

### WHY CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM?

Chronic absenteeism is linked to lower academic performance, higher dropout rates and diminished success after high school. A student is considered chronically absent if he or she misses 10 percent or more of school days for any reason – excused or unexcused. This accountability indicator collects information on all lost instructional time to ensure that root causes of absence are not hidden. Thirty-six states, including Oklahoma, have adopted chronic absenteeism as the nonacademic indicator in their accountability systems to serve as an early warning sign for students.

A recent study showed that students who were chronically absent in kindergarten and first grade were significantly behind their peers in grade 3 reading; only 17 percent were reading on grade level, compared to 64 percent with consistent attendance. This study and other important research conducted by AttendanceWorks, a national initiative leading attendance awareness, help explore the connection between attendance and achievement. Findings are available here: <http://awareness.attendanceworks.org/wp-content/uploads/Research2016.pdf>

### HOW IS THIS DIFFERENT FROM ADA AND TRUANCY?

Average Daily Attendance (ADA) can mask high absenteeism rates. Since ADA is a snapshot by day of total attendance compared to membership, it fails to track or identify individual students who are regularly absent. Schools can have a 90 percent ADA with 30 percent of their students chronically absent. In contrast, truancy is a measure of only unexcused absences. By including all absences, chronic absenteeism measures all lost instructional time. While some absences are warranted, research indicates that a student who misses more than 10 percent of school is at risk of falling behind academically, regardless of the reason. The chronic absenteeism indicator will identify all at-risk students and assist schools in providing appropriate supports to students and families.

### WHAT ABOUT ABSENCES DUE TO EXTERNAL FACTORS (E.G. CHICKEN POX, CAR ACCIDENT, FLU)?

Chronic absenteeism is not a zero-tolerance indicator. A student is only considered chronically absent if he or she has missed 10 percent or more of the school year (for a standard academic calendar, approximately 18 days). For example, a student who misses a week due to the flu is not immediately identified as chronically absent. That student would have to miss an additional 13 days in a traditional school calendar in order to be identified. The goal of this indicator is to identify and support students who have missed enough school that it could put them at academic risk.

### ARE THERE ANY EXEMPT ABSENCES?

The goal of chronic absenteeism is to identify students who have missed significant instruction due to absences. As such, all absences are included. Students who are at home sick miss the same amount of instruction as those who are on a family vacation. However, the state does recognize that extreme circumstances may exist. House Bill 1693 outlines the requirements for a medical exemption. In March 2018, the State Board of Education approved an emergency rule for medical exemptions that was then signed by the governor. OAC 210:10-13-24 outlines the criteria for an absence exempted from the chronic absenteeism calculation. Among other scenarios, this exemption applies to students who are receiving treatment for a chronic or terminal disease or students who have lost an immediate family member. The complete rule can be accessed [here](#).



For many of these students, no formal exemption will be required. If a student is receiving services (even out-of-school care) outlined in an IEP/504 plan, that student should be marked present. However, if a student is not on an IEP/504 but has met the criteria outlined in the exemption, he or she may have specific absences related to hospital stays, medical treatments, etc. removed from the chronic absenteeism calculation. Please note that the exemption will only apply to absences related to the medical emergency, not additional absences due to vacations, orthodontist appointments, etc.

## HOW WILL CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM BE CALCULATED ON THE SCHOOL REPORT CARD?

A student will be identified as chronically absent if his or her  $(\text{days in attendance})/(\text{days in membership}) \leq 90\%$ .

Note that this calculation uses days in membership and is calculated at the school level. Therefore, a student is determined to be chronically absent at a given school under this indicator. Furthermore, only students who meet the definition of Full Academic Year (FAY) at the school are included for points in this indicator (i.e., a student must have enrolled at the school site within the first 20 instructional days and not experienced an enrollment gap of 10 or more consecutive instructional days prior to the end of the school year).

Points per school/district will be earned based on the percentage of FAY students not chronically absent. For example, if a school identifies 16 percent of FAY students as chronically absent, it would receive  $100\% - 16\% = 84\%$ , 8.4 points out of 10. Students who qualify for an exemption will have the exempted absence(s) included in their “days in attendance” calculation.

## WHEN WILL MORE INFORMATION BE AVAILABLE?

Chronic absenteeism is a multifaceted indicator. OSDE is currently in conversations with various stakeholders to ensure that the indicator is equitable, accurate and reflective of the goal: early identification of students at risk of falling behind academically so that the school can provide necessary interventions and supports. Additional guidance regarding this indicator will be communicated as it becomes available. The Office of Accountability is developing a tool within Single Sign On (SSO) for chronic absenteeism exemption applications. Additional information on the application and approval process will be made available by June 2018.

## WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION?

For questions on chronic absenteeism in accountability, please contact the Office of Accountability at (405) 522-5169 or [accountability@sde.ok.gov](mailto:accountability@sde.ok.gov).

Additional information will be provided to districts and communities throughout 2018. The Office of Accountability is currently developing a toolkit to further explain each indicator’s purpose, data sources, calculation methodology and more.