



501 3rd Street, NW · 8th Floor
Washington, DC 20001
T 202.467.4900 · F 202.467.4949
www.childrenslawcenter.org

Testimony Before the District of Columbia Council
Committee of the Whole
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Public Oversight Hearing:
Chronic Absenteeism and Truancy

Children's Law Center
Judith Sandalow, Executive Director
Danielle Robinette, Senior Policy Attorney

Introduction

Children's Law Center believes every child should grow up with a strong foundation of family, health and education and live in a world free from poverty, trauma, racism and other forms of oppression. Our more than 100 staff – together with DC children and families, community partners and pro bono attorneys – use the law to solve children's urgent problems today and improve the systems that will affect their lives tomorrow. Since our founding in 1996, we have reached more than 50,000 children and families directly and multiplied our impact by advocating for city-wide solutions that benefit hundreds of thousands more.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today regarding school attendance and student engagement in the District. Absenteeism has long been a challenge for the District, and several programs currently exist to support students and families in overcoming their barriers to attendance (see Appendix). Over the years, the District has developed several tools to address student disengagement. However, the current system lacks the necessary interagency collaboration to easily connect students facing barriers to the supportive programming that could help them. We urge the Council to focus on better coordination among the District agencies that implement these supportive tools rather than doubling down on ineffective referrals to law enforcement and child welfare.

The District Must Focus on Supporting Students and Families by Identifying and Overcoming Barriers to Attendance

To remove barriers to attendance, we must first identify them. OSSE's annual attendance reporting shows that at-risk students are more likely to incur absences compared to their peers.¹ At the same time, at-risk students report higher instances of feeling unsafe due to bullying, harassment, and embarrassment.² They are more frequently enrolled in schools with poor facility conditions, are more disconnected and disengaged from adults in the school community, have limited transportation options, and have additional familial responsibilities.³ Moreover, OSSE's attendance data shows that "absenteeism is higher at schools with higher concentrations of at-risk students."⁴ For students in these educational settings, their barriers to attendance are likely to be numerous and comprise both school- and home-based concerns. For these students there will be no quick fix that will address their needs. They will need nuanced and carefully tailored plans that address several distinct, and perhaps competing, concerns.

In many cases, schools have closer relationships with students and families than any other government agency. As such, they are best suited to identify the barriers that prevent students from attending school. Schools should be given the tools they need to foster relationships with students, communicate with families, and develop school climates that are welcoming and engaging. Schools should have both the flexibility to implement strategies that address the needs of their school community and the resources necessary to ensure they can implement these strategies with fidelity. FutureEd and

Attendance Works recently published the Attendance Playbook that details more than two dozen evidence-based strategies for education policymakers and practitioners that “promote conditions that strengthen the educational experiences of all students: rigorous instruction that is relevant to students’ lives; a safe, welcoming school climate; and stronger bonds between students and teachers.”⁵

Specifically, Children’s Law Center has long supported more robust investment in Student Support Teams (SSTs).⁶ SSTs⁷ were created “to support the individual student by developing and implementing action plans and strategies that are school-based or community-based, depending on the availability, to enhance the student’s success with services, incentives, intervention strategies, and consequences for dealing with absenteeism.”⁸ However, for schools to implement SSTs effectively, they need the time and personnel capacity to ensure that the meetings provide a meaningful opportunity to find solutions for students and families. In our experience, insufficient resources have led to SST meetings that are brief and superficial – just another box to check. To be impactful, SST members need the time and information to identify a student’s barriers, connect the student and their family to appropriate supports, and the capacity to provide regular follow up to determine if the proposed support is working. As such, SSTs cannot be managed by existing school personnel who are often already overburdened and who do not have dedicated bandwidth to focus on personalized attendance interventions. SSTs must be adequately resourced and staffed – and there must be meaningful

connections between schools and the existing supportive services offered by District government.

District Government Needs Greater Collaboration and Coordination to Connect Students to Supportive Programming

We recognize that schools are already bearing much of the responsibility for young people in our communities. And while we believe that schools are often best suited to identify the barriers that their students face, they may not always be best suited to remove or overcome those barriers. Rather than make what have been shown to be ineffective referrals to law enforcement and child welfare, we urge the Council, the education sector, and the human services agencies to examine how to better collaborate in their efforts to connect students and families to the programs that can meet their needs or remove their barriers to attendance.

Under DC's current system, when a high school student is identified as truant, their school makes a referral to the Court Social Services Division of the DC Superior Court (CSS) and the Office of the Attorney General (OAG) who then must review the case and decide whether to prosecute. Former Attorney General Racine recognized that "prosecuting children or their parents long after children have started missing school is not a particularly effective means of improving attendance."⁹ Under his leadership, OAG "shifted to using prosecution as a last resort, and OAG now looks for proactive approaches to reduce truancy—approaches that address the actual barriers that are causing kids to miss school."¹⁰ This strategy is consistent with trends seen across the

country where jurisdictions are moving away from punitive attendance policies in favor of systems that offer wraparound services to students facing barriers. A national review of attendance-related legislation found that:

“With no evidence that punishing students for missed days leads to better attendance, some states are scaling back their punishments and moving toward more holistic approaches to reducing absenteeism. Texas, which in the past treated truancy as a criminal offense, decriminalized it in 2015 and required districts to provide behavior improvement plans, school-based community service, or counseling referrals. Ohio in 2016 required districts to provide truancy intervention plans. California in 2020 made it harder to send truant students to juvenile court.”¹¹

Research shows that using the juvenile justice system to address absenteeism does not improve school attendance. In fact, a recent study found that “youth who became involved with the juvenile justice system missed, on average, five additional days of school—a statistically significant difference.”¹² We urge the Council to resist any impulse to return to old methods that we know do not work to improve attendance.

Instead, we point the Committee to several District offices and programs that are better suited to support students and families in overcoming barriers to attendance. For example, OAG often refers students to truancy diversion programs within the Department of Human Services (DHS) – such as Alternatives to Court Experience (ACE) or Parent and Adolescent Support Services (PASS). These programs address root causes, develop action plans, and provide crucial follow up with students and families to see what is working and what can be improved. ACE “assesses the needs of [truant] youth, links youth and their families with appropriate services, and monitors successful

program participation.”¹³ Currently, referrals to ACE can only be made by the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) or OAG.¹⁴ PASS is an intensive case management program that assists youth aged 10 to 17 who are engaging in behaviors such as skipping school.¹⁵ This model provides “early intervention services to the youth and families it serves with the ultimate goal of keeping youth out of the juvenile justice and/or child welfare systems by reducing or eliminating these behaviors.”¹⁶ Under the current system, youth cannot access these programs without first being referred to OAG. This referral pathway adds undue administrative burden on OAG while requiring harmful court involvement for the student before they can access supportive programming.

If a student’s school has already identified the student as in need of truancy intervention, why not skip the middle man and have the school make a referral directly to ACE or PASS? Under this alternative referral pathway, the administrative burden on schools would be approximately the same – monitoring students with attendance concerns and making a referral as needed. However, by making the referral directly to a truancy reduction program, they could avoid the interceding court involvement that often proves harmful to students and families. For schools with the highest levels of need, DHS could co-locate ACE and PASS staff on the school campus to ensure they are readily accessible to students and families in need of support. These co-located staff may also provide invaluable support to SSTs.

Such inter-agency collaboration need not be limited to DHS. OSSE's DC ReEngagement Center (REC) works with youth ages 16-24 who are not currently enrolled in secondary school and works to reconnect them to education options and other supportive services. The REC engages with youth to assess their non-academic needs, develop personalized reengagement plans, and provide ongoing support after reenrollment.¹⁷ We encourage OSSE to examine how they could expand this work into schools in order to engage with students who have exhibited serious school disengagement but have not yet dropped out.

For middle school students, the Office of Victim Services and Justice Grants (OVSJG) offers truancy reduction support through their Show Up, Stand Out (SUSO) program. Through SUSO, "community-based organizations are partnered with schools to provide wraparound services that assist children and their families in addressing the practical, behavioral, financial, and health challenges that prevent them from attending school." SUSO also works directly with middle schoolers to improve their attitude toward school.¹⁸ This is the precise set of skills and expertise that are needed to make SSTs more meaningful. As schools continue to face time and workforce constraints, the District would benefit from thinking creatively about how to better coordinate and/or expand ongoing efforts like SUSO to meet students and families where they are.

These sort of partnerships are not new to DC's education sector. In SY17-18, DCPS and Children's National established the Collaborative for Attendance Resources in

Education & Health (CARE-H) Program. Through this partnership, DCPS shares attendance data for participating students with Children's National so the healthcare provider can identify ways in which the student's health may be affecting their school attendance.¹⁹ This partnership allows Children's to reach out to participating families to offer support to address medical concerns like behavioral health and asthma management.²⁰ The CARE-H Program began with a pilot at just six schools, but has gradually expanded and, as of SY23-24, is available in all DCPS schools.²¹ What the District needs is not more punishment, but more and better collaboration like this between agencies and community partners who are already doing the work to support students and families facing barriers to attendance

To Better Monitor Improvements Over Time, DC Needs More Timely and More Detailed Attendance Data

While more robust SSTs would allow schools to respond to the unique needs of individual students, we also need to identify and address the systemic causes of chronic absenteeism across the District. To do this, we need more detailed and more timely data. Experts in this field recommend several ways to improve attendance data "to ensure accurate, comparable and transparent data that helps key stakeholders take action to improve student outcomes and assume shared accountability."²²

The District has already made some improvements to attendance data. Last year, the Council, the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE), and the State Board of Education (SBOE) worked together to amend the definition of "absent" and

improve our understanding of attendance needs in the District. Under the 80/20 Rule, a student was considered fully absent if they missed 21% of the school day – just 78 minutes.²³ Not only did this system disincentivize students from coming to school at all if they were going to be more than an hour late, but it also obscured the data by not allowing schools to differentiate between students who miss 21% of a school day and those who are completely disengaged students missing all day every day. The needs of a student who misses 5 full school days and a student who is tardy for 5 times are likely quite different. Thus, it is important for the data to allow differentiation between students who are partially absent and those who are fully absent.

OSSE's annual attendance report is key to understanding attendance outcomes for DC students. However, the report is not released until November 30th of each year – several months after the end of the school year on which it reports. The timeline for this reporting makes it difficult for LEAs or OSSE to identify and respond to changes in a timely manner. If the pandemic taught us anything, it is how quickly the situation on the ground can change and how our education sector must be able to adapt to the needs of the students in front of them. Regarding attendance data, this means that last year's data may no longer apply to the challenges faced by this year's students. OSSE's long-term trend data is important; however, to respond in real time, DC needs more timely attendance data that allows schools and others supporting attendance to understand the needs of the current cohort of students while it is still possible to course correct.

Other jurisdictions have noted the challenges posed by delayed attendance data and have started gathering relevant data several times throughout the school year. For example, during the pandemic, Connecticut began collecting and publishing attendance data on a monthly basis.²⁴ These data allow schools “to engage in continual improvement efforts and take timely action to improve student outcomes” and have been used by state leaders “to inform resource allocation.”²⁵ It is our understanding that OSSE has started gathering attendance data three times during the school year. Were OSSE to publish this mid-year data, LEAs and community programs would be better equipped to support students during the second semester of the school year.

In addition to more timely data, the education sector needs more information on the root causes of absenteeism in the District. Currently, D.C. Code § 38-203(i)(A-i)(i)-(v) requires LEAs to report extensive information about the work of their school-based student support teams – including:

- “(i) The number of students who were referred to a school-based student support team;
- “(ii) The number of students who met with a school-based student support team;
- “(iii) A summary of the action plans and strategies implemented by the school-based student support team to eliminate or ameliorate unexcused absences; and
- “(iv) A summary of the services utilized by students to reduce unexcused absences;
- “(v) A summary of the common barriers to implementing the recommendations of the school-based student support team;”

However, none of OSSE's attendance reports have published or analyzed this information. It is unclear whether this is because the data are not collected by LEAs, not shared with OSSE, or simply not included in OSSE's reporting. Regardless, without this information, it is nearly impossible to know what SSTs have tried, how effective their efforts have been, and what could be improved going forward.

Further, OSSE's annual attendance reporting identifies several groups of students who consistently miss more school than their peers but does not offer any analysis into the root causes of these persistent attendance trends.²⁶ For example, students with disabilities consistently miss more school than their nondisabled peers.²⁷ It is crucial that OSSE and LEAs know not only that students with disabilities miss more school, but also why this has been true year after year after year. To better serve these students LEAs must know which needs are not being met for these students. It cannot solely be that these students miss more school due to increased healthcare needs. If that were true we would not see such a significant gap in truancy rates between students with disabilities and those without²⁸ because medical absences would be excused. There must be some other reason why students with disabilities are less engaged with their education. For schools to better meet the needs of students with disabilities, they first need a clear understanding of the root causes of their disengagement from school.

Child Welfare Referrals Are an Ineffective Tool for Addressing Attendance Concerns

Ten years ago, the Council passed the Attendance Accountability Act of 2013.²⁹ Under that law, schools are required to refer students with ten or more unexcused absences to law enforcement and child welfare. Once a student has reached their 10th unexcused absence, schools are required to report the family's information to the MPD.³⁰ Next, students under 14 years of age are referred to the Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA)³¹ while students 14 and older are referred to CSS³² and OAG.³³ However, in the decade since passage of the Attendance Accountability Act, we have not seen any improvement in rates of chronic absenteeism or truancy in the District – in fact, both have steadily increased year over year.³⁴ Further, research has shown that referrals to child welfare agencies and juvenile courts cause more harm than good.³⁵ Because CFSA referrals have not worked in DC and can cause harm to students and families, we urge the Council to pursue a new strategy in addressing absenteeism.

Any contact with CFSA, even an investigation where allegations are not substantiated, can be traumatic and damaging for children and families.³⁶ The vast majority of children who miss 10 days of school over the entire school year are experiencing neither a threat to their health or safety nor educational neglect.³⁷ Additionally, the resources spent on reviewing and responding to the large number of referrals limits the ability of CFSA to reach children who are experiencing unsafe circumstances which require the type of intervention that CFSA is best equipped to

provide. Referring every child who misses ten days of school over the course of a school year casts too wide a net.

The primary function of child welfare agencies like CFSA is to receive and investigate reports of child abuse or neglect and, when necessary, to provide safe out-of-home care for a child removed from their family.³⁸ Although CFSA may be able to refer families with attendance concerns to other services and programs (if schools provide sufficient information and detail in their referral), the Agency typically does not assign a social worker or offer case management without substantiating an allegation of abuse or neglect against the parents. Because chronic absenteeism is generally not due to child abuse or neglect, CFSA is not positioned to meaningfully support families in cases where there is not a substantiated allegation of abuse or neglect. The child welfare system is not the “all-purpose agency” that many envision it to be.³⁹

While an individual student’s barriers to attendance are unique to them, research on absenteeism has categorized common barriers into six domains of functioning: academic, social–emotional, mental health, physical health, family, and school & community.⁴⁰ Additional research finds that one “overarching correlate of chronic absence may be poverty. Homelessness, housing instability, family obligations such as caring for younger siblings or elderly family members, and lack of a safe path to school are poverty-related barriers that prevent students from consistently attending schools.”⁴¹ CFSA is not the appropriate agency to address concerns in these domains. For example,

if a student is disengaged from school because they are several years behind grade level in reading, there is nothing CFSA can do to remedy the underlying concern. If a student is missing school due to mental or physical health concerns, CFSA is not the right agency to support the family in seeking medical treatment. CFSA does not manage Safe Passage or improve school climates or provide families with safe housing. CFSA is not the right agency to help families overcome the barriers to their student's school attendance.

Moreover, students in CFSA's care consistently miss more school than their peers who are not in care. In SY22-23, 54% of students in CFSA's care missed at least 10% of the school year⁴² and were nearly three times more likely to face profound chronic absenteeism.⁴³ At Children's Law Center, we see similar trends among the children and youth in foster care with whom we work. Among our school age clients, approximately 47% missed ten or more school days in SY22-23. Considering both the potential harm that a child welfare investigation can inflict on a family and the concerning attendance data for students under the care of CFSA, we urge the Council to move away from this ineffective response to absenteeism in favor of a system that can better support students and families in overcoming barriers to attendance.

Instead of subjecting students and families to prosecution or to the anxiety that they may be separated and placed in foster care, we encourage the Council and DC's education sector to pursue strategies that identify the root causes of absenteeism and connect students and families to interventions and supports that are tailored to the

unique needs of the individual student and family. This requires investments of time and resources at the student- and system-level. At the student-level, schools need the time and resources to work with individual students to uncover the unique set of circumstances that have led to that student's disengagement from school. At the system-level, the education sector needs more and more timely data to ensure that our system is nimble enough to adapt to new or unanticipated conditions that undermine student engagement.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify and we welcome any questions.

¹ See Office of the State Superintendent of Education, District of Columbia Attendance Report: 2022-23 School Year, Appendix B (Nov. 30, 2023), available at:

https://osse.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/osse/publication/attachments/2022-23%20Attendance%20Report_FINAL.pdf.

² See Valerie L. Marsh, *Understanding Chronic Absenteeism: What Research Tells Us about Poor Attendance at School*, American Federation of Teachers (AFL-CIO) (Winter 2019–2020) available at:

<https://www.aft.org/ae/winter2019-2020/marsh>

³ *Id.*

⁴ See Office of the State Superintendent of Education, *District of Columbia Attendance Report: School Year 2021-22*, at 21 (Nov. 30, 2022), available at:

<https://osse.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/osse/publication/attachments/2021-22%20Attendance%20Report%20%28Nov%2028%202022%29.pdf>

⁵ Phyllis Jordan, FutureEd & Attendance Works, *Attendance Playbook Smart Strategies for Reducing Student Absenteeism Post-Pandemic*, (May 2023), available at: <https://www.future-ed.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Attendance-Playbook.5.23.pdf>

⁶ See, e.g., Danielle Robinette, Children’s Law Center, Testimony before the District of Columbia Council Committee of the Whole, Performance Oversight Hearing, (March 1, 2023), available at:

[https://childrenslawcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/CLC_Education-](https://childrenslawcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/CLC_Education-Agencies_PerformanceOversightTestimony_Final.pdf)

[Agencies_PerformanceOversightTestimony_Final.pdf](https://childrenslawcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/CLC-Testimony_Mar-11-Attendance-Hearing_Final.pdf); Danielle Robinette, Children’s Law Center, Testimony before the District of Columbia Council Committee of the Whole, (March 11, 2022), available at:

[https://childrenslawcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/CLC-Testimony_Mar-11-Attendance-](https://childrenslawcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/CLC-Testimony_Mar-11-Attendance-Hearing_Final.pdf)

[Hearing_Final.pdf](https://childrenslawcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/CLC-Testimony_COW-Roundtable_Attendance-Absenteeism-and-Truancy_FINAL.pdf); Danielle Robinette, Children’s Law Center, Testimony before the District of Columbia Council Committee of the Whole, (Nov 30, 2022), available at: [https://childrenslawcenter.org/wp-](https://childrenslawcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/CLC-Testimony_COW-Roundtable_Attendance-Absenteeism-and-Truancy_FINAL.pdf)

[content/uploads/2022/11/CLC-Testimony_COW-Roundtable_Attendance-Absenteeism-and-Truancy_FINAL.pdf](https://childrenslawcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/CLC-Testimony_COW-Roundtable_Attendance-Absenteeism-and-Truancy_FINAL.pdf)

⁷ The term “Student Support Team” or “SST” is drawn from the South Capitol Street Memorial Act of 2012 § 302, codified at DC Code § 38-201(3B). A recent presentation at a recent presentation before the Every Day Counts! Taskforce, the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education noted an effort to rebrand SSTs as “Student Attendance Conferences (SACs).” For the purposes of this testimony, we will use SST, but we acknowledge the potential change in terminology.

⁸ DC Code § 38–201(3B).

⁹ Dana Edwards, Office of the Attorney General for the District of Columbia, Testimony Before the Council of the District of Columbia, Comm. of the Whole, Public Roundtable on Attendance, Chronic Absenteeism, and Truancy in the District (Nov. 30, 2022), available at: [https://oag.dc.gov/release/oag-](https://oag.dc.gov/release/oag-testimony-attendance-chronic-absenteeism-and#:~:text=Under%20Attorney%20General%20Racine's%20leadership,causing%20kids%20to%20miss%20school.)

[testimony-attendance-chronic-absenteeism-](https://oag.dc.gov/release/oag-testimony-attendance-chronic-absenteeism-and#:~:text=Under%20Attorney%20General%20Racine's%20leadership,causing%20kids%20to%20miss%20school.)

[and#:~:text=Under%20Attorney%20General%20Racine's%20leadership,causing%20kids%20to%20miss%20school.](https://oag.dc.gov/release/oag-testimony-attendance-chronic-absenteeism-and#:~:text=Under%20Attorney%20General%20Racine's%20leadership,causing%20kids%20to%20miss%20school.)

¹⁰ *Id.*

¹¹ Phyllis Jordan & Hedy Chang, *State Strategies for Fighting Chronic Student Absenteeism* (Aug. 23, 2023), available at: <https://www.future-ed.org/state-strategies-for-fighting-chronic-student-absenteeism/>

¹² Josh Weber & Rebecca Cohen, The Council of State Governments Justice Center, *Rethinking the Role of the Juvenile Justice System: Improving Youth’s School Attendance and Educational Outcomes*, at 9-10 (Sept. 2020), available at: [https://csgjusticecenter.org/wp-](https://csgjusticecenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/CSG_RethinkingtheRoleoftheJuvenileJusticeSystem_15SEPT20.pdf)

[content/uploads/2020/09/CSG_RethinkingtheRoleoftheJuvenileJusticeSystem_15SEPT20.pdf](https://csgjusticecenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/CSG_RethinkingtheRoleoftheJuvenileJusticeSystem_15SEPT20.pdf)

¹³ See Department of Human Services, “Alternatives to the Court Experience (ACE) Diversion Program,” available at: <https://dhs.dc.gov/page/alternatives-court-experience-ace-diversion-program>

¹⁴ Id.

¹⁵ See Department of Human Services, “Parent and Adolescent Support Intensive Case Management (PASS ICM),” available at: <https://dhs.dc.gov/service/parent-and-adolescent-support-intensive-case-management-pass-icm>

¹⁶ Id.

¹⁷ See Office of the State Superintendent of Education, “DC ReEngagement Center,” available at: <https://osse.dc.gov/service/dc-reengagement-center>

¹⁸ See Office of Victim Services and Justice Grants, “Show Up, Stand Out,” available at: <https://ovsjg.dc.gov/service/show-stand-out-suso#:~:text=The%20program%20works%20with%20families,and%20success%20later%20in%20life.>

¹⁹ See District of Columbia Public Schools, *Frequently Asked Questions: Collaborative for Attendance Resources in Education and Health (CARE-H) Program*, at 1, available at: https://dcps.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/dcps/publication/attachments/English%20CARE%20Project%20FAQs_June%202023.pdf

²⁰ Children’s Hospital Association, *Using School Attendance Data to Improve Health Outcomes*, (May 24, 2023), available at: <https://www.childrenshospitals.org/news/childrens-hospitals-today/2023/05/using-school-attendance-data-to-improve-health-outcomes>

²¹ See *id.*

²² Attendance Works, *Monitoring Who Is Missing Too Much School: A Review of State Policy and Practice in School Year 2021-22*, at 7 (June 2022), available at: https://www.attendanceworks.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Attendance-Works-State-Policy-Analysis-2022_061422.pdf

²³ Assuming a standard 6.5-hour school day.

²⁴ See Attendance Works, “Monitoring Who Is Missing Too Much School: A Review of State Policy and Practice in School Year 2021-22”, at 6 (June 2022), available at: https://www.attendanceworks.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Attendance-Works-State-Policy-Analysis-2022_061422.pdf

²⁵ *Id.*

²⁶ See, e.g., OSSE, *District of Columbia Attendance Report: 2022-23 School Year*, *supra* note 1, Appendix B, at 38-44.

²⁷ See *id.*, at 38, 41.

²⁸ See *id.*

²⁹ The Attendance Accountability Act, DC Law 20-17 (2013).

³⁰ D.C. Code § 38-207(c)(1).

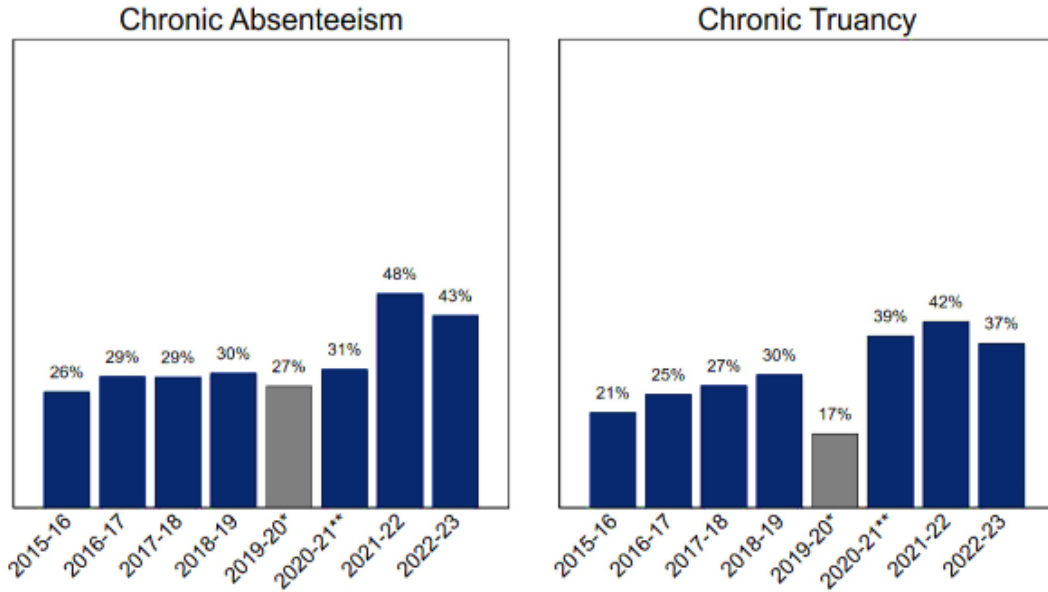
³¹ D.C. Code § 38-208(c)(1)(A).

³² D.C. Code § 38-208(c)(1)(B).

³³ *Id.*

³⁴ See OSSE, *District of Columbia Attendance Report: 2022-23 School Year*, *supra* note 1, Figure 1 at 11.

Annual Chronic Absenteeism and Chronic Truancy Rates SY2015-16 - SY2022-23



*Data for SY2019-20 are only through March 13th; data include partial days.

**Data for SY2020-21 include both remote and in-person learning environments; data include partial days.

³⁵ See Casey Family Programs, *Issue Brief: How does investigation, removal, and placement cause trauma for children?* (Updated May 2018), available at: https://www.casey.org/media/SC_Investigation-removal-placement-causes-trauma.pdf; see also Josh Weber & Rebecca Cohen, The Council of State Governments Justice Center, *Rethinking the Role of the Juvenile Justice System: Improving Youth’s School Attendance and Educational Outcomes*, at 9-10 (Sept. 2020), available at: https://csgjusticecenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/CSG_RethinkingtheRoleoftheJuvenileJusticeSystem_15SEPT20.pdf (finding that “youth’s juvenile justice involvement was not associated with improvement in their school attendance. Instead, youth who became involved with the juvenile justice system missed, on average, five additional days of school—a statistically significant difference”).

³⁶ See Casey Family Programs, *Issue Brief*, *supra* note 35.

³⁷ See OSSE FY2022 Performance Oversight Responses, response to Q20, available at: https://dccouncil.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/CFSA-FY22-Performance-Oversight-Hearing-Pre-Hearing-Responses-to-Questions_2-17-2023-FINAL-1.pdf.

³⁸ Child and Family Services Agency, “About CFSA,” available at: <https://cfsa.dc.gov/page/about-cfsa>

³⁹ Dorothy Roberts, TORN APART: HOW THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM DESTROYS BLACK FAMILIES – AND HOW ABOLITION CAN BUILD A SAFER WORLD, 168 (2022) (citing Kelley Fong, *Getting Eyes in the Home: Child Protective Services Investigations and State Surveillance of Family Life*, 84.4 AM. SOCIOLOGICAL REV. 610, 620 (Aug. 2020)).

⁴⁰ See Christopher A. Kearney, et al., *School attendance problems and absenteeism as early warning signals: review and implications for health-based protocols and school-based practices*, 8 *Frontiers in Educ.* (Aug. 30, 2023), available at: <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/feduc.2023.1253595/full>

⁴¹ Kathryn Van Eck, et al., *How school climate relates to chronic absence: A multi-level latent profile analysis*, 61 *J. SCH. PSYCHOLOGY* 89, 90 (2017), available at: <https://www.attendanceworks.org/wp->

content/uploads/2018/04/How_School-Climate_relates_to_chronic-absence_attendance_works_1-s2.0-S0022440516300607-main.pdf

⁴² See OSSE, *District of Columbia Attendance Report: 2022-23 School Year*, *supra* note 1, at 42 (percentage calculated by adding percentages for moderate, severe, and profound chronic absence).

⁴³ See *id.* (calculated by dividing the rate of profound chronic absence for students under care of CFSA by that for students not under the care of CFSA).

APPENDIX

Program Name	Agency / Organization	Program Description
ACCESS Youth	DCPS & Access Youth	<p>Access Youth partnered with DCPS and developed and implemented a program to provide early intervention to address truancy issues.</p> <p>The goals of the program are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase student attendance rates and • Prevent them from experiencing the escalation of penalties for truancy • Enhance their school experience and academic performance • Reduce their likelihood of contact with the criminal justice system <p>The program is fully implemented at Anacostia, Ballou and Eastern high schools, where we are focused on determining what kinds of interventions are most effective at increasing student attendance.</p>
Alternatives to the Court Experience (ACE)	DHS	<p>ACE assesses the needs of diverted youth, links youth and their families with appropriate services, and monitors successful program participation. The goal of the program is to help youth and their families address the underlying issues causing the negative behaviors while minimizing the likelihood of reoffending and giving youth the opportunity to avoid acquiring a juvenile record. It is a voluntary program, not probation, although not participating in ACE may result in prosecution.</p> <p>Note: Referrals to the ACE program only come through MPD or OAG.</p>
ATTEND (Abating Truancy Through Engagement and Negotiated Dialogue)	OAG & DC Superior Court	<p>The Court's Multi-Door Dispute Resolution program mediates cases between parents and the school in a neutral environment and links the parents through the Mayor's Services Liaison Office (MSLO) to appropriate community-based services in lieu of prosecution. The goal of the program is to help children and their families address the underlying issues causing the chronic absenteeism while minimizing the likelihood of repeat referrals and giving parents the opportunity to avoid a criminal record.</p>
Collaborative for Attendance Resources in Education and Health (CARE-H)	DCPS & Children's National Hospital	<p>CARE-H is a partnership between DCPS and local medical providers for students who are enrolled at DCPS who are current Children's National Hospital patients. The CARE-H program aims to support student health and reduce absenteeism. Parents or guardians can give permission to DCPS to securely share attendance information with their child's doctor(s), nurse(s) and medical office staff. This information will help these healthcare professionals to provide special outreach and medical attention to children that might be missing school and their families.</p>

DC ReEngagement Center	OSSE	<p>The ReEngagement Center is a “single-door” through which youth ages 16-24 who have dropped out can reconnect back to educational options and other critical services to support their attainment of a high school diploma or GED. Services provided: assessing academic status and non-academic needs of youth and using this information to help them develop individualized education plans; identifying good-fit educational options; supporting the re-enrollment process (e.g., collecting required documents, accompanying youth on site visits, connecting to resources that will address reconnection barriers); and providing ongoing support for at least one year once re-enrolled.</p>
“I Belong Here”	OAG	<p>The “I Belong Here” program is an effort to reduce truancy and encourage student attendance at an early age through a year-long attendance competition between classrooms. OAG staff serve as ambassadors for sixth-grade and seventh-grade homerooms, leading lesson plans on topics such as responsibility and empathy. Currently piloted at Sousa Middle School, the program is designed to disrupt the negative behaviors associated with truancy rates and positively reinforce the idea that students belong in school. Sousa Middle School was recently recognized as one of the schools with the most improved attendance rates in the District.</p>
Parent and Adolescent Support Services (PASS) Intensive Case Management (ICM) program	DHS	<p>PASS ICM provides early intervention services to the youth and families it serves with the ultimate goal of keeping youth out of the juvenile justice and/or child welfare systems by reducing or eliminating these behaviors. PASS ICM uses the Transition to Independence Process in partnership with the Department of Behavioral Health, a case management system for older youth with emotional and behavioral challenges. All youth receiving PASS ICM services have access to community support services such as mentoring, tutoring, and after-school programming.</p>
Show Up, Stand Out (SUSO)	OVSG	<p>A community based truancy reduction program that helps parents get their children to school every day. The program works with families to identify barriers to school attendance by providing support services that address the family needs to make sure their kids attend school regularly- a critical first step for a good education and success later in life. The program also works directly with middle school youth to reengage students by providing them with the opportunity to receive additional resources that will positively impact their attitude towards school.</p>
TRIAGE (Truancy Reduction Initiative and Gateway to Empowerment)	OAG & DHS	<p>The TRIAGE program employs a functional family therapist who is co-located at OAG to help review all cases that are eligible for diversion; the therapist also links families with services. These behavioral health and community support services help youth and their families address root causes of truancy, while minimizing the likelihood of reoffending.</p>