

Resources Guide

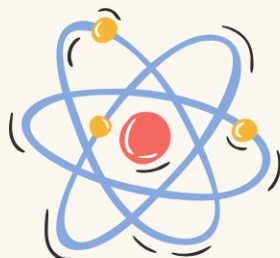


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Introduction

Parents and guardians can play an important role in helping their children attend school and avoid absenteeism and truancy. Please read below for resources and information on prevention and intervention steps you can take to help your child.

You Are Not Alone.

There are so many circumstances that can make it difficult for a child to attend school like transportation, mental health concerns, and special needs just to name a few. Please know you and your family are not alone! There are resources available to help and support your family and child's needs. This Guide includes resources you can reach out to or access to help your child more regularly attend school and support their wellbeing. There are numerous potential reasons a child may miss school such as:

- Chronic illness
- Mental health issues
- Special Needs/Disabilities
- Transportation Issues
- Food Access Issues
- Childcare Issues
- Family Issues (work schedules, family illness, joint custody, etc.)
- And many more

Whatever reason your family may be experiencing, you are not alone and there are resources available to help support your family.

The Problem: Harms of Absenteeism.

- For the 2020- 2021 school year, at least 14.7 million children were chronically absent from school across the U.S., almost double from the school year before.
- Too many absences from school can cause children to struggle socially and academically.
- Missing 2 days/month of school can make it harder to learn to read and do basic math.

The Importance of Attendance.

- Regular school attendance can help children feel better about themselves and school.
- **Regular attendance can also help your child become more confident, enjoy learning, and make friends!**
- According to the [Department of Education and Workforce](#), attendance also helps children do better in school. Students who are present at a school every day are more likely to graduate and achieve reading milestones.

What is Chronic Absenteeism? What is Truancy?

What is Chronic Absenteeism?

- Chronic Absenteeism is when a child misses 10% or more of school, whether or not these absences are excused. ([O.R.C. §3221.191\(A\)](#)) This amounts to missing about 2-3 days/month according to [Attendance Law FAQs | Ohio Department of Education and Workforce](#).
- There are intervention measures that schools put in place when a child has reached chronic absenteeism. These measures may include, but are not limited to:
 - (1) Support through resources and intervention teams;
 - (2) Sending out warning letters around before or when a child reaches the 5% absences threshold; and
 - [Section 3321.191 \(C\)\(3\) - Ohio Revised Code](#)
 - (3) Mediations (further explained in Section IX of this guide).

Habitual Truancy:

When children are absent without an excuse from school, they may become “habitually truant” if they miss:

- “thirty or more consecutive hours;
- forty-two or more hours in one school month; or
- seventy-two or more hours in a school year.”
 - [Section 2151.011 - Ohio Revised Code](#) R.C. 2151.011(B)(18)

Attendance:

[This resource](#), by the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce, explains information that parents should understand about attendance, and suggestions for how to handle absences.

[Stay in the Game! Attendance Network](#) has resources for parents or guardians to learn about the importance of attendance and looking for resources to encourage their children to attend school. It also has resources for parents, caretakers, and other entities that are “designed to improve student attendance.”

General Resources to Help with Absenteeism

Helpful Tools & What You Can Do to Help Your Child

- Prepare clothes and school backpacks before school.
- Keep your child healthy and make sure they have all required shots.
- Develop backup plans for transportation to school if something unexpectedly happens.
- If your child seems worried about going to school, talk to teachers and other parents for advice on how to make your child feel comfortable and interested in going to school.
- **Make school attendance a priority.**
 - Monitor your child's absences.
 - Help your child keep a daily routine, like finishing homework and getting enough sleep.
 - Consider lowering your child's use of tech devices if they impact sleep.
 - If your child needs to stay home because they are sick, make sure you ask teachers for schoolwork that will be missed.
- Check on your child's social relationships. Peer pressure can cause skipping and children without many friends can feel isolated and skip school to avoid social situations. Ask for help from your child's school if these situations come up.
- Encourage your child to join after-school activities like sports/clubs to help them feel engaged and enjoy attending school.
- **Communicate with your child's school.**
 - Know the school's attendance policies both incentives and penalties.
 - Check on your child's attendance to make sure absences are not adding up.

Who to Contact For Help

- [The Ohio Department of Child Resources](#): This provides a list of resources organized by location in Ohio for different needs like childcare, mental health, and special needs.
- Your local parents or teachers' association.
- Your local state educational agency or school district.
- [National Education Association](#) (202-833-4000): This resource provides family support resources for their children's education and wellbeing.
- [National PTA](#) (202 289-6790): This resource provides resources for families to navigate academics, social, and mental health issues for their children.
- [U.S. Department of Education](#) (1-800-872-5327)
- [National Foster Parent Association](#) ((800) 557-5238)
- [The Anti-Drug](#) (1-800-662-4357)

Mental Health Obstacles and Resources

Mental health concerns like anxiety, depression, and bipolar disorder can make attending school difficult for some children. Mental health issues can be caused by traumatic events, stress, genetics, and environmental factors. This is no one's fault. It is important to share this concern with your child's school so they can help support your child and their mental health. You can also access helpful resources below to help address mental health concerns and help your child with absenteeism.

- [Ohio Suicide and Crisis Hotline](#): Dial 988 for immediate support
- [Ohio Department of Health Child and Adolescent Mental Health](#): This resource provides information on mental health and mental health resources to support your child.
- [Be Present Ohio](#): This is a mental health and suicide prevention resource for children and young adults in Ohio.
- [Mobile Response and Stabilization Services \(MRSS\)](#): MRSS is a free service that provides immediate help for children 20 and under, who are experiencing overwhelming mental, emotional, behavioral distress, or trauma that impacts their ability to function with their family, school, or community.
- [Crisis Text Line](#): Text "4hope" to 741-741 to be connected to a trained Crisis Counselor. This resource is a free, confidential service available all day by phone and text.
- [The Ohio Department of Child Resources](#): This resource provides a list of resources organized by location in Ohio for different needs like childcare, mental health, and special needs.
- [With You Here](#): Life is Better With You Here provides mental health resources for African American students and young adults.
- [Ohio CareLine \(1-800-720-9616\)](#): The Ohio CareLine is a free emotional support call service. This service is staffed by behavioral health professionals all day every day. The services include confidential support for any challenges individuals are struggling to cope with.
- [Sources of Strength Ohio](#): Sources of Strength is a wellness program that focuses on suicide prevention but also helps with other issues like substance abuse, bullying, and violence. This resource is available for elementary and secondary grades.
- [Ohio Youth Led Prevention Network](#): This is a network of substance misuse prevention providers and youth across Ohio that are committed to prevention and positive youth development. It provides resources and support for students, schools, and parent organizations.

Food Assistance and Resources

Day-to-day needs may be difficult to meet, like access to food. Lowered access to food can contribute to student absenteeism. Please know that your family is not alone and there are resources available to help support your family. Some available resources and search terms to find local assistance are listed below:

- **Mid-Ohio Food Collective:** The Mid-Ohio Food Collective provides food for hundreds of food pantries and soup kitchens in central and eastern Ohio. You can view their website to find a location near you by just entering your zip code [here](#).
- **Local Churches:** Local churches may provide food assistance for families, so we recommend you contact your local churches to see if they may be able to provide food assistance.
- **Google Search terms to find local food assistance:** “pantry near me”, “[location] + food pantry,” “food bank + [location],” “emergency food assistance.”
 - Google has also created a resource [here](#) for help in locating food assistance programs.
- Ohio Food Programs are available [here](#).
- Consider applying for SNAP food assistance benefits if your family is eligible. See [here](#) for more information.
- Ohio Legal Help also shares links to resources for food resources for families with children [here](#).
- **Meals on Wheels:** This service provides food delivery services for adults 60+ with mobility issues. Eligibility requirements may vary and you can find more information [here](#).

Childcare Obstacles and Resources

Access to childcare can be an obstacle for some families, causing their children to have issues attending school regularly. Please know your family is not alone. Beforecare and aftercare resources can help with childcare needs. Find listed below resources and organizations that can support your family and its needs with resources:

- Check your Local YMCAs and religious organizations to see if they provide childcare support and services for a reduced or free cost.
- Ohio Benefits provides information on childcare services [here](#) with information on different resources, and eligibility requirements.
- [Early Childhood Education Grant Services](#): This is a program your family can apply to if you meet their financial requirements, that will provide childcare free of charge.
- 4C for Children provides information and resources [here](#) for financial assistance for childcare services for low-income families.
- [The Ohio Department of Child & Youth Resources](#): This resource provides a list of resources organized by location across Ohio for different needs like childcare, mental health, and special needs. You can search by zip code or county to find childcare providers. Many of these organizations either offer or provide resources for financial assistance for childcare for low-income working parents.

Special Needs Resources

Some children are differently abled and need special education resources to support their needs. Being a parent of a child with special needs comes with unique challenges, but you do not have to handle this alone. Please know your family is not alone and your school is available to support your family. Find listed below resources and organizations that can support your child and their needs with resources online or in-person:

- Speak with your child’s school and teacher(s). By sharing that your child has special needs, schools and teachers can help accommodate and create personalized plans and resources to support your child attending school and learning.
 - Some children may have disabilities, causing them to be nonverbal and immobile, that make it, so they attend school solely for the social aspect. This is completely okay and speaking with your child’s school can help support their experience attending school.
- [The Ohio Department of Child Resources](#): This resource provides a list of resources organized by location in Ohio for different needs like childcare, mental health, and special needs.
- [Milestones Autism Resources](#): This resource provides support and resources to help autistic individuals navigate their needs and lives.
- [Autistic Advocacy](#): This resource is a nonprofit organization created for and by autistic individuals that provides resources, advocacy, and training for neurodivergent individuals.
- [Help Me Grow](#): is a resource for pregnant persons, caregivers, and families with younger children with disabilities or development special needs. This resources provides services and support for early intervention to support children in learning and gaining skills. This source can be searched by county within the state of Ohio. Their resource directory can be found [here](#).

Transportation Issues

Transportation is another common obstacle that can make it difficult for some children to attend school regularly or on time. Please know your family is not alone and there are resources available to support your child and their needs. [Research has shown](#) that access to safe and reliable transportation supports more consistent school attendance.

Find listed below resources and organizations that can support your family and its needs with resources:

- The Ohio Department of Education and Workforce provides information and resources for students experiencing homelessness [here](#).
- The Ohio Department of Education and Workforce provides information and resources for transportation support [here](#).
- Consider reaching out to other families at your child's school for carpooling.
- Reach out to your local faith based organizations to see if they have a transportation program.

Understanding Mediation & Mediation Resources

Mediation

Mediation is a way for families and schools to talk through concerns and find solutions together. In a truancy or attendance case, it brings parents, school staff, and sometimes the student into a guided conversation. A trained, neutral person called a mediator leads the meeting. The mediator does not take sides or make decisions.

Mediation focuses on working together, not punishment. Each person can share their concerns and explain what makes it hard for the student to attend school regularly. The mediator helps guide the discussion, so it stays calm and focused. This is called facilitated negotiation.

Mediation is also confidential. This means what is shared in the meeting is kept private and not used outside the process, except when the law requires it. This helps everyone feel more comfortable being open and honest.

At the end, everyone works together to make a plan. This plan lists clear steps the family and school will take to improve attendance. It may include support, resources, and expectations so everyone knows what to do moving forward.

What is a mediator?

Mediators are people trained in conflict resolution who are not involved with the issues being discussed in your conversation. Mediators are trained to standards set by the Supreme Court of Ohio and are obligated to be fair during your conversation. They work like planners to help keep your discussion structured and productive and referees to make sure that the discussion is fair and respectful.

What does “confidential” mean?

Mediations are confidential, which means that your mediator is not allowed to share details of your conversation with anyone with exceptions for abuse, neglect, and threats of physical harm.

What does “voluntary” mean?

Mediations are voluntary, meaning that you do not need to reach a settlement and can stop participating at any time. Even if you are ordered to participate in a mediation by the Court, you do not need to make an agreement and may leave the mediation at any time.

Who can I ask about mediation? Some Ohio courts have local contacts who can provide information on mediations and may be able to provide you with more specific information. The Supreme Court of Ohio lists the different court contacts on their website [here](#).

Where can I learn more? If you have additional questions that are not covered here or are interested in reading about the laws governing mediation, you can find out more on the Supreme Court of Ohio's website [here](#).