

Mississippi Attendance Playbook

Plain-Language Guidance and Resources for Implementing the State's Attendance Law



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To build a world-class education system that equips every student with the knowledge and skills to succeed in college, careers, and life in Mississippi and the world.

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	4
Introduction	5
What's New in Mississippi's Attendance Law	6
Active Monitoring of Chronic Absenteeism	8
Timely Parent/Guardian Notification	10
Parent/Guardian Conference to Identify Barriers	13
Referral to Support Services	16
Individualized Attendance Success Plan	18
Proactive Family Engagement	21
Written Chronic Absenteeism Reduction Plan	24
Locally Tailored District Policies	27
Partnering With Your School Attendance Officer	29
Appendix A: Written Chronic Absenteeism Reduction Plan – Development Tool	33
Appendix A: Locally Tailored District Policies – Model Policy Framework	37
Appendix B: Attendance Playbook Implementation Rubric	44

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Introduction

The Mississippi Attendance Playbook provides guidance related to Senate Bill (SB) 2103. Signed into law in 2026, this legislation overhauls school attendance policies to combat chronic absenteeism. This playbook clarifies what SB 2103 requires of districts and schools, and helps leaders (1) understand those requirements and (2) implement tangible strategies. Two appendices support implementation: Appendix A adds a reduction plan development tool and a model district policy framework; Appendix B adds a section-by-section implementation rubric.

This Playbook is a resource to assist district and school leaders in addressing chronic absenteeism and meeting the requirements of SB 2103.

For District Leaders:

- Clarifies district responsibilities under SB 2103 and the requirements for preventing and reducing chronic absenteeism.
- Highlights required policies, monitoring, reporting, and family engagement practices needed to support implementation and compliance.
- Provides guidance for using attendance data to identify needs, support schools, and develop required chronic absenteeism reduction plans when required.
- Offers practical strategies for coordinating efforts across schools, families, community partners, and school attendance officers.

For School Leaders:

- Clarifies school responsibilities under SB 2103 and the role of school teams in addressing chronic absenteeism.
- Provides practical strategies for monitoring attendance, engaging families, and responding early to attendance concerns.
- Supports the use of MTSS, Early Warning Systems, and student support teams to identify barriers and coordinate interventions.
- Offers strategies and resources to help improve attendance, strengthen family partnerships, and support student success.

What's New in Mississippi's Attendance Law

SB2103 (2026) amends the Mississippi Compulsory School Attendance Law (§37-13-91) and the school attendance officer statute (§37-13-89). This is a new statewide framework for preventing and reducing chronic absenteeism. It is separate from the existing compulsory-attendance enforcement system.

Two Separate Pathways

	Prevention Pathway	Enforcement Pathway
What it counts	All absences, excused or unexcused (§4(c))	Only unlawful (unexcused) absences (§4(a))
Purpose	Keep students in school through support (§4(d))	Enforce compulsory attendance (§5–§7)

A student is *chronically absent* after missing 10% or more of the school year, whether excused or not (§4(c)). An *unlawful absence* is a school day, or part of one, missed without a valid excuse (§4(a)).

Each pathway has its own progression:

- **Prevention pathway:** notify family (3+ absences) → conference to identify barriers → referral to supports → individualized success plan
- **Enforcement pathway:** report to the attendance officer (5 unlawful) → contact and written notice → prima facie case (8 unlawful) → youth-court petition

A student can be chronically absent without a single *unlawful* absence (e.g., when every absence is excused). Chronic absenteeism, under §4(e), creates no new offense and does not redefine unlawful absence.

How Absences Are Counted After SB2103

- Full day = 66% present. An absence over 33% of the day counts as a full-day absence. (§2(d), §4(a))
- Students get five excused absences per semester (school-sanctioned events don't count). Beyond five, an absence is treated as unexcused unless the superintendent approves it for extenuating circumstances. (§4(b))

What SB2103 Requires

What the law requires	Statute	In this playbook
Actively monitor chronic absenteeism by school, grade, and subgroup	§4(c)(i)	Active Monitoring
Timely notice at 3+ absences; offer a parent/guardian conference	§4(c)(ii)	Notification & Conference
Referral to health, counseling, and transportation supports	§4(c)(ii)	Referral to Support Services
Assign an individualized attendance success plan	§4(c)(ii)	Individualized Attendance Success Plan
Adopt proactive family engagement strategies	§4(c)(iii)	Proactive Family Engagement
Adopt a written reduction plan when a subgroup or grade exceeds a 10% rate	§4(c)(iv)	Written Chronic Absenteeism Reduction Plan
Adopt locally tailored district policies (documentation + engagement)	§4(d)	Locally Tailored District Policies
Coordinate with the school attendance officer	§37-13-89; §4(c)(ii)	Partnering With Your School Attendance Officer

Active Monitoring of Chronic Absenteeism

What the Law Requires

SB2103 (2026), §37-13-91(4)(c)(i): Each school district shall actively monitor chronic absenteeism rates by school, grade level, and subgroup. Districts shall include chronic absenteeism data in their annual accountability reporting and in their district- and school-level improvement plans.

A student is **chronically absent** if absent for 10% or more of the student's school days in a school year, regardless of whether absences are excused or unexcused. (§4(c))

Putting It Into Practice

The law says what to monitor. The guidance below, drawn from existing MDE resources and national research, offers practical approaches for how.

Track the Right Data

The MS EWS Guide (Fall 2024) uses three categories—Attendance, Behavior, and Course performance (the ABCs)—to sort students into risk levels. For attendance, the thresholds are:

Status	Per Quarter	Per Year	Response
On Track	0–2 absences	0–9	Monitor
Sliding	3–5 absences	10–18	Outreach
Off Track	5+ absences	18+	Intervene

Use the Teams You Already Have

The EWS is not a new team, it's a tool your existing teams use. In many districts, the work divides like this:

- **School leadership / MTSS team:** Responsible for school-level chronic absenteeism data. Reviews rates by grade and subgroup. This is the team that typically carries out the monitoring required by §4(c)(i).
- **Teacher Support Team (TST):** Handles student-level review. When a student is flagged, the TST identifies root causes, assigns interventions, names an owner, and sets a follow-

up date. In PreK–6, the TST often functions as the EWS team. In 7–12, they may be separate, with the counselor bridging them.

For the student-level team, consider:

- **Team composition:** Administrator + counselor + teacher(s) + someone who owns the attendance data.
- **Meeting frequency:** Minimum three times per year. For middle and high schools, biweekly is recommended, using monthly data from the district MSIS contact.
- **Keep it structured:** Review flags → identify root cause → assign owner → set follow-up.

Quick Check

Required by §4(c)(i):

- We track chronic absenteeism at the student level, not just average daily attendance.
- We disaggregate rates by grade level and subgroup.
- We include chronic absenteeism data in our annual reporting and our district- and school-improvement plans.

Consider to strengthen practice:

- Our team meets on a regular cycle with a structured protocol.
- Roles are clear: who pulls the data, who reviews it, who acts on it.
- We track absence patterns: day of week, around breaks, by period.

Resources

- [Mississippi Department of Education Early Warning System Guide](#) — State EWS guide aligned to MTSS. Includes ABC thresholds, team configuration by grade span, and coded intervention menu. [mdek12.org > Elementary Education and Reading > Intervention Services](#)
- [Mississippi Department of Education MTSS Guidance Document](#) — State’s multi-tiered system of supports framework, including a chronic-absenteeism section; the landing page adds an explainer webinar. [msachieves.mdek12.org > MTSS guidance document and webinar](#)
- [The GRAD Partnership Team Reflection and Action Planning Tool](#) — Self-assessment for school and district teams to strengthen how they monitor attendance and respond to early-warning data. [gradpartnership.org > resources > team reflection tool](#)
- [Early Warning & Response Systems — Johns Hopkins Everyone Graduates Center](#) — Tools and models for standing up an early warning system and running the review cycle that flags students early. [every1graduates.org > tools-and-models > early-warning-and-response-systems](#)

Timely Parent/Guardian Notification

What the Law Requires

SB2103 (2026), §37-13-91(4)(c)(ii): Each school district shall develop and implement tiered intervention strategies for students identified as being at risk of chronic absenteeism. At a minimum, these must include timely parent or guardian notification when a student has accumulated three (3) or more absences that place the student at risk of chronic absenteeism.

Notice to families must be provided through multichannel and translated communications, in a language and manner they understand (§4(d)). Districts set these communication protocols in their locally tailored policy.

Putting It Into Practice

The law requires timely parent/guardian notification, in a language and manner families understand, once a student reaches three absences. The guidance below offers practical approaches for doing so.

Send the first notification within 24–48 hours of a student's third absence, then follow up at later thresholds (e.g., 5 and 7 absences) aligned to your EWS tiers. Effective early notifications include clear next steps and a direct contact.

Use Clear, Supportive, Personalized Messaging

Tone matters. Effective messages stay informational rather than punitive, positioning the school as a partner rather than an enforcer. Personalized notices that name the student and reference their specific attendance draw higher family response than generic form letters.

An effective notification includes:

- The student's name and current absence count ("3 days so far this year")
- Why attendance matters, in terms that fit the grade level (early literacy in elementary; credits toward graduation in high school)
- An offer of support
- A direct contact: ideally a staff member the family already knows (name, phone/email)

Example (text message):

"Hi [Parent/Guardian Name], we noticed that [Student Name] has missed 3 days of school this year. Missing even a couple of days a month adds up and can make it harder to keep up. We're here to help—please contact [Staff Name] at [Phone] if there's anything you need."

Personalize Whenever Possible

Personalized communication increases family response rates. Consider:

- Using the student's name and specific absence count
- Referencing recent attendance ("3 days so far this month")
- Including a known staff member (teacher, counselor, attendance clerk)
- Tailoring messages for grade level (e.g., early literacy in elementary, credits in high school)

Use Multiple Communication Channels

Not all families respond to the same methods. Consider a layered approach:

- Text messages: Fast, high open rates; effective for early nudges
- Phone calls: More personal; useful at higher risk thresholds
- Email or letters/postcards: Reinforce the message and provide documentation
- In-person conversations: When concerns persist

A common sequence is to start with text and email, then escalate to phone calls and meeting invitations as concerns persist.

Ensure Accessibility and Language Support

Districts must:

- Provide translations in home languages
- Avoid jargon; use plain, family-friendly language
- Offer interpreter support when needed
- Ensure formats are accessible (e.g., readable fonts, mobile-friendly texts)

Connect Notification to Tiered Supports

Notification should not stand alone. It should trigger action:

Student Risk Level	Suggested Response
3 absences	Timely parent/guardian notification and attendance awareness messaging
Continued absences	Parent/guardian conference to identify barriers
Attendance barriers identified	Referral to school- or community-based supports
Ongoing attendance concerns	Individualized Attendance Success Plan (IASP) and ongoing monitoring

Quick Check

- Messages go out within 24–48 hours of the third absence.
- Families are responding and engaging.
- We check whether certain groups are less likely to receive or respond.
- Notifications trigger the next tier of support when needed.
- We track whether attendance improves after outreach.

Resources

- [IES Toolkit: Text Messaging with Families to Support Student Attendance](#) — Step-by-step guidance for districts building an evidence-based attendance text-messaging system. [ies.ed.gov > learn > blog > supporting student engagement and attendance](#)
- [Reduce Absences in Early Grades with Personalized Postcards](#) — Harvard Proving Ground step-by-step guide for a teacher-written postcard campaign to cut early-grade absences. [provingground.cepr.harvard.edu > resources > personalized postcards how-to guide \(PDF\)](#)
- [Personalized Messaging How-To Guide](#) — Harvard NCRERN guide for a low-cost personalized attendance-messaging campaign across text, email, call, and letter. [ncrern.provingground.cepr.harvard.edu > personalized messaging how-to guide \(PDF\)](#)

Parent/Guardian Conference to Identify Barriers

What the Law Requires

SB2103 (2026), §37-13-91(4)(c)(ii): As part of its tiered intervention strategies for students identified as being at risk of chronic absenteeism, each school district shall provide opportunities for parent or guardian conferences to identify barriers to regular attendance.

Under §4(d), the parent/guardian conference is one of the family engagement protocols the district's locally tailored policy must establish, with related communications provided through multichannel and translated means, in a language and manner families understand.

Putting It Into Practice

The law requires opportunities for parent or guardian conferences when a student is at risk of chronic absenteeism. The guidance below, drawn from attendance research and family-engagement practices, offers practical approaches for doing so.

Frame and Schedule the Conference

The conference works best framed as a problem-solving opportunity, with families understanding from the outset that its purpose is support, not blame. The invitation should make clear the meeting is meant to:

- Understand barriers to attendance
- Identify supports and resources
- Collaborate on solutions

When scheduling the conference:

- Offer flexible meeting options (in-person, phone, or virtual).
- Use translated materials and interpretation services when needed.
- Include the student when developmentally appropriate.

Prepare for the Conference

Staff should review attendance data before meeting with the family and look for patterns that may reveal underlying barriers.

Consider reviewing:

- Total absences and attendance percentage
- Patterns by day of week or class period
- Tardiness trends
- Previous interventions or outreach
- Academic, behavioral, and Early Warning System indicators
- Known family or health circumstances

The goal is to understand the student's experience and identify supports that may improve attendance.

Focus on Root Causes

The conference should seek to identify the underlying reason a student is missing school rather than focusing only on the number of absences. Attendance Works recommends exploring both external barriers and school-related factors that may contribute to absenteeism.

Possible Attendance Concern	Questions to Explore
Health or medical issues	Does the student have physical or behavioral health needs that affect attendance?
Transportation challenges	Are there difficulties getting to school consistently?
Housing or family instability	Are family circumstances making attendance difficult?
School avoidance or anxiety	Does the student feel stressed, unsafe, overwhelmed, or disconnected at school?
Bullying or peer conflict	Are social concerns affecting the student's willingness to attend?
Academic difficulty	Does the student feel unsuccessful or unable to keep up with coursework?
Misunderstanding attendance expectations	Does the family understand how absences accumulate and affect learning?

Document Barriers and Connect Families to Support

The conference should produce actionable information. Identified barriers should be documented and shared, as appropriate, with the team responsible for attendance interventions. Where a barrier calls for outside support, connect the family to the appropriate service and note the handoff; the Referral to Support Services section maps pathways by barrier type. Where a student's needs warrant it, this information also informs an individualized attendance success plan.

Quick Check

- Meetings are framed as support and problem-solving, not punishment.
- Attendance data are reviewed before the conference.
- Conversations begin with student strengths and family goals.
- Staff use open-ended questions to identify root causes.
- Interpreters and translated communications are available when needed.
- Identified barriers are documented and connected to support services.
- Follow-up responsibilities, timelines, and next steps are clearly assigned.

Resources

- [Attendance Works: Engage Families at Teacher Conferences](https://attendanceworks.org/resources/teaching-attendance-2.0/engage-families-at-teacher-conferences) — Guidance for discussing attendance during family conferences, identifying barriers, and connecting families to supports. [attendanceworks.org > resources > teaching attendance 2.0 > engage families at teacher conferences](https://attendanceworks.org/resources/teaching-attendance-2.0/engage-families-at-teacher-conferences)
- [Attendance Works: Student Attendance Success Plans](https://attendanceworks.org/resources/student-attendance-success-plans) — Tools to help families identify supports, monitor attendance, and set attendance goals. [attendanceworks.org > resources > student attendance success plans](https://attendanceworks.org/resources/student-attendance-success-plans)

Referral to Support Services

What the Law Requires

SB2103 (2026), §37-13-91(4)(c)(ii): Districts shall provide referral to school- or community-based support services as appropriate, including health, counseling, and transportation resources.

Districts shall partner with community organizations, faith-based institutions, or local businesses to support families in overcoming barriers to school attendance. (§4(c)(iii))

Putting It Into Practice

The law requires referrals to appropriate support services when barriers are identified. The guidance below offers practical approaches for doing so.

Match the Response to Barrier

When a student is identified for support, the most important step is to match the referral to the underlying barrier, rather than applying the same response to all absences. Schools may use information already gathered through attendance reviews, parent or guardian conferences, and Early Warning System (EWS) meetings to identify likely root causes.

If the barrier looks like . . .	Consider focusing on . . .	Possible referral pathways
School avoidance (e.g., anxiety, emotional distress)	Mental health support and re-entry planning	Counselor, school mental health team, telehealth providers, UMMC CHAMP
Health-related absences	Access to care	School-based health services, community clinics, telehealth
Transportation challenges	Access and logistics	District transportation, community partners
Family responsibilities or housing instability	Wraparound supports	Housing liaison, community-based organizations

Recognize School Avoidance

Some chronic absenteeism is driven by school avoidance: anxiety, depression, or other mental health challenges that make attending difficult. Indicators may include:

- Physical complaints that improve when the student stays home
- Increased distress as school approaches
- Withdrawal from peers or activities
- Difficulty engaging during the school day

Students experiencing school avoidance may benefit from a support-based response, such as mental health services and gradual re-entry, rather than a discipline-based response.

When Medical Documentation Becomes a Barrier

Under §4(a)(ii), any illness absence beyond the third requires documentation from a medical provider. In communities with limited healthcare access, this requirement can become a barrier to attendance. It's advisable to establish referral pathways to school-based health services, community health centers, and telehealth options before a student approaches the third illness absence.

Make Referrals Actionable

Effective referral systems focus on connection and follow-through. Schools may consider:

- Assigning a staff member (e.g., counselor, attendance officer, or liaison) to coordinate the referral
- Making a warm handoff by connecting the student or family directly with the service provider
- Completing referrals promptly
- Following up to confirm services were accessed and barriers are improving

Use and Strengthen Community Partnerships

Districts are encouraged to maintain a current directory of local supports, organized by barrier type (health, transportation, housing, counseling, basic needs). This directory should include:

- Named contacts at each organization
- Clear referral pathways
- Periodic review to ensure services are accessible in practice, not just on paper

Resources

- [Child Access to Mental Health and Psychiatry \(CHAMP\)](#) — Statewide behavioral health consultation line for school and community mental health center staff. [champms.org > home](#)
- [The SHAPE System Screening and Assessment Library](#) — School Health Assessment and Performance Evaluation System; screening and assessment library (free login). [theshapesystem.com > assessment library](#)
- [University of Mississippi Medical Center Telehealth for Schools](#) — UMMC's school-based telehealth program, bringing medical and behavioral health visits into the school day to reduce health-related absences. [umc.edu > Healthcare > Telehealth > Schools > Helping Schools](#)
- [Mental Health Mississippi Find Services Directory](#) — Statewide locator for community mental health centers and services. [mentalhealthms.com > find services](#)

Individualized Attendance Success Plan

What the Law Requires

SB2103 (2026), §37-13-91(4)(c)(ii): As part of its tiered intervention strategies, each district shall assign an individualized attendance success plan, which may include mentoring, case management by a school attendance officer, or other evidence-based supports.

Putting It Into Practice

The individualized attendance success plan is the most intensive intervention in the prevention sequence, intended for students who remain at risk after notification, conferencing, and referral to services. At this stage, schools shift from general strategies to identifying and addressing the specific reasons a student is not attending.

Develop a Written, Student-Specific Plan

Districts looking to structure these plans may find the sample template below helpful.

Sample Individualized Attendance Success Plan Template

Student Information

- Name: _____
- Grade: _____
- Current attendance concern (e.g., missed days, patterns): _____

1. Root Cause of Absences *(What is driving the absences? Select and describe the primary factor(s))*

- ☐ Barrier (e.g., health, transportation, housing)
- ☐ Aversion (e.g., anxiety, bullying, academic difficulty)
- ☐ Disengagement (e.g., low connection to school)
- ☐ Misconception (e.g., attendance not viewed as important)

Brief description: _____

2. Student Strengths and Motivators *(What can the plan build on?)*

- Interests (e.g., favorite subject, extracurriculars): _____
- Student and family strengths: _____
- Trusted adults/relationships: _____
- Motivators or goals: _____

3. Planned Actions and Expectations

School Actions (who + what + by when):

- Action: _____ | Staff responsible: _____ | Timeline: _____
- Action: _____ | Staff responsible: _____ | Timeline: _____

Family Actions (with school support): _____

Student Commitments (if appropriate): _____

4. Assigned Supports

- Strategy being used (e.g., mentoring, counseling, transportation support):

- Assigned adult (mentor/case manager/attendance officer):

5. Monitoring Plan

- Review frequency (e.g., weekly, biweekly): _____

- What will be tracked (e.g., daily attendance, engagement indicators):

- Next review date: _____

6. Goal and Exit Criteria

- Short-term goal (e.g., improve attendance to ___% over ___ weeks):

- When will the student exit this plan? _____

Assign One Adult

Research consistently shows the importance of a single consistent adult responsible for the plan. Name one person (e.g., teacher, counselor, coach, school attendance officer) to build it with the student and family and follow through.

Review and Close the Plan

- Review each plan against its goal at least biweekly and decide whether to continue, modify, or exit.
- Set exit criteria at the start, including what improvement looks like and when the student comes off the plan.
- When the student meets the goal, close the plan and return to monitoring through existing MTSS and EWS systems.

Quick Check

- Every plan names one adult who owns it.
- Plans are built together with the student and family.
- Caseloads are realistic.
- Plans have a review cycle and specific exit criteria.
- Plans leverage MTSS and EWS processes already in place.

Resources

- [Check & Connect \(University of Minnesota\)](https://checkandconnect.umn.edu) — Evidence-based mentoring and case-management model in which one consistent adult monitors a student's attendance, behavior, and grades and stays with them over time. checkandconnect.umn.edu

- [Attendance Works Addressing the Root Causes of Absence](#) — Provides tools and guidance to help schools identify underlying drivers of absenteeism and align interventions within student success plans. [attendanceworks.org > ... > 3-tiers-of-intervention > root-causes](#)
- [Early Warning & Response Systems — Johns Hopkins Everyone Graduates Center](#) — Tools and models for standing up an early warning system and running the review cycle that flags students early. [every1graduates.org > tools-and-models > early-warning-and-response-systems](#)
- [Mississippi Department of Education Early Warning System Guide](#) — State EWS guide aligned to MTSS. Includes ABC thresholds, team configuration by grade span, and coded intervention menu. [mdek12.org > Elementary Education and Reading > Intervention Services](#)

Proactive Family Engagement

What the Law Requires

SB2103 (2026), §37-13-91(4)(c)(iii): Each school district shall adopt strategies for proactive family engagement to prevent and reduce chronic absenteeism. At a minimum, these must include:

- regular communication with families, in a language and manner they understand, about the importance of daily attendance and the consequences of absenteeism;
- partnerships with community organizations, faith-based institutions, or local businesses to support families in overcoming barriers to school attendance; and
- training for school staff on culturally responsive family engagement practices related to attendance.

Putting It Into Practice

The law requires districts to adopt proactive family engagement strategies. The guidance below, drawn from national attendance, family engagement, and school improvement research, offers practical approaches for doing so.

Move From Notification to Partnership

Research consistently finds that schools with stronger family engagement experience lower rates of chronic absenteeism. Effective attendance efforts treat families as partners in problem-solving rather than recipients of compliance messages. They build trust before problems arise, frame attendance as a shared responsibility, invite two-way communication, and seek to understand barriers before proposing solutions, recognizing that families are often the best source of

information about what keeps a student from school. These conversations work best when they begin early, before attendance concerns become chronic.

Communications must use plain, family-friendly language and be translated into families' home languages so every family can understand them. (§4(c)(iii))

Early, proactive messages can also:

- Explain that chronic absenteeism includes both excused and unexcused absences
- Highlight the connection between attendance, learning, and graduation
- Name a contact person for questions or support

Establish a Year-Round Communication Strategy

Attendance communication should not begin after a student becomes chronically absent. Regular communication with families about the importance of attendance is required (§4(c)(iii)); a year-round communication plan is a practical way to meet it and to help families understand how attendance patterns affect academic success.

Timing	Suggested Strategy
Beginning of school year	Attendance expectations shared through registration, open houses, orientation events, and family handbooks
Monthly or quarterly	Attendance reminders, positive attendance messages, and attendance pattern updates
After emerging concerns	Personal outreach by a trusted staff member to understand barriers and offer support
Throughout the year	Text messages, phone calls, emails, social media posts, and printed communications in families' preferred language

Use Relational Outreach

Families are more likely to respond to personal outreach from someone they know than to automated messages or form letters. Schools should prioritize relationship-based communication, particularly for students showing early signs of attendance concerns. Examples include:

- Personal phone calls from teachers, counselors, or administrators
- Welcome calls at the beginning of the school year
- Home visits or community-based meetings, where appropriate
- Positive "good news" calls that celebrate attendance improvements

- Student-family attendance goal-setting conversations

Train Staff on Family Engagement Practices

The law requires staff training on culturally responsive family engagement related to attendance.

Training topics may include:

- Building trust with families
- Conducting strengths-based attendance conversations
- Understanding cultural responsiveness
- Effective communication with multilingual families
- Collaborative problem-solving around attendance barriers
- Using attendance data to guide supportive family outreach

Partner With Community Organizations

Attendance barriers frequently extend beyond school, into transportation, health care access, housing instability, food insecurity, and childcare. The law requires districts to partner with community organizations, faith-based institutions, or local businesses to help families overcome these barriers (§4(c)(iii)). Useful partners include faith-based organizations, youth-serving nonprofits, community health providers, family resource centers, and social service, housing, and transportation agencies.

Proactive engagement means building these relationships before a crisis, not only when a barrier surfaces for a specific student. Examples include attendance resource fairs, community-based attendance awareness campaigns, and weekend or after-school mentoring programs. When a barrier is identified for an individual student, the Referral to Support Services section covers how to maintain a partner directory and make warm handoffs.

Quick Check

- Communications are provided in languages and formats families can understand.
- Families receive attendance information before chronic absenteeism develops.
- Staff use relationship-based outreach, not just automated notifications.
- Community partners are incorporated into attendance support efforts.
- Families help identify attendance barriers and solutions.
- School staff receive training on culturally responsive family engagement.

- Family engagement strategies are reflected in attendance, MTSS, and school improvement processes.

Written Chronic Absenteeism Reduction Plan

What the Law Requires

SB2103 (2026), §37-13-91(4)(c)(iv): When a school's chronic absenteeism rate exceeds 10% for any subgroup or grade level, the district must adopt a written chronic absenteeism reduction plan, submit it to the school board, and make it publicly available on the district website. The plan must describe the specific evidence-based practices the district will use to reduce chronic absenteeism, the timeline for implementation, family and community engagement strategies, and the metrics for measuring progress.

Putting It Into Practice

The 10% Trigger: When a Plan Is Required

A written chronic absenteeism reduction plan is required when the share of students who are chronically absent exceeds 10% for any single subgroup or grade level — not the schoolwide average.

Build From Your District's Existing Data

Your district already tracks chronic absenteeism data. Active monitoring (§4(c)(i)), tiered interventions (§4(c)(ii)), and proactive family engagement (§4(c)(iii)) are already required. The

chronic absenteeism reduction plan should describe that existing work, not invent an additional plan.

Your district's chronic absenteeism data already appears in your annual accountability reporting and in both district- and school-level improvement plans (§4(c)(i)). The reduction plan should align with the relevant improvement plan, not duplicate it.

What the Plan Must Include

The plan must describe four elements:

- the specific evidence-based practices the district will use to reduce chronic absenteeism;
- the timeline for implementation;
- family and community engagement strategies; and
- the metrics for measuring progress.

The district must also:

- submit the plan to the school board; and
- post it on the district website.

Recommended Steps for Developing the Plan

With your district leadership team, develop your chronic absenteeism plan by leveraging what's already reported in your district- and school-level improvement plans. Appendix A provides a reduction plan development tool that walks through each required element.

Start with clear data.

- School chronic absenteeism rate
- Grade-level rates
- Subgroup rates
- Multi-year trends
- Comparison to other district averages and state averages

Include a root-cause analysis. Capture the *why*, including issues like transportation, chronic illness, school climate.

Connect the plan to existing plans and teams. Consider how each of these are used in the plan:

- MTSS (Multi-Tiered Systems of Support)
- EWS (Early Warning Systems)
- Teacher Support Team (TST)
- School counseling plans
- Existing school and district improvement plans

Quick Check

Required by §4(c)(iv):

- The four essential elements are clear, thorough, and expressly identified within the plan.
- The plan has been submitted to the school board.
- The plan is posted on the district website.

Consider to strengthen practice:

- The district leadership team and school leaders are aware of the plan and its significance.
- A plan is in place for public messaging and stakeholder communications once it's published.

Resources

- [Mississippi Department of Education Early Warning System Guide](#) — State EWS guide aligned to MTSS. Includes ABC thresholds, team configuration by grade span, and coded intervention menu. [mdek12.org > Elementary Education and Reading > Intervention Services](#)
- [Attendance Works Three Tiers of Intervention](#) — Provides evidence-based strategies for prevention, early intervention, and intensive supports, including tools for root cause analysis and family engagement. [attendanceworks.org > chronic absence > addressing chronic absence > 3 tiers of intervention](#)
- [Applying a Cycle of Evidence-Based Continuous Improvement to Improve Attendance \(IES\)](#) — Offers research-based guidance on selecting, implementing, and refining attendance interventions using a continuous improvement approach. [ies.ed.gov > resource library > applying a cycle of evidence-based continuous improvement](#)

Locally Tailored District Policies

What the Law Requires

SB2103 (2026), §37-13-91(4)(d)(i): By November 1, 2026, each school district shall, by board action, adopt and implement locally tailored policies that:

1. Set documentation standards for the excuse categories listed in §4(a)(ii)–(v) — illness/injury, isolation orders, death or serious illness of an immediate family member, and medical/dental appointments—including acceptable verification, submission timelines, a locally set limit on parent/guardian notes before third-party documentation is required, and protections for student privacy; and
2. Establish family engagement protocols, including timely notice when a student is at risk of chronic absenteeism, a parent/guardian conference and attendance success plan, multichannel/translated communications, and referral to available local supports.

Policies shall be posted on the district website, reviewed at least every three (3) years, and reported on annually to the school board using disaggregated attendance data. (§4(d)(ii))

The department shall issue a nonbinding model policy not later than August 15, 2026. Adoption of the model policy, or a substantially aligned policy, constitutes minimum compliance. (§4(d)(iii))

What Your Policy Must Address

Appendix A provides a model policy framework that covers each component below and the local decisions to record for each. Districts can adopt it directly or use it to check a locally drafted policy against the statute.

Documentation Standards for Excused Absences

These standards apply to the excuse categories in §4(a)(ii)–(v): illness, isolation orders, family death or serious illness, and medical appointments.

- Acceptable verification for excuse categories (e.g., illness, medical appointments)
- Submission timelines: how long families have to submit documentation after an absence
- Locally set limit on parent/guardian notes before third-party documentation is required
- Protections for student privacy: who can access attendance data, how it is shared, FERPA compliance

Family Engagement Protocols

Your policy must commit to how your district will carry out each of these steps.

- Timely notice when a student reaches 3+ absences and is at risk of chronic absenteeism
- Parent/guardian conference to identify barriers to attendance
- Individualized attendance success plan
- Multichannel and translated communications
- Referral to school/community-based supports

Transparency and Review

- Policy posted on district website
- Annual report to school board using disaggregated attendance data
- Formal policy review at least every three years

Policy Additions to Consider

The following aren't required by statute but may strengthen the policy and its implementation.

- Who is responsible for leading notification, conferencing, referral, and success plan development?
- How are chronically absent students supported in catching up?
- Transportation is named as a barrier (§4(c)(ii)). If it is a barrier in your district, how can it be addressed in the policy?
- How does attendance data feed into the school improvement planning process, as required by §4(c)(i)?

Policy Development: Engaging Families and Youth

The policy must be locally tailored to your community. The families and students who live with these policies should help shape them. The approaches below are recommended ways to gather their input.

Recommended members of the plan development team: District leadership, school-level staff (principals, counselors, attendance clerks), families who have experienced chronic absenteeism, students, community partners, and school board members.

Reaching Families

- Hold listening sessions where families already are, such as community centers, churches, or in individual neighborhoods.
- Use existing touchpoints like parent-teacher conferences or back-to-school events.
- Conduct short surveys via phone or text.
- Leverage trusted messengers, including faith leaders and community health workers.

Engaging Students

- Conduct small focus groups facilitated by someone students trust.
- Train a small group of students to survey peers about attendance barriers and solutions.
- Ask the student council to help develop or provide feedback on the draft policy.

Resources

- [Mississippi Department of Education Early Warning System Guide](#) — State EWS guide aligned to MTSS. Includes ABC thresholds, team configuration by grade span, and coded intervention menu. [mdek12.org > Elementary Education and Reading > Intervention Services](#)
- [Applying a Cycle of Evidence-Based Continuous Improvement to Improve Attendance \(IES\)](#) — Offers research-based guidance on selecting, implementing, and refining attendance interventions using a continuous improvement approach. [ies.ed.gov > resource library > applying a cycle of evidence-based continuous improvement](#)

Partnering With Your School Attendance Officer

What the Law Requires

SB2103 (2026), §37-13-91(2)(g): A school attendance officer (SAO) is a person employed by the State Department of Education to enforce the Compulsory School Attendance Law (§37-13-89). The officer's duties span both sides of attendance: investigating unlawful absences, contacting the home, and providing written notice, as well as providing counseling to encourage attendance and attempting to secure the social or welfare services a child may need in order to attend. (§37-13-89(4))

An individualized attendance success plan may include case management by a school attendance officer. (§4(c)(ii)) The state funds one school attendance officer for every 4,000 compulsory-school-age children enrolled in the public schools. (§37-13-89(6))

Putting It Into Practice

The law says who the officer is and makes their help available. The guidance below offers practical considerations for how to partner with the officer.

Know Who the SAO Is

The SAO is a State Department of Education employee, not district staff. The state funds roughly one officer for every 4,000 compulsory-school-age students. Work with the officer and be mindful of that caseload.

Use Both Sides of the Role

The officer supports both prevention and enforcement.

Prevention pathway		Enforcement pathway
School	Leads: monitors all absences, conducts early outreach, provides Tier 1–2 supports, builds the IASP	Reports a student's fifth unlawful absence to the SAO by the next business day
SAO	Supports: provides counseling, helps secure the services a child needs to attend, and can case-manage a student through an IASP	Leads: investigates unlawful absences, issues written notice, and petitions youth court if attendance efforts fail

On the enforcement side, the district must report a student's fifth unlawful absence to the SAO by close of business the next business day (§37-13-91(6)). This counts unlawful absences, not the five-excused-per-semester cap.

On the prevention side, the SAO's support is available to draw on. Consider bringing the officer into the first parent-and-student support conference, rather than waiting for a case to escalate to enforcement.

Coordinate Data With the SAO

Timely referrals depend on attendance data that is accurate and current.

The district reports unlawful absences to the SAO. The SAO keeps its own records of absences and the actions it takes. These do not overlap: the report counts unlawful absences, not chronic absenteeism.

Deciding which absences are unlawful is the district's job: it applies its own excuse policy and tallies the days. The SAO does not recalculate days or judge whether an excuse is valid. A referral sent before the excuse process has run, or built on a miscounted report, creates rework and delay.

Schools may consider the following steps to coordinate:

- Keeping MSIS as the shared system of record
- Naming a standing point of contact with the officer
- Setting a regular check-in cadence rather than a handoff at crisis

Resources

- [Mississippi Department of Education Office of Compulsory School Attendance Enforcement and Dropout Prevention \(OCSA\)](#) — Provides oversight, guidance, and coordination for attendance officers, including roles, responsibilities, and processes for addressing unlawful absences and supporting student attendance. mdek12.org > OCSA

Appendix A

Written Chronic Absenteeism Reduction Plan: Development Tool

This tool supports development of a Written Chronic Absenteeism Reduction Plan when a school's chronic absenteeism exceeds 10% for any grade level or student subgroup. Use this plan development guide with your district leadership team, the plan should:

- Build on existing practices, including attendance monitoring, tiered supports, family engagement, and district and school improvement planning.
- Use attendance data to identify barriers, leverage existing systems, engage families and community partners, and develop innovative solutions that reflect the district's unique strengths, challenges, and community context.

Required Plan Elements

Evidence-Based Practices

Use attendance data and root-cause analysis to identify barriers, build on existing strengths, and select strategies that address local needs. Include the following plan components:

- Root causes contributing to chronic absenteeism
- Current evidence-based intervention strategies and how they address identified attendance barriers
- Evidence-based strategies to be strengthened, expanded, or refined
- Innovative or locally developed strategies responsive to student and family needs
- District and community assets that will support attendance improvement

Status	Plan Requirement	Meets	Strengthens	Refines
Required	Evidence-based practices	Plan names the specific practices the district will use to reduce chronic absence	Practices are evidence-based and matched to the district's root-cause analysis, drawn from the	Practice selection revisited against results and routinely reviewed and refined through

Status	Plan Requirement	Meets	Strengthens	Refines
			tiered interventions already in place	continuous improvement cycles using implementation and outcome data

Timeline for Implementation

Identify key action steps, responsible individuals, and implementation milestones. Include the following plan components:

- Implementation timeline, key milestones, and target completion dates
- Individuals, or teams responsible for implementation and monitoring
- Benchmarks and indicators used to measure progress toward implementation goals
- Schedule and process for reviewing data, refining strategies, and responding to emerging needs

Status	Plan Requirement	Meets	Strengthens	Refines
Required	Implementation timeline	Plan states a timeline	Timeline includes milestones, responsible parties, monitoring checkpoints, and planned progress reviews	Implementation progress is routinely reviewed and timelines are adjusted based on data, feedback, and changing needs

Family and Community Engagement Strategies

Describe how families, students, community organizations, and local partners will contribute to attendance improvement efforts and help address barriers. Include the following plan components:

- Student, family, and community input used to identify attendance barriers and inform solutions
- Proactive strategies for engaging families that support regular student attendance
- Specific strategies to support the identified student subgroup(s) and/or grade level(s)

- Community partnerships and resources that will be leveraged to address attendance barriers
- Referral system and aligned community supports
- Methods for communicating attendance information, expectations, and supports
- Processes for collecting and using family and community feedback to strengthen attendance efforts

Status	Plan Requirement	Meets	Strengthens	Refines
Required	Family & community engagement	Plan describes the strategies it will use	→ see Proactive Family Engagement (p. 50)	→ see Referral (p. 47)

Metrics for Measuring Progress

Identify both outcome measures and implementation measures to assess progress and inform decision-making. Include the following plan components:

- Measurable attendance goals and benchmarks for identified student subgroup(s) and/or grade level(s)
- Outcome measures to evaluate progress
- Data and Implementation measures to monitor strategy delivery and effectiveness
- Data review processes and monitoring schedules

Status	Plan Requirement	Meets	Strengthens	Refines
Required	Progress metrics	Plan names metrics for measuring progress	Metrics are specific and baselined, tied to the named practices and to the monitoring data	Metrics monitored on a cycle and drive adjustments to the plan

Plan Submission and Implementation

Align your plan with existing district and school improvement efforts.

Status	Plan Requirement	Meets	Strengthens	Refines
Required	Alignment to existing improvement efforts	Plan references existing district and school improvement efforts and identifies where attendance-related goals or strategies are already included	Plan clearly aligns attendance priorities, strategies, and action steps with existing school and district improvement goals	Plan fully integrates attendance strategies into ongoing school and district improvement cycles

Submit the plan to the local school board.

Status	Plan Requirement	Meets	Strengthens	Refines
Required	Board submission & endorsement	Plan is submitted to the school board	Plan is presented to the board with the data behind it; the board engages and formally endorses, not just receives	Board reviews progress against the plan on a set cadence during the year, not only at adoption

Post the plan on the district website.

Status	Plan Requirement	Meets	Strengthens	Refines
Required	Public posting & transparency	Plan is posted on the district website	Posting is paired with plain-language communication	Feedback invited and taken in; it informs revision

Establish a process for ongoing review and continuous improvement.

Status	Plan Recommendation	Meets	Strengthens	Refines
Recommended	Plan development & revision	Plan is drafted by district staff and adopted	Plan review draws in the people closest to the problem — school staff, families who've experienced chronic absence, students, community partners	Plan revisited and refined through ongoing review of data, feedback, and implementation evidence— a living plan, not an annual artifact

Locally Tailored District Policies: Model Policy Framework

Each district is required to adopt a locally tailored attendance policy by November 1, 2026. These policies should clarify attendance expectations, define documentation procedures, establish family engagement practices, and ensure students receive timely support when attendance concerns emerge.

District leadership teams can use this model policy framework to guide development of their locally tailored district attendance policy. Locally tailored policies should meet statutory requirements while reflecting local needs, priorities, attendance challenges, and community resources. Effective policies establish clear expectations while providing flexibility to address the unique circumstances of students, families, and communities.

Documentation Standards

Local Policy Decisions: Consider the advantages, tradeoffs, and implementation implications of each option. Select and document the approach that best aligns with district needs, community context, and available resources.

Status	Decision to record	Options — choose and adapt
Required	Acceptable verification (<i>what counts as proof?</i>)	• Narrow (official only, e.g., physician note) — cleanest records; may be a barrier where healthcare access is limited • Broad (NP, school nurse, community health worker) — lowers the access barrier; more school-level judgment calls • Tiered — official documentation for some categories, lighter proof for others
Required	Submission timeline (<i>how long to turn it in?</i>)	• Short (2–3 days) — records stay current; tougher for families • Longer (5–10 days) — more realistic; can mean messier data • Differentiated — short window for planned absences, longer for emergencies
Required	Parent/guardian note limit (<i>before third-party documentation is required</i>)	• Low (2–3 notes) — surfaces need earlier; may flag uninsured students • Higher (4–5) — more family flexibility; can delay identifying who needs support • Flexible — documentation required only once a pattern develops
Required	Student-privacy protections	• Define who may access attendance information, how information is stored and shared, FERPA protections, and processes for maintaining student confidentiality

Family Engagement Protocols: Required Policy Components

Policies should emphasize early intervention, relationship-building, and collaborative problem-solving to address attendance barriers before they become chronic.

Status	Component	Meets	Strengthens	Refines
Required	At-risk notification commitment	Policy commits to notifying families at the at-risk trigger	Policy specifies timing, channels, and translation (see Notification)	Policy includes procedures for monitoring effectiveness and refining outreach methods when families are not successfully reached
Required	Conference & success-plan commitment	Policy commits to offering conferences and success plans	Policy names how families access them and how barriers get documented (see Conference, IASP)	Policy includes procedures for monitoring conference participation, success-plan implementation, and follow-up support
Required	Communications commitment	Policy commits to multichannel, translated communication	Communication methods, translation supports, and expected response timelines are clearly defined	Communication practices are reviewed regularly to improve accessibility, responsiveness, and family engagement
Required	Referral commitment	Policy commits to referral to local supports	Policy identifies available school and community resources and establishes referral procedures	Policy identifies process for reviewing outcomes to ensure families successfully access supports and services

Transparency & Review: Required Policy Components

Locally tailored attendance policies should evolve as districts learn more about attendance patterns, implementation challenges, and the effectiveness of supports. Transparent reporting and regular policy review help districts monitor impact, engage stakeholders, and refine practices over time.

Status	Component	Meets	Strengthens	Refines
Required	Website posting	Policy posted on the district website	Posting paired with a plain-language explanation to families	Feedback invited and feeds revision
Required	Annual board report	Disaggregated attendance data reported to the board annually	Report includes attendance trends, subgroup data, identified needs, and planned actions to improve attendance outcomes	Board engages with it and tracks response over time
Required	Three-year review	Policy reviewed at least every three years	Review incorporates implementation experiences, attendance data, and student and family feedback in addition to legal compliance requirements	Policy effectiveness is monitored regularly, with revisions considered when data or implementation results indicate a need for adjustments

Optional Policy Elements to Strengthen Implementation

While not required by statute, districts may choose to include additional policy provisions that strengthen implementation, improve consistency, and address attendance barriers unique to their local context.

Status	Component	Meets	Strengthens	Refines
Recommended	Make-up work & grading	Not addressed; students return to failing grades for missed work	Policy gives students a path to make up work and recover grades after supported absences	Recovery approach reviewed for whether it actually helps returning students catch up
Recommended	Staff roles	Ownership of notification, conferencing, referral, and planning is unassigned in policy	Policy clearly defines responsibilities for notification, conferencing, attendance planning, referrals, and follow-up	Ownership reviewed and adjusted against how the work actually gets done
Recommended	Transportation protocols	Transportation barriers not addressed in policy	Policy identifies attendance-related transportation barriers and outlines available district or community supports	Transportation-related attendance data is reviewed regularly to identify emerging needs and improve access
Recommended	Recognition & incentives	No positive-recognition approach	Policy supports positive attendance messaging,	Incentives reviewed for effect and adjusted

Status	Component	Meets	Strengthens	Refines
			student engagement, and recognition efforts that encourage improved attendance	
Recommended	Student mobility & transitions	Plans and data don't travel when a student changes schools	Policy addresses how plans and attendance data transfer across schools	Transitions tracked so students don't fall through the gaps
Recommended	Link to school-improvement planning	Attendance data not connected to the improvement-planning cycle	Policy ties attendance data into the school-improvement cycle	Attendance trends and outcomes are regularly reviewed alongside other improvement measures to support continuous improvement
Recommended	"Extenuating circumstances" definition	No local definition for approving excused absences beyond the semester cap	Policy defines "extenuating circumstances" for exceptions	Definition reviewed for consistency and fairness in application

Appendix B

Attendance Playbook Implementation Rubric

1. Active Monitoring of Chronic Absenteeism

Status	Action	Meets	Strengthens	Refines
Required	Student-level tracking	Chronically absent students are identified at the 10% threshold — student-level, not just average daily attendance	Students are flagged before 10% using EWS/ABC risk thresholds, reviewed on a set cycle	Early warning flags rising risk and triggers review automatically; local thresholds adjusted to what predicts chronic absence
Required	Disaggregation	Rates broken out by grade level and subgroup	<i>one-time data cut — floor only</i>	—
Required	Data in reporting & improvement plans	Chronic absenteeism data included in annual reporting and in district/school improvement plans	Data actively shapes improvement-plan goals and strategies, not just reported within them	Improvement-plan attendance goals monitored against live data and adjusted mid-cycle
Recommended	Review team & cadence	Attendance data reviewed ad hoc or year-end; no standing cadence	An existing team (MTSS/TST) reviews attendance on a regular cycle (min. 3×/yr) with a structured protocol: flags	Secondary teams meet biweekly on monthly MSIS data; protocol outputs tracked and cadence adjusted to what works

Status	Action	Meets	Strengthens	Refines
			→ root cause → owner → follow-up	
Recommended	Clear roles	Roles informal or unassigned	Named owners: who pulls the data, who reviews it, who acts on flags	Roles coordinated across school- and student-level teams; handoffs reviewed and reassigned as gaps surface
Recommended	Pattern tracking	Overall rates only	Patterns tracked: day of week, around breaks, by class period	Patterns drive targeted intervention design and are re-examined as interventions shift them

2. Timely Parent/Guardian Notification

Status	Action	Meets	Strengthens	Refines
Required	Notify at 3+ absences	Families notified when a student reaches 3 absences, in a language and manner they understand	Notice within 24–48 hrs; names the student and absence count, states why it matters, gives a direct contact	Staged notices at 3 / 5 / 7 aligned to EWS tiers, escalating channel each step, tracked for response and adjusted
Required	Translated & accessible communication	Notices provided in families' home language, plain wording, accessible format	Interpreter support offered when needed; formats mobile-friendly and readable	Reach checked — which groups actually receive and respond — and gaps closed

Status	Action	Meets	Strengthens	Refines
Recommended	Personalized messaging	Generic form notice	Names the student, gives specific absence count, comes from a known staff contact	Grade-level framing; references the recent pattern; tuned to what draws response
Recommended	Multichannel sequencing	Single channel	Layered: text/email first, escalating to phone and in-person as concern persists	Sequence tuned by threshold and tracked for response rate by channel
Recommended	Connect to tiered supports	Notification stands alone	Notification triggers the next tier of support	Outreach tracked against whether attendance improves, and trigger logic adjusted

3. Parent/Guardian Conference to Identify Barriers

Status	Action	Meets	Strengthens	Refines
Required	Offer a barrier-identification conference	Conferences offered to families when a student is at risk of chronic absenteeism	Framed as support, not blame; flexible options (in-person, phone, virtual); interpretation when needed; student included when appropriate	Conference outcomes tracked and feed the intervention team; scheduling and format adjusted to what gets families in the room

Status	Action	Meets	Strengthens	Refines
Recommended	Prepare with data	Staff hold the conference without structured preparation	Attendance data and patterns reviewed before the meeting (day/period, tardies, prior outreach, EWS and academic/behavioral indicators)	Preparation follows a standard protocol; what surfaces routinely informs which barriers the district anticipates
Recommended	Focus on root causes	Conversation centers on the number of absences	Open-ended questions explore the external and school-related barriers behind the absences	Root-cause patterns across conferences inform district-level supports, not just individual plans
Recommended	Document barriers & connect to support	Barriers noted informally	Barriers documented and shared with the attendance team; families connected to services with a noted handoff (see Referral)	Documentation feeds the success plan where warranted (see IASP) and is tracked to confirm the handoff led to support

4. Referral to Support Services

Status	Action	Meets	Strengthens	Refines
Required	Provide referral to supports	Students referred to school- or community-	Referral matched to the underlying barrier, using	Referrals tracked to confirm services were

Status	Action	Meets	Strengthens	Refines
		based supports (health, counseling, transportation) as appropriate	information from attendance reviews, conferences, and EWS	accessed and barriers improved; match logic refined over time
Required	Partner with community organizations	District has referral relationships with outside organizations, faith-based institutions, or local businesses	A current directory by barrier type (health, transportation, housing, counseling, basic needs) is maintained, with named contacts and clear pathways	Directory reviewed on a cycle to confirm services are accessible in practice; partnerships adjusted to real gaps
Recommended	Recognize & respond to school avoidance	Absences treated uniformly regardless of cause	Staff recognize school-avoidance indicators and route to a support-based response (mental health, gradual re-entry) rather than discipline	Avoidance patterns tracked and re-entry supports refined
Recommended	Medical-documentation barrier pathway	No pathway when the medical-documentation rule creates a barrier	Pathways to school-based health, community health centers, and telehealth established before a student nears the third illness absence	Pathway usage tracked; documentation policy revisited where access is the barrier

Status	Action	Meets	Strengthens	Refines
Recommended	Make referrals actionable	A referral is a name and number handed to the family	A staff member coordinates; a warm handoff connects the family directly to the provider; referral completed promptly	Follow - up confirms services accessed and barriers improving; the loop closes back to the team

5. Individualized Attendance Success Plan

Status	Action	Meets	Strengthens	Refines
Required	Assign an individualized success plan	A plan is assigned for students still at risk after notification, conferencing, and referral	Plan is written and student-specific: root cause, strengths and motivators, actions with owners and timelines, assigned supports, monitoring, exit criteria	Plans reviewed against goals on a cycle and modified or closed; closed plans return to MTSS/EWS monitoring
Recommended	Assign one accountable adult	Responsibility for the plan is diffuse or unassigned	One named adult (teacher, counselor, coach, or attendance officer) owns the plan and follows through	Ownership supported by realistic caseloads and reassigned as gaps surface
Recommended	Build the plan with student & family	The plan is written for the student	Plan built together with the student and family,	Student and family voice shapes plan design

Status	Action	Meets	Strengthens	Refines
			leveraging strengths and trusted relationships	broadly, not just individual plans
Recommended	Review cycle & exit criteria	Plans lack a set review cadence or defined endpoint	Plans reviewed at least biweekly against the goal; exit criteria set at the start	Review data drive continue / modify / exit decisions; exit returns the student to existing monitoring

6. Proactive Family Engagement

Status	Action	Meets	Strengthens	Refines
Required	Regular, year-round communication	Families receive regular communication, in a language and manner they understand, about why attendance matters and the consequences of absenteeism	Communication is year-round and starts before problems: explains chronic absence includes excused and unexcused days, links attendance to learning and graduation, names a contact	Communication plan adjusted by what reaches and resonates with families; reflected in MTSS and school-improvement work
Required	Partner with community organizations	District partners with community organizations, faith-based institutions, or local businesses to help	→ see <i>Referral</i> (p. 47)	→ see <i>Referral</i> (p. 47)

Status	Action	Meets	Strengthens	Refines
		families overcome barriers		
Required	Staff training on culturally responsive family engagement	School staff receive training on culturally responsive family-engagement practices related to attendance	Training covers trust-building, strengths-based conversations, communication with multilingual families, collaborative problem-solving, using data for supportive outreach	Training refreshed and adjusted based on staff practice and family response
Recommended	Relational outreach	Outreach is automated messages and form letters	Relationship-based outreach from known staff: welcome calls, positive “good news” calls, home or community meetings where appropriate, goal-setting conversations	Relational outreach prioritized for early-risk students and tuned to what builds response