**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

# Quick Guide: Early Childhood Programs—Building Relationships That Support Consistent Attendance

This Quick Guide outlines an approach that aligns with K-12 Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) strategies and emphasizes the importance of building early relationships with families that support participation and attendance. Research has shown a positive correlation between consistent attendance and successful school outcomes for children. By establishing a welcoming school climate and positive relationships with children and families, children are more likely to fully participate in school learning opportunities. Developing whole family practices that support improved attendance helps support a child's participation in school.

## Supporting Children and Families During Times of In-Person, Hybrid, and Distance Learning

The following table has been adapted from Attendance Works information and suggests attendance strategies that can support children and families during in-person or alternate learning school models. By paying attention to the needs of families that often contribute to absenteeism, issues of systemic inequity can be recognized and addressed by the level of support and resources offered to students and their families.

| Guiding Questions for Schools | In-Person Learning at School | Preparing for School Closure and Outreach During Distance Learning | Support and Engagement During Distance and Hybrid Model Learning |
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| **How are we communicating and connecting with families and their children?** | • Clearly communicate attendance information with families during outreach and orientation sessions; make sure that practices are informed by family beliefs and cultural practices.<br>• Reach out in a trauma-informed, relationship-building manner to families that are experiencing stress.<br>• Address needs for food, shelter, and other needed supports.<br>• Ensure access to technology, other needed educational materials, and understand possible barriers.<br>• Coordinate outreach efforts by family to avoid duplication of information. | • Communicate clearly and frequently details of school closure with families including plans to collect attendance information.<br>• Develop a coordinated outreach approach between professionals working with children from the same family to avoid duplicate communications and share information across teams/staff<br>• Use multiple methods of communicating information and make it available in different languages and formats. | • Continue using strategies used during in-person learning periods.<br>• Partner with families to form plans that will support their child(ren)'s attendance and learning.<br>• Provide seamless transition supports that will facilitate the child's return to school when in-person learning resumes. |

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| **How are we proactively monitoring and addressing attendance and absenteeism?** | • Follow Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) FY2021 Student Membership and Attendance Guidance for tracking attendance.<br>• Use available data to understand the children and families.<br>• Look at data by family as well as by child.<br>• Monitor who is absent on the first day back at school and reach out to them.<br>• Identify ahead of time specific situations that will activate immediate support e.g. #absences, no parent check-in.<br>• Closely observe for changes in family situation or attendance patterns and apply the MDE MTTI plan appropriate intervention<br>• Identify a key staff person who will have ongoing communication with the family. | • Follow MDE FY2021 Student Membership and Attendance Guidance for tracking attendance.<br>• Continue using practices established during in-person learning.<br>• Identify children who have experienced chronic absenteeism in the past.<br>• Identify and address potential new or changing barriers to attendance.<br>• Identify ways to recognize and support improved attendance.<br>• Connect with families to discuss and establish an attainable plan. | • Follow MDE FY2021 Student Membership and Attendance Guidance for tracking attendance.<br>• Use data to track and identify attendance patterns.<br>• Develop early supports to promote consistent attendance.<br>• Use established procedures to shape and implement supports for students with decreased engagement (this should include other staff and administrators). |
| **How are we ensuring daily/regular interaction with a staff person?** | • Develop school attendance policies and "check-in" procedures that involve the classroom teacher or other trusted school adult.<br>• Consider using a virtual application for communication. | • Establish communication methods by using family feedback.<br>• Identify a staff person to communicate individually with families to assure understanding details of attendance tracking plans | • Create methods that allow for contact, engagement and participation both synchronously and asynchronously. |