absences on your child and you?
 - a. If a doctor fills out this form, then your child's absences will not be penalized. They would be called in as "Chronic."
 - b. Can I email the form to you to take to the next doctor appointment?
3. We can make a care plan at school. Are you aware of that?
 - a. I will be making my administration (Principal) aware of what is going on to see if there are additional supports we can provide.

Made in collaboration with Cartwright Elementary School District



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