



ERSEA: Encouraging and Supporting Regular Attendance

Consistent attendance is essential for children to benefit from their Head Start experience and for future school success. Programs must implement strategies to promote regular attendance.

THE GOAL

Eligibility, Recruitment, Selection, Enrollment, and Attendance (ERSEA) systems require programs to encourage and support regular attendance. This helps ensure that all children benefit from full participation in their Head Start program and develop important life habits that will serve them in school and beyond.

Questions to consider

- Have you developed a system for identifying attendance concerns and possible responses?
- Have you educated staff and parents about importance of regular attendance?
- Have you developed a plan for partnering with parents to promote regular attendance?
- Have you identified potential barriers and support strategies for vulnerable populations?

Programs need to think strategically and include relevant stakeholders as they develop policies that promote regular attendance.

PLANNING AND MONITORING FOR SUCCESS

Train all staff on the direct impact regular attendance has on school readiness and future school success. Research shows that one-third of chronically absent (missing 10% or more of the school year) 4-year-olds continue to be chronically absent in kindergarten. Of those students, more than 30 percent are still chronically absent in second grade. This has a direct and negative impact on student reading levels.

Questions to consider

- Have you developed a system for collecting and analyzing attendance data?
- Have you created tip sheets to educate parents on the importance of regular attendance and what to do when a child is absent?
- Does your community assessment help you identify trends, health concerns, or cultural traditions that may impact regular attendance?
- Have you developed strategies that respond to child, family, and community barriers to regular attendance?

Think about the ways your program's tracking system can be used to maintain attendance data and identify trends in absenteeism.

MAINTAINING THE COURSE

Work with parents to develop strategies that support regular attendance. Consider establishing predictable routines, scheduling appointments and trips when the program is not in session, and developing backup plans to assist with transportation issues.

Questions to consider

- Have you established systems for monitoring the diverse needs of your families and community?
- Have you developed an individualized improvement plan for children who are at risk for missing 10 percent of the program year?
- Have you developed an attendance communication plan that identifies opportunities to talk with parents and staff about the benefits of consistent attendance?
- Have you worked with partners to address community-wide issues that may be impacting regular attendance such as transportation, neighborhood safety, or health concerns?

Regular attendance has a direct impact on school readiness and future school success. It affects children's learning and also the habits it instills. Because of this, programs need to have systems in place that continuously monitor child absences. Part of this system is helping families identify strategies to help them overcome the hurdles that interfere with regular attendance.



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