

School Attendance and the Pediatrician's Role in the Era of COVID-19



Heidi Schumacher, MD FAAP
Presentation for Maine Chapter of the AAP
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American Academy of Pediatrics
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HOUSEKEEPING

- The webinar is being recorded.
- Please stay on mute if you are not speaking.
- After the webinar:
 - A copy of the recording and corresponding materials will be emailed.



QUESTIONS?

- Use the chat feature for technical assistance and to send us your content questions throughout the webinar
 - Questions will be addressed at the conclusion of the presentation



COUNCIL ON SCHOOL HEALTH

Mission

The Council on School Health (COSH) is dedicated to maximizing the personal health, academic achievement and life-long success of children and adolescents. The COSH seeks to promote sound school health policies and practices that ensure the health and safety of school-aged children and adolescents through policy, education and advocacy.

Interested in Joining the Council?

Visit <https://services.aap.org/en/community/aap-councils/council-on-school-health/>

- OR -

Contact SchoolHealth@aap.org



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By participating in the webinar, attendees will be able to:

- Describe key aspects of chronic absenteeism and the status of school attendance tracking during COVID-19.
- Describe health-related (both physical and emotional) causes of chronic absenteeism.
- Identify evidence-based interventions to support families with distance learning and school attendance and engagement.



FACULTY DISCLOSURE INFORMATION

In the past 12 months, the faculty have had no relevant financial relationships with the manufacturer(s) of any commercial product(s) and/or provider(s) of commercial service(s) discussed in this CME activity.

The faculty do not intend to discuss an unapproved/investigative use of a commercial product/device in my presentation.

I am speaking in my role as a member of the Executive Committee of the American Academy of Pediatrics Council on School Health.



Framing the Discussion: Chronic Absence and the Pediatrician



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Case Study



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CASE STUDY

Jane is a 9yo F participating in hybrid learning. School reopened for limited in-person activities in February. Has missed 14 days of school (virtual and in-person) this year.

On history:

- Vomiting: Vomiting off and on x 2 months, weekdays > weekends. On days when vomits, Mom does not send Jane to school.
- School: Hx of bullying. Jane says school “fine” but clearly anxious discussing.
- Social history: Parents are separated, spends time with mother and grandparents
 - Mom recently back to work. On virtual days when Mom at work, Jane is home by herself for virtual school.
 - Mom expresses concern about transportation, especially now that school bus services is limited.
 - Spotty WiFi at mom’s and grandparents’



CASE STUDY

- Asking about school attendance led to understanding key issues for Jane and her family
 - Bullying
 - Transportation
 - Child care
 - Digital connectivity
- Engaging health care team members made a difference
 - Family navigator
 - School nurse



POLL

How frequently do you ask about school attendance as part of routine office visits?



Chronic Absenteeism: What is it? Why does it matter?

For more resources, visit www.attendanceworks.org
and www.healthychildren.org

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TRUANCY VS. CHRONIC ABSENCE

TRUANCY

Counts only unexcused absences

Emphasizes compliance with compulsory school attendance law

Can result in legal and administrative action (e.g., truancy court)

VS

CHRONIC ABSENCE

Counts all absences:

Excused, unexcused and suspensions

Uses community-based strategies as solutions



TRUANCY IN MAINE

A public school student in Maine is considered truant if he/she/they:

Completed grade 6 and has the equivalent of 10 full days of unexcused absences or 7 consecutive school days of unexcused absences during a school year;

OR

Is at least 6 years of age and has not completed grade 6 and has the equivalent of 7 full days of unexcused absences or 5 consecutive school days of unexcused absences during a school year.



TRUANCY VS. CHRONIC ABSENCE

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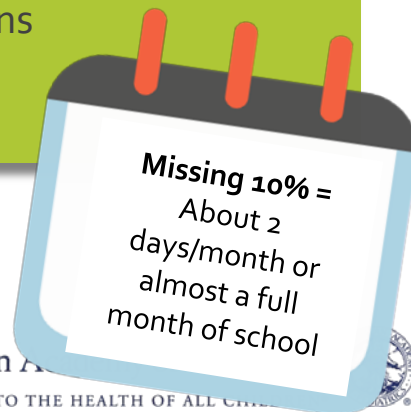
VS

CHRONIC ABSENCE

Counts all absences:

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WHO IS MOST IMPACTED BY CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM?

4X

*more likely to be
chronically absent*

- Youth from **low income backgrounds**
- **Youth of color**
- Youth who have experienced **trauma or Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)**
- Youth with **disabilities**
- Youth who **experience homelessness**
- Youth who have been in contact with the **juvenile justice system**

Additionally:

- *Students in extracurricular activities (e.g. athletics and band)*
- *Families that vacation during the school year*

LONG TERM IMPACT OF CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM

→ Chronic absenteeism in early grades can lead to below grade-level reading in 3rd grade, which in turn impacts high school graduation rates



→ By high school, irregular attendance is a better predictor of school dropout than test scores



→ Not earning a high school diploma is associated with increased mortality risk or lower life expectancy





Common Causes of Absence

Barriers

- **Illness** (*chronic and acute, physical and mental*)
- **Lack of health, mental health, vision, or dental care**
- **Family responsibilities**
- **Trauma**
- **Depression or anxiety**
- **Poor transportation**
- **Housing and food insecurity**
- **Involvement with child welfare or juvenile justice systems**
- **Unsafe path to/from school**
- **Frequent school changes**
- **Inequitable access to resources due to bias & discrimination**

Negative School Experiences

- Struggling academically and behaviorally
- Ineffective or harmful interventions
- Bored
- Social challenges
- Bullying
- Suspensions and expulsions
- Harsh, biased disciplinary practices especially for students of color
- Negative attitudes of parents due to their own school experience
- Undiagnosed disability
- Lack of appropriate accommodations for disability
- Pressure for academic success

Lack of Engagement

- **Lack of access to high quality virtual instruction during school closures**
- Lack of or inequitable access to challenging, culturally responsive, engaging instruction & enrichment
- Lack of or ineffective academic, emotional and behavioral support
- No meaningful or negative relationships to adults in the school
- Stronger ties with peers out of school than in school
- Unwelcoming school climate
- Failure to earn credits/ no future plans
- Many teacher absences or long-term substitutes

Misconceptions

- Absences are only a problem if they are unexcused
- Missing 2 days per month doesn't affect learning
- Sporadic absences aren't a problem
- Attendance only matters in the older grades
- Suspensions are not relevant

HEALTH-RELATED CONDITIONS AND SOCIAL FACTORS ARE A LEADING CAUSE OF CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM

- Asthma
- Oral health and dental pain
- Influenza
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Parental physical or mental health issues
- Type I and II Diabetes Mellitus
- Seizure disorders
- Obesity



HEALTH-RELATED CONDITIONS AND SOCIAL FACTORS ARE A LEADING CAUSE OF CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM

Social factors:

- Exposure to trauma
- Safety concerns
- Housing instability
- Access to:
 - Food
 - Transportation
 - Healthcare

Over 80% of health outcomes are driven by socioeconomic factors, behaviors, and the physical environment



CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM RATES

During the 2018-2019 school year, the following percentage of all **public school students** were chronically absent:

16.8%



of all students in Maine

25.3%



of economically disadvantaged students in Maine

23.9%



of students with disabilities in Maine



Interventions to Support School Attendance and Engagement, Including During Distance Learning

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SCHOOL YEAR 2020-21 & COVID-19

- Reopening Schools
 - Nationally
 - Locally
- AAP Role: [COVID-19 Planning Considerations: Guidance for School Re-entry](#)
- AAP State Chapters
- Role of Individual Pediatricians



AAP POLICY STATEMENT ON SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

In February 2019 , AAP released a [policy statement](#) regarding the role of pediatric providers in addressing school attendance.



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The Link Between School Attendance and Good Health

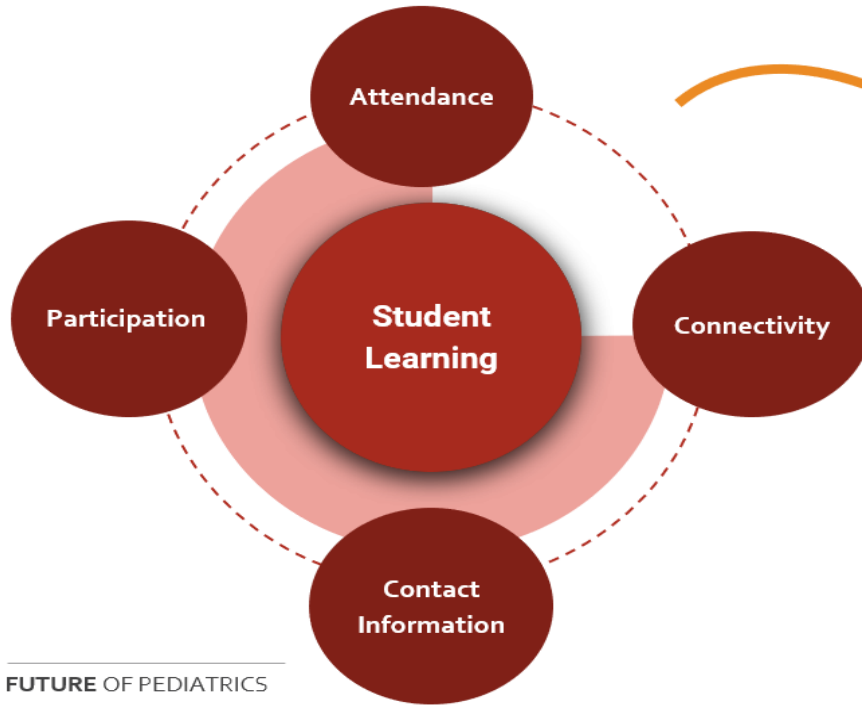
Mandy A. Allison, MD, MSPH, FAAP^a Elliott Attisha, DO, FAAP^b COUNCIL ON SCHOOL HEALTH

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TRACKING ATTENDANCE DURING COVID-19



- Absenteeism is still a **leading** indicator of educational inequity.

SCHOOL ACTIONS FOR SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AND ENGAGEMENT DURING COVID-19

- **Schools need to:**
 - Monitor lost learning time in school - participation in asynchronous or synchronous virtual or in-person learning opportunities
 - Adopt a holistic approach to collect attendance data and expanded measures of connectivity and participation
 - Promote a tiered approach to supporting students beginning with prevention



SCHOOL ACTIONS FOR SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AND ENGAGEMENT DURING COVID-19

- **Schools need to:**
 - Strategically target investments that address the digital divide, lack of supports (health, economic, nutrition, housing, etc.) and other inequities
 - Provide IEP services, including mental health
 - Provide meal services



PEDIATRICIAN ACTIONS FOR SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AND ENGAGEMENT DURING COVID-19

- Consider you may be the only (or primary) touch point for youth and families during this time



STRAIGHT AS

How Pediatricians Support School Attendance

“ASK” ABOUT SCHOOL ATTENDANCE & ENGAGEMENT

- Routinely ask about the number of absences a student has experienced and if they are engaged in distance learning (as applicable).



“AMPLIFY” THE IMPACT OF SCHOOL ATTENDANCE & ENGAGEMENT ON HEALTH AND ACADEMIC OUTCOMES

- Provide [guidance](#) on when a sick child should stay home, especially regarding high-risk COVID-19 symptoms, and when to return to school after a positive COVID-19 test in the household.
- Put up [posters](#) and [provide handouts](#) to convey the importance of attendance to caregivers/patients.



"ADDRESS" BARRIERS TO SCHOOL ATTENDANCE & ENGAGEMENT

- Conduct comprehensive well-child exams that screen for:
 - ◆ Physical health
 - ◆ Mental health
 - ◆ Oral health
 - ◆ Social determinants of health, including access to internet and technology



"ACTIVELY" PARTNER WITH SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES TO SUPPORT ATTENDANCE

- Help with or inform families about available school and community-based supports.
- Help address access issues by:
 - ◆ Extending office hours
 - ◆ Offering [telehealth](#)
 - ◆ Providing information for the family to connect with the school regarding IEPs and other essential services and programs



Adapted from resources by [American Academy of Pediatrics](#), [Healthy Schools Campaign](#), and [Attendance Works](#).

SYSTEMS-LEVEL ACTIONS FOR AAP CHAPTERS AND PEDIATRICIANS

- **Advocate for evidence-based COVID-19 policies for school districts**
- **Advocate for policies and interventions** known to promote school attendance
- **Collaborate with community leaders** to promote school attendance
- Support school districts' efforts to **improve access to health insurance and medical services**
- **Encourage and support data sharing** to better understand patterns and causes of chronic absenteeism in your community



RESOURCES

- [AAP Policy Statement on School Absenteeism](#)
- [AAP COVID-19 Planning Considerations: Guidance for School Re-entry](#)
- [HealthyChildren.org](#)
- Count ME In: <https://countmeinmaine.org/>
- AttendanceWorks: www.attendanceworks.org
- Straight As visual



QUESTIONS

Please use the chat box to submit your questions.



Additional questions? Contact SchoolHealth@aap.org.

THANK YOU & NEXT STEPS

- Within the coming days, you will receive an email with presentation materials and a link to the recorded webinar.
- Consider acting as an ambassador to further promote school attendance in your clinical practice and community!

Examples:

- Consider hosting a brown bag with your practice or health system colleagues, using the webinar recording or templated PPT deck.
- Consider engaging further within Maine AAP!
- Consider reaching out to your local school district or state education agency to discuss opportunities for partnership.



THANK YOU & NEXT STEPS

- Want to continue the conversation? Additional questions?
 - Contact SchoolHealth@aap.org.
 - Consider joining AAP Council on School Health!
<https://services.aap.org/en/community/aap-councils/council-on-school-health/>

