

EXERCISE: CREATING A FAMILY PLAN FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

Time: 20-25 minutes

Part I: Review Student Attendance Success Plan

Hand out the Student Attendance Success Plan worksheets and Academic Calendars to participants and walk through the different parts of it so that they know what you'll be discussing:

- » My child's attendance goal
- » Strategies to reach the attendance goal
- » Your family's help bank
- » Discuss the value of creating a Student Attendance Success Plan.

Say: What we do every day in our family matters. As parents and caregivers, we can have a powerful impact on our child's attendance and success in school.

Let's acknowledge that sometimes families face particularly challenging circumstances that require formal services, but right now, we are focusing on what families can influence.

I am going to guide you through to creating your family's Student Attendance Success Plan. At the end of this process, you will have clear goals for your child's attendance, strategies you will use to support your child's attendance, a backup plan for when you need help getting your child to and from school and a way to know whether your child is on track to meeting his attendance goal.

Part II: Setting Attendance Goals

Helping families develop a Student Attendance Success Plan begins with examining students' current attendance rate and absences and formulating goals for improvement. To go through this step, you can either provide school attendance data to families (if you have access to it and the family has signed a consent form), or have families self-report.

- » Direct families to the Student Attendance Success Plan. Ask them to fill out the first part of the first section of the worksheet, titled My Child's Attendance Goal. The questions included in this section are:
 - My child was present _____ days. My child was absent _____ days.
 - The number of school days that have passed is: _____

To be ready for the next grade, my goal is to ensure my child misses no more than _____days for the rest of the year.

- » Stress that 9 or fewer absences a year equals satisfactory attendance.
- » Stress that 5 or fewer absences a year equals good attendance
- » Go around the room to see if anyone needs help picking a goal for improvement.

Part III: Identify Concrete Strategies Each Parent Can Take

Review with the group some of the possible strategies suggested on the Student Attendance Success Plan worksheet:

Possible Strategies To Reach Your Child's Attendance Goal

- » I will keep an attendance chart at home. At the end of the week, I will reward my child for attending school every day with _____ (i.e. a visit to the park, a new book, a break from chores, a special treat).
- » I will make sure my child is in bed by ____ p.m. and the alarm clock is set for ____ a.m.
- » If my child consistently complains of a stomach or head ache, I will send him/her to school anyway and call _____ to check in with my child during the school day.
- » If my child has a cold but no fever (lower than 100 degrees), I will send him/her to school anyway. If I don't have a thermometer, I will purchase or borrow one.
- » I will find a relative, friend, or neighbor who I can call on take my child to school if I can't or if he/she misses the bus.
- » If my child is absent, I will contact his/her teacher to find out how he/she can make up missed schoolwork.
- » I will set medical and dental appointments for weekdays after school.

Ask participants if they can think of additional strategies not included on the worksheet that they would imagine could be helpful (to them, or to their peers) in reaching their attendance goal. Chart their ideas on a flipchart or white board.

Ask families to take time to think about 1 or 2 action steps they will commit to taking to support their child getting to school on every day on time. Have them write it down on their Student Attendance Success Plan.

Ask for 3-4 volunteers to share what actions steps they are committing to with the group. Chart them on the flipchart or white board. Alternatively, ask them to go around in a circle at their tables and share their commitments within their small groups.