

Using Federal Dollars to Reduce Chronic Absenteeism

Title I - Improving the Academic Achievement of the Disadvantaged

ESSA Provision - What It Funds

How Chronic Absenteeism Fits

Title I supports schools serving students living in poverty. Schools with 40% or more of students from low-income families can develop schoolwide approaches.

Schools with less 40% of low-income children must identify at risk students and provide “targeted assistance.”

7% of Title I spending must go to school improvement for:

- The lowest performing 5% of schools receiving Title I dollars
- All public high schools failing to graduate a third or more of students
- Other schools identified by the state

Low-income students are both more likely to be chronically absent and more likely to suffer academically because of those missed days than their peers.

Schoolwide approaches to improving attendance include public relations campaigns and contests, outreach to parents, and mentoring for students. For targeted assistance programs, chronic absenteeism can serve as an indicator for identifying students headed off track.

Since chronic absenteeism is tied to weaker academic performance, reducing absenteeism is a natural strategy for school improvement. Districts can use Title I money to improve school climate, which can influence absenteeism.

Title II - Preparing, Training, and Recruiting High-Quality Teachers, Principals and School Leaders

ESSA Provision - What It Funds

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In **Part A**, under local use of funds, the law includes in-service training for school personnel and mentions chronic absenteeism specifically.

There’s a growing recognition that teachers play an important role in reducing absenteeism. A welcoming classroom environment—whether it’s a special handshake at the door or circle time each morning—can improve attendance. So can talking about absenteeism in parent-teacher conferences or sending letters home showing families how many days their children have missed.

Title IV - 21st Century Schools

ESSA Provision - What It Funds

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Part A provides funding for Student Support and Academic Enrichment block grants, which combine a number of past programs. Funding can be used for three priorities:

- Advancing technology
- Providing access to a well-rounded education
- Improving school conditions for student learning

Districts can spend money on such strategies as mental health services based on trauma-informed practices, bullying prevention, student mentoring, and efforts to reduce suspensions and improve student behavior. This work can involve engaging families.

All of these strategies are considered important to creating a safe and healthy school climate, and a safe and healthy school climate is key to ensuring students attend school regularly.

Part B provides money for 21st Century Community Learning Centers

These centers often include quality afterschool programs, which contribute to better school-day attendance.

Part E provides grants for family engagement

Family engagement is a key strategy for reducing chronic absenteeism. Families often don’t realize how many days students have missed or why all absences, even if they’re excused, can lead to academic trouble.

Part F includes grants for full-service community schools

The community schools model brings a range of health and social services for children and families into the school buildings. Nonprofits and public agencies that deal with housing, health and transportation are often part of the collaborative effort. Chronic absenteeism is often a metric for success. The law allows grants to pay for site resource coordinators at these schools.