

**Chronic Absenteeism:  
Far-Reaching Consequences and No Easy Solutions**

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**Abstract**

*Chronic absenteeism from school is a serious and common problem. Students miss school for many reasons, and the combination of factors that lead to absences are unique for each student. The only way to stop chronic absenteeism is to address the underlying causes, such as school avoidance, health-related issues, parental issues, and homelessness. Because these factors come from all aspects of the students' lives, solving the problem requires teamwork from students, schools, parents, and communities. A Multitiered System of Supports (MTSS) will ensure that students get support they need to solve their unique attendance problem. Chronic absenteeism must be curbed, because students who are chronically absent are subject to experiencing negative consequences throughout the rest of their lives.*

The problem of students' chronic absenteeism from school must be addressed. While the point where a student's attendance becomes chronic is difficult to define, statistics surrounding the issue indicate the seriousness of the problem. The consequences of poor school attendance are far-reaching and affect every aspect of students' lives. School attendance is affected by factors that are unique to each student. The students' family situation, the school they attend, the community they live in, and their own actions all play a role in determining whether they go to school regularly. Preempting absenteeism and stopping minor attendance problems from becoming worse works better than reacting to problem absenteeism. To address the problem of chronic absenteeism, the root causes of the issue must be determined and solved. This requires many people working together to solve each part of the problem. A Multitiered System of Supports (MTSS) brings the student, their family, the school, and the community together to work toward a solution to the student's absenteeism.

**The Problem of Absenteeism**

Regular school attendance is a key factor in a child's success in school. While 100% attendance is rare, the number of school days that must be missed for a child to be deemed chronically absent is not defined. Despite the lack of a firm standard, there are trends and statistics about which students can be expected to be chronically absent, and when. Missing school on a regular basis can have negative consequences for those children, not only for that school year but for the rest of their lives. Schools aim to set their students on a path to success and they cannot do this when students are absent.

The number of school days that must be missed in order to differentiate between chronic absenteeism and regular attendance is fluid. Most researchers deem missing 10% of school days as chronic (Allison & Attisha, 2019, p. 1). Others define it as missing 25% of school time (not necessarily whole days) for at least two weeks, or missing 10 or more school days during any 15-week period (Kearney, 2016, p. 4). For the purposes of this article, chronically absent students are defined as those who are at academic risk due to either prolonged absences or regularly occurring absences. Attendance problems include leaving early, arriving late, missing individual classes in the day's timetable, or full-day absences (Kearney & Graczyk, 2020). Absences may be excused by students' guardians for legitimate reasons or otherwise, or unexcused, which are cases when the child should be in school but is not (Kearney, 2016). In cases when attendance is not taken at every class, such as most primary and middle schools,

students who arrive on time and are marked present may then leave the classroom but not necessarily the school, and not attend for a period of time without their record showing it. Though it may be difficult to define, chronic absenteeism is a worldwide problem (Kearney & Graczyk, 2020).

Significant trends surrounding when problem absenteeism occurs are found when school attendance is examined. School attendance problems are common in preschool, kindergarten, and first grade before dropping in elementary school (Kearney & Graczyk, 2020). During kindergarten and first grade, at least 10% of students can be expected to miss a month or more of school (Allison & Attisha, 2019, p. 2). Attendance issues decline during elementary school, then rise sharply in middle school and continue to rise through secondary school, peaking in grade 12 (Kearney & Graczyk, 2020). Attendance problems are most likely to occur after school holidays or after the student has been absent for other prolonged periods, such as due to illness (Gentle-Genitty et al., 2015). Absences beget absences, because students who have a pattern of absences in first grade tend to be the students who later stop going altogether (Manitoba Education, n.d.). These trends show that children are most at risk for absenteeism during certain grades and at certain times of the year, and that missed school tends to lead to more absences.

The number of students who are chronically absent is difficult to pinpoint, particularly in Canada where attendance statistics are missing from the academic literature. Without a set definition of problem attendance, schools and divisions set their own (Gentle-Genitty et al., 2015). Statistics of chronically absent students are therefore gathered from populations defined by using different benchmarks. However, the prevalence of chronic absenteeism is still illustrated by these statistics. In the United States, roughly 15% of students are chronically absent (Skedgell & Kearney, 2016, p. 46). Students in American high school are absent 19% of the time (Allison & Attisha, 2019, p. 2). Groups of students that show higher rates of absenteeism are minority or multi-racial students, female secondary students, and students with disabilities (Kearney & Graczyk, 2020). Of students who are chronically absent, 30% are afflicted with some sort of mental disorder (Knollmann et al., 2019, p. 399). These percentages of chronically absent students are greater in low-income nations (Kearney & Graczyk, 2020). These statistics show that chronic absenteeism is a widespread problem.

Being absent from school has many consequences, both short and long term. A short-term consequence that arises during the child's school years is lower academic achievement (Allison & Attisha, 2019). This is intuitive; students who are not in school are not being taught and even insignificant absences add up: 10 minutes late every day is equal to 6 full days throughout the year, missing 10% of classes equates to 4 weeks absent, and 15 days missed per year is equivalent to an entire school year by graduation (Manitoba Education, n.d., paras. 1-3). Chronic non-attenders have lower math and literacy skills, and are more likely to fail grades or courses (Skedgell & Kearney, 2016). These issues begin early. Students who miss a significant number of preschool classes score lower on kindergarten readiness tests (Kearney & Graczyk, 2020). Students who miss a lot of school generally do worse academically.

However, the greatest short-term consequence of absenteeism is that it leads to more absenteeism. Chronic absenteeism in preschool and kindergarten is related to future chronic absenteeism (Kearney & Graczyk, 2020). Chronic absenteeism in United States students as young as sixth grade indicates a higher likelihood of dropping out (Allison & Attisha, 2019). In fact, students who miss more than seven days of school in two years are more likely to drop out (Kearney, 2016, p. 4). Only 64% of students who miss 10 or more days in grade 10 will graduate (Kearney, 2016, p. 7). It may be assumed that in Canada, as well, missing school tends to lead to more missed school, which tends to lead to not completing school.

Failure to graduate, whether due to dropping out or poor academic performance, has negative consequences for the rest of the students' lives. Those without high school diplomas have unemployment rates double those of graduates (Manitoba Education, n.d.). Those with jobs are less likely to have fulfilling ones (Allison & Attisha, 2019). Students who drop out of

school have less money and are more likely to be divorced, end up in prison, be on social assistance, and be single parents (Kearney, 2016). The less education people have, the less healthy they are because they are more likely to smoke and less likely to exercise (Allison & Attisha, 2019). Simply put, students who fail to graduate high school are less likely to thrive in any aspect of their life, be it socially, occupationally, or any other aspect of a quality life (Kearney, 2016).

Regular school attendance is a key indicator of a student's academic success. Despite a lack of consensus of an exact definition of chronic absenteeism, it is a prevalent problem in schools. Regularly missing days of schools, or portions thereof, can have profound negative effects on children. Students who are chronically absent may feel the effects for the rest of their lives, in all aspects of their lives.

## **Causes of Absenteeism**

Chronic absenteeism is a difficult problem to address. There are numerous categories of absenteeism, and students' symptoms may be different even though they are in the same category (Skedgell & Kearney, 2016). Despite these variations, absentee students do display some common characteristics. Determining the reason for their absenteeism is difficult, given the sheer number of risk factors. However, there are some definite causes of missed school. To solve the problem, the underlying reasons must each be addressed because chronic absenteeism is rarely caused by one factor.

## **Categories**

Absentee students can be categorized into a few distinct groups. Historically, students missed school because of general anxiety, social or academic anxiety, sadness, illness, to get attention, or to do something more enjoyable (Kearney, 2016). While those are all still relevant reasons for absences, the categories are outdated. Today, there are two different ways to categorize absentee students. They can be grouped based on the reason behind the absence or based on who initiates the action. The differences are semantic because the risk factors and causes behind the absences are the same.

If students are categorized by the reason they are absent, students may be presumed to miss school because they cannot go, because they do not want to go, or because they would rather do something else. Students may not be able to go to school if they do not have transportation, if they are involved in the justice systems, or if their parents do not let them. Students who are bullied at school, who are embarrassed by their academics, or who attend an unsafe school will want to avoid it. Students who would rather hang out with their friends, have a job, or whose parents do not see the value in going will miss school not because they necessarily dislike it but because they like something else more (Allison & Attisha, 2019). Students may miss for reasons in one category or for reasons in each; there is overlap between these areas (Kiani et al., 2018). Indeed, students may move between categories during the course of one day.

Grouping students based on who initiates the action results in three categories. Absenteeism may be initiated by the school, the caregiver, or the child (Kearney & Graczyk, 2020). School-initiated absences are when a child is not allowed to attend school. Often this is due to disciplinary actions, such as expulsion or suspension, or health reasons, such as lice or Covid-19 symptoms. Parent-initiated actions include keeping the child home to help with childcare, to hide mistreatment, or to go on holiday. Child-initiated reasons can be boiled down to two categories: truant and school refusing. These are differentiated based on reinforcement. School refusers see school as negative and want to avoid it; truants see missing school as positive because they get attention from parents, access to electronics, income from a job, or high from a substance (Kiani et al., 2018). Again, there is overlap. A student could miss three

consecutive days, each initiated by a different player. However, no matter how chronically absent students are categorized, many factors underly their absences.

### **Common Characteristics**

Chronically absent students, even those who share a category, are all different. Their academic status, behavioural profile, and their attendance history will be unique (Skedgell & Kearney, 2016). However, within this heterogeneity, there are some common characteristics (Kiani et al., 2018). Absentee students tend to suffer from high rates of substance abuse and display high rates of psychiatric disorders, such as depression, separation anxiety, and oppositional defiance disorder. Students who are school refusers tend to be younger and display psychiatric disorders. Truants tend to be older and to abuse substances. Truants also have higher rates of poverty and lower rates of parental supervision (Knollman et al., 2019). The highest rates of all issues have been found among students who display signs of both truancy and school refusal. Students who are chronically absent, like their reasons for being absent, are difficult to categorize.

### **Risk Factors**

Myriad risk factors play a part in absenteeism. The children, their family, their friends, their peers, their school, and their community all play a role (Kearney, 2016). Children from certain demographics display higher rates of absenteeism. Not all risk factors are equal; some are more robust predictors than others. Risk factors are correlations: a student with good attendance may experience similar risk factors to a non-attender. However, these factors are numerous and widespread, and play a definite role in absenteeism.

Every aspect in a child's life can play a part in determining whether the child attends school regularly. These factors can be grouped into four categories: individual, family, school, and community. Individual factors include internalizing problems (anxiety, depression), externalizing problems (behaviour problems, hyperactivity), and health problems (chronic illness, disability) (Skedgell & Kearney, 2016). Family factors include divorced parents, over-protective parents, and violence (Knollmann et al., 2019). School factors include everything from bullying, to the structure of the school schedule, to transitioning to high school (Kiani et al., 2018). Community factors include gang activity, social support services, and the school division's policies regarding absenteeism (Kearney, 2016). The factors that put children at risk are numerous. Students may experience any number of risk factors and they may experience them at different times.

Demographics may also predict absenteeism. Students who live in poverty are more likely to be absent because they experience associated problems such as poorer health, transportation difficulties, and unstable housing conditions (Allison & Attisha, 2019). Poverty is a greater risk factor when it is paired with food insecurity, domestic violence, incarcerated parents, and substance abuse (Kearney, 2016). Indeed, students who have witnessed domestic violence, or have experienced other major traumas like natural disasters, are more likely to be chronically absent. Another demographic at risk are students from ethnic or racial minority groups (Allison & Attisha, 2019). Not all students who live in poverty or are part of a minority will be chronically absent, though those groups display higher rates of absenteeism.

While all risk factors have the potential to lead to missed school, some are more robust predictors than others. Students with substance abuse problems, low grades, and low educational ambitions are mostly like to miss school (Kearney, 2016). The best predictors of the severity of absenteeism are behaviour problems, family work, family health, and school environment (Skedgell & Kearney, 2016). Conversely, the best predictors of good attendance are having college-educated parents, limited time unsupervised, good grades, and a safe feeling at school (Kiani et al., 2018). Again, risk factors are correlates, not causes, and these are simply the most common attributes of chronically absent students.

## **Causes**

Risk factors become causes when they are the reason for a student to miss school. These causes can be categorized, they are many, and they are all dependent on the context they occur (Kearney, 2016). The causes of absenteeism are age dependent. Among all the reasons, one factor always leads to attendance issues. Students who are chronically absent miss school for any number of reasons and their particular combination will be unique.

Students miss school for a reason. Risk factors predict which students are more likely to experience the underlying reason. The actual reasons for absenteeism can be grouped into five categories: health concerns, lack of consistent transportation, stress, activities outside of school, and the student's or student's family's personal opinions about the value of school (Eklund et al., 2020). The reason a student has missed school will fit into one of the categories but the underlying cause of the student's stress, for instance, will be unique to that child's life. Absences do not just happen, and why they do will be because of one of the five reasons given by Eklund et al. (2020).

The cause of absenteeism is somewhat age dependent. Younger students are most likely to be absent because of health concerns (Balu & Erlich, 2018). Younger students' absenteeism is far more dependent on parents' decisions than older students. It is the parents' decision whether their child is sick enough to stay home and their opinion about the value of school will determine how often a child is absent. Parents may not realize that missing two days a month is a problem, they may think that excused absences are not a problem, or they may not realize the importance of attendance in the younger grades (Allison & Attisha, 2019). The reasons older students miss school tend to fall under the categories of attitude toward school and activities outside of school. Secondary students cite jobs and helping their family as the primary reason for not attending (Balu & Erlich, 2018). However, there is another reason, one that falls under the health category: becoming a parent. Indeed, pregnancy is the number one reason female students drop out (Allison & Attisha, 2019). Males will also cite becoming a father as the reason they left school (Balu & Erlich, 2018). Younger and older students' reasons for missing school will be different, but they fall under the same five categories.

One factor leads to greater absenteeism independent of other factors. Students who are homeless miss more school (Kearney, 2016). Students may experience multiple risk factors from every category and not have their school attendance affected, but a student who is homeless is going to miss some school.

## **Summary**

The reason chronic absenteeism is difficult to solve is because of its variety. Students who miss school do it for any number of reasons. While they may display some common traits, they are motivated to miss school for factors unique to them. The fact that there are so many risk factors that may lead to absenteeism is daunting, but each student will miss school for a reason. To get that student to attend school regularly, the reason, and the factors behind it, must be determined.

## **Solutions to Chronic Absenteeism**

As long as the school system (as we know it) has existed, there has been absenteeism (Jacob & Lovett, 2017). Efforts to solve the problem have so far been futile because chronic absenteeism remains widespread. Determining the best way forward can be daunting because of the number of programs available and the lack of evidence around what works. However, a multitiered system of support (MTSS) will ensure that students get the assistance they need to address their risk factors. Within MTSS, there are strategies that teachers can use in their classroom to help combat the problem. Schools can tackle some of the root causes. Since each

absentee student's profile is unique and involves so many factors, having them attend school regularly requires effort from the student, the family, the school, and the community. These stakeholders each play a role in the student's absences, and each will benefit from the student being successful in school.

## **Historical Efforts**

Despite schools trying to combat absenteeism for centuries, it is still a problem. Early solutions included jailing the truant (Jacob & Lovett, 2017). Historically, attendance interventions focused on the students and their parents (Young et al., 2020). Behaviour interventions, such as social skills training, relaxation techniques, and family therapy, were the norm (Kiani et al., 2018). Any effort to involve the wider community were inefficient, uncoordinated, time consuming, and ineffective (Young et al., 2020). Had these efforts worked, the problem would be gone.

## **Problems With Interventions**

Part of the problem for educators is the number of interventions proposed by numerous experts and academics (Skedgell & Kearney, 2016). Another problem is the lack of evidence for whether these attendance interventions are effective (Eklund et al., 2020). The strategies that educators use to combat absenteeism tend to be understudied, have small effects, or both. Past practices, such as intervening only with individual students and their families, have a small to moderate effect on attendance (Eklund et al., 2020). Proof that targeting only single risk factors does not work is demonstrated by the fact that using pharmacological treatments to treat underlying mental health concerns has no effect on attendance (Kiani et al., 2018). However, pharmacological treatments combined with behaviour interventions are associated with better attendance (Kiani et al., 2018). To address absenteeism effectively, each of the factors that lead to missing school must be addressed.

## **Multitiered System of Support**

The MTSS approach unites the school, parents, and community in trying to address factors that affect students' success at school, of which a big one is their attendance. It matches interventions with their needs from the domains that affect attendance (Kearney & Graczyk, 2020). Since causes of absenteeism tend to occur simultaneously across the different domains (individual, family, school, community), MTSS can focus on numerous areas at one time. At its core, MTSS is essentially a Positive Behavioural Intervention and Support (PBIS) system combined with a Response Through Intervention (RTI) system (Kearney & Graczyk, 2020). PBIS is a tiered approach to promoting positive behaviour, rather than punishing negative behaviour (Sugai & Horner, 2006). An RTI system is also tiered and is designed to identify and help struggling students (Hughes & Dexter, 2011). Because many schools already have these programs in place to target other areas of need, the approach naturally fits into the school's existing improvement plan. MTSS, as described by Kearney & Graczyk (2020), is a three-tiered system. Tier 1 focuses on promoting attendance to the entire student population. Tier 2 involves early interventions with the student and their family to address developing attendance concerns. In Tier 3, students who display chronic absenteeism undergo intensive interventions involving the student, parents, school, and community. Teachers and schools try to solve issues they can address at the first and second tiers. The third requires outside agencies.

The factors that schools and individual teachers can address are those that occur under their watch. Teachers can promote the importance of attendance, set up incentive programs for attendance in their class, and ensure that their classroom environment is not causing students to be absent. Schools can work to address myths around attendance, such as excused

absences do not matter and the link between attendance and academics; barriers that prevent attendance, such as transportation; and the students' and parents' opinions about school (Balu & Erlich, 2018). Schools are already often the primary means of social services and mental health services, so these programs can be part of the interventions (Kearney & Graczyk, 2020). Factors such as homelessness, poverty, and parents' divorces are not going to be effectively addressed by schools and teachers alone.

### ***Tier 1***

At the Tier 1 level, the focus is on preventing absences (Kearney, 2016). The school and individual teachers have roles to play in prevention. Incentive programs are one way to promote attendance and prevent absences. Tier 1 is proactive, rather than reactive, so students who are experiencing attendance issues will move on to Tier 2.

At the schoolwide level, the school needs clear policies, rules, and expectations for students' attendance, and these need to be communicated to students and parents (Kearney, 2016). As part of these policies, there must be a continuum of consequences for absences. Schools need to develop a system to identify students who display signs of an attendance problem and to notify parents about their concerns as soon as possible. Beyond these administrative steps, schools can involve parents in the school culture through concerts, bingo, newsletters, tweets, and plays. Parents could also be given information about some of the causes of absenteeism (sleep habits, screen time, etc.) and strategies to improve them (Sprick & Berg, 2019). Schools can address health concerns by providing hand sanitizer, teaching safe sex, and addressing headlice (Kearney, 2016). Strategies to improve students' mental health, from yoga to social-emotional training programs, can be made available to all students (Kearney, 2016). These training programs could address problems as diverse as difficulty making friends or handling uncomfortable situations. Students who are not at risk of absenteeism will still benefit from having clear expectations, parental involvement in the school culture, better health, a safer school, and better mental health.

Teachers are the first line of defense against absenteeism in a MTSS model. The first step to solving an attendance problem is knowing who is having problems, and that requires teachers' accurate daily attendance records (Sprick & Berg, 2019). Teachers need to greet their students each day; a simple check-in can reduce absenteeism (Young et al., 2020). Teachers need to analyze their own attendance records monthly and identify any students who were absent two or more days (Sprick & Berg, 2019). Simply informing parents about their child's attendance record can boost attendance by 10 percentage points (Balu & Erlich, 2018, p. 96). Finally, teachers need to teach their students the importance of attendance and the problems associated with poor attendance (Sprick & Berg, 2019). Teachers cannot solve chronic attendance problems on their own, but simple procedures in their own classroom can have a large effect.

One strategy to promote attendance, which schools as a whole and individual teachers could both use, is incentive programs. Rather than punishing students who fall short of expectations, these programs celebrate students who meet them (Kearney, 2016). In order to work, the incentives need to be clearly linked to attendance, given as soon as expectations are met, be large enough to be worthwhile (but not so large that the cost is untenable), and given to the person in control of the behaviour (Balu & Erlich, 2018). Schools and classrooms may find that having three separate incentive programs may be necessary. One could target individual students, one the whole class, and one the students' families. Small gift cards could be rewards, though rewards do not have to be financial. Photos of students who met the goals could be displayed, classrooms could receive extra recess time, and families could be recognized in the school newsletter. For the systems to work, students and families must be aware of the attendance goals and associated rewards, and only those students meeting the expectations should receive the award (Sprick & Berg, 2019). Incentive programs have been shown to work

and they need not be expensive (Young et al., 2020).

In addition to promoting attendance to a wide audience, the first tier of MTSS serves another purpose. Through accurate record keeping, analysis of the records, and noticing which students do not receive incentives, students who are at risk of absenteeism are identified. Early identification of at-risk students and continued record keeping through the year will show whether the interventions are working, both of which are required in MTSS (Kearney & Graczyk, 2020). Students who are deemed at risk will move on to Tier 2.

### ***Tier 2***

Tier 2 interventions do not involve the entire school population. Interventions at this stage are delivered to small groups or to individual students. The school leaders, involved teachers, families, and the student work as a team to develop an action plan to improve attendance (Sprick & Berg, 2019). Students at this stage should not yet be considered chronically absent; the goal is to prevent an attendance problem from getting to that point.

Interventions at Tier 2 need to be targeted to students whose attendance issues are caused by the same factor. Because reasons for missing school are so numerous and diverse, the students may require individualized interventions. However, students who are pregnant, are substance abusers, or are low academically would benefit from the same interventions and could be grouped together. To decide on the issue or issues to target, antecedents of absenteeism must be identified (Kearney, 2016). Once the underlying cause is known, the interventions can work to eliminate those (Sprick & Berg, 2019). These interventions can have myriad forms.

Like most interventions, classroom teachers will start the process. Tier 2 begins with a phone call to parents and a one-on-one meeting with the student (Sprick & Berg, 2019). It may be that the root cause of the worrying absences can be identified and eliminated at that meeting. However, if the teacher discovers something beyond their scope, or if the attendance does not improve after the meeting, the teacher will need to enlist school leaders for help. The team involved will then develop an action to address the concerns and will explain the consequences of continued absences, as laid out in the school plan. The student will then begin the plan and its effect will be monitored.

Tier 2 interventions can address underlying causes from most of the domains. These causes can be student focused, family focused, and school focused, but not community focused (Kearney & Graczyk, 2020). An example of a student-focused intervention would be a tutoring program to address grades, when lack of academic success or stress around marks is the cause of absenteeism. Family-focused interventions could be home visits, information on substance abuse programs, or delivery of a bus pass. School-focused interventions include teacher training in behaviour management or collaboration time to share ideas for preventing absences. Students whose attendance issues stem from community issues and those students whose attendance does not improve from Tier 2 move on to Tier 3.

### ***Tier 3***

Tier 3 interventions are the final resort. Tier 3 is reserved for students who are chronically absent by whatever definition the school uses. These interventions will be intensive and individualized (Kearney & Graczyk, 2020). Tier 3 involves parties from all aspects of a student's life (student, family, school, community) working together to identify the problem and eliminate it. Some of these interventions may require the student to leave the school environment. These interventions represent the last hope to solve the problem of absenteeism.

Tier 3 interventions will look different for each student. They first involve intensive assessments to identify what factors are preventing school attendance (Kearney & Graczyk, 2020). Once these are identified, they are each addressed. Since each student's absenteeism is



caused by a unique mix of factors, how they are addressed will differ. However, the plan will always involve more people than Tier 2.

The student's reasons for missing school will all be addressed in turn. Family and student-focused interventions often involve cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT). CBT aims to change beliefs and attitudes toward school (Kiani et al., 2018). Parents are key to CBT as they learn to reinforce attendance, ignore improper behaviour, and change the home environment to one where school is emphasized. Interventions addressing problems in the school domain could involve credit recovery plans, Individualized Education Plans, or a modified schedule (Kearney & Graczyk, 2020). Community-focused interventions may involve individualized transport, arranging childcare, or securing housing. Whatever issue is preventing the student from coming to school, Tier 3 needs to find it and solve it.

Tier 3 interventions may involve the student leaving school. Where possible, practices that keep students at school are preferred (Kearney & Graczyk, 2020). However, some students may need to be absent from school for specialized mental health care. They may need to rehabilitate from injuries or substance abuse. They may be on their way to prison. In cases when students will be absent from school, focus should shift to completing academic outcomes while the student is absent.

## Summary

Chronic absenteeism has been a problem in schools as long as there has been school. Efforts to curtail it have not worked. The fact that there are many programs purporting to solve the problem, and not much research on their effectiveness, is part of the problem. MTSS brings together students, teachers, schools, parents, and the broader community to solve an individual's attendance problem. These stakeholders should all be invested in school attendance because the consequences of absenteeism can affect all aspects of a person's life.

## Conclusion

Chronic absenteeism is a serious problem. The point when attendance becomes a chronic problem is difficult to define and may be different for each student. However it is defined, chronic absenteeism is a problem because roughly 3 of every 20 students are chronically absent (Skedgell & Kearney, 2016). Students who are chronically absent tend to have worse outcomes in various aspects of their lives than students who attend regularly. Though it is acknowledged to be an important issue, the sheer number of variables that cause absenteeism prevent it from being adequately addressed. The way to solve the problem of chronic absenteeism is to eliminate every factor that prevents the student from regularly attending school. This will require teamwork from the students, their educators, their family, and their community. A MTSS approach can bring these stakeholders together to address the factors behind the students' absenteeism. Absenteeism is a difficult problem, and it is a huge problem. These teams need to work to make sure every student attends school every day because attendance problems can have negative consequences for the rest of that student's life.

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### **About the Author**

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