

CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS (SPOX)

Chicago Public Schools (CPS) is committed to creating sustainable change that keeps students in school.

Like school districts across the country, COVID-19 and COVID-19-related concerns impacted student attendance. The District uses multiple approaches to address attendance issues, including chronic absenteeism, and to re-engage and re-enroll students.

The 2021-22 School Year was a big recovery year for students and all of CPS due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, which had an adverse effect on the District's attendance numbers. To address this increase, CPS made additional investments during the 2022-23 school year in targeted interventions, multi-tiered systems of support, mental health services, and other student support services that reduce absenteeism, and the District is optimistic these intentional investments will lead to improved attendance rates.

Educators at Chicago Public Schools understand that daily class attendance is a powerful predictor of student engagement and academic outcomes. Students are more likely to stay on top of learning and coursework and to enjoy the social-emotional benefits of spending time with peers and building friendships.

We remain committed to reviewing our data, our attendance supports and interventions to date, and improving and expanding on those methods that are working to help students return - and stay - in the classroom.

With the limitations associated with COVID-19 lessened, establishing robust teaming structures at schools is a priority. The school-based teams provide support by District specialists to build and stabilize these teams to serve as a proactive and responsive means to support students. As all schools are required to have attendance plans, the District is working to ensure that the behavior, grades and attendance are being discussed so that the whole child is considered when trying to identify and mitigate barriers to attending. The use of Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) as the model for the work is based on what has been identified as an effective strategy.

MTSS RESOURCES

- All schools are expected to have an MTSS leadership team. The team should be comprised of various staff roles and should include an

administrator or someone with designated decision-making authority.

- The MTSS leadership team drives evidence-based systems and structures to support students. These systems and structures include student-level data analysis, engaging in the problem solving process, collaborating with Instructional Leadership Teams and Behavioral Health Teams, and providing professional learning for school teams to implement the MTSS framework.
- **MTSS Lead and Interventionist:** All schools are expected to have an assigned MTSS lead and interventionist. The MTSS lead manages the school-wide implementation of MTSS and serves as the main liaison with school leaders and other school teams. The interventionist ensures that qualifying students are provided academic interventions, supports, and services aligned to their needs. Depending on the school, either the same person can fill both roles or different people can fill each role.

TARGETED INTERVENTIONS

CPS has also made more targeted commitments to improving the connectedness and well-being of students:

- Out of School Time (OST) programming is available to every student in the District, including students with IEPs and 504s, which offers enrichment and academic support outside of the regular school day.
- ODLSS augmented OST opportunities for every student with an IEP or 504. Following guidelines from the Office of Civil Rights (OCR), individual meetings are required to determine recovery services and additional needed individualized supports.
- Targeted preventative steps toward reducing chronic absenteeism by identifying students at risk of becoming chronically absent and providing targeted interventions like:
 - Connection points and family outreach through school support teams
 - Enrollment in OST programs
 - Tracking interventions through our MTSS system
- Responsive measures to locate secondary and middle school students who have exhibited chronically truancy, identify their barriers to success, connect them with resources and support a warm re-entry to school

E-ABSENCES

- CPS has launched a new feature in the Parent Portal, the platform CPS families use to monitor their child's progress. The new feature allows parents/guardians to submit reasons for absences online. CPS hopes that having an updated, convenient way to communicate, will help assist schools in better understanding barriers that keep a student from coming to school, and, subsequently, help schools determine if any support is needed to ensure student attendance.

MENTAL HEALTH

Students' future success is tied to their social-emotional skill development affected by the COVID-19 school closures and interruptions. Our school teams have been working hard to rebuild a sense of community, teach social-emotional skills (SEL) and share SEL information and resources with families. School leaders have focused on emotional development by:

- Creating safe and predictable daily routines and rituals.
- Fostering relationships with students.
- Implementing shared agreements and expectations.
- Building learning environments with social-emotional learning and equity.
- Providing instructional schedules for students to share their experiences.
- Regular healing circles to help students and families process difficult events and emotions and provide mutual support.

Before the onset of the pandemic, CPS recognized the importance of mental health. In the fall of 2019 CPS began the [Healing-Centered Project](#) to transform our schools into healing centers. CPS is working to provide communities by proactively promoting healing and being responsive to trauma.

BACKGROUND

- In January 2022, the District notified our principals of the amended compulsory attendance laws to allow mental and behavioral health reasons as excused absences.