



Educational Champion Training

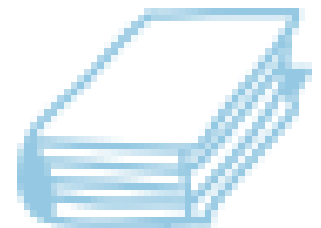
MODULE 6:

School Attendance

Why Focus on School Attendance?



- Consistent **school attendance** is **crucial to a child's success in school.**
- Frequent absences cause children to fall behind academically and contribute to higher dropout rates.
- Regular attendance is linked to **higher achievement, better behavior, and grade promotion.**



It is important for the child to attend school every day, on time.



- Try to plan **medical appointments** and **family trips** when school is not in session.



Children must attend school regularly.



- Under CA law school attendance is “compulsory” (required) from ages 6 to 18.
- If a student misses more than 30 mins of school three times in a year, without an excuse, the student is considered “truant.”
- If a student misses 10% or more of the school days in a school year, without a valid excuse, the student is considered a “chronic truant.”
- If a student is reported as a “truant” 3 or more times in one school year and the school has tried to meet with the parent/guardian and student to fix the problem, the student is considered a “habitual truant.”

Consequences for truant youth.



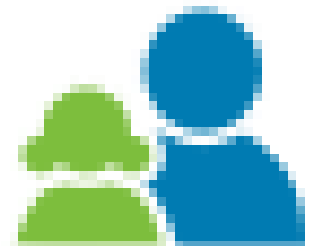
There is a range of possible consequences for the student and parent. For example:

- Schools may assign truant students to an after-school or weekend study program.
- Schools may refer a student to what is called a “school attendance review board” or to a mediation program.
- Students and parents/guardians/others responsible for a student can also face legal penalties for truancy.

Special rules to protect dependency youth.



- There are **special rules** to protect foster youth who are absent from school for **court-related reasons** or because of **changes in placement**:
 - If a child's school placement changes, the new school must enroll the child immediately.
 - If a child misses school because of reasons related to a change in placement, the child's grades cannot be lowered as a result of the absence.



Establish a routine.



- Establish a routine for getting the child prepared for and to school **every day**.
 - Make sure the child has a **set bedtime**, especially on school nights.
 - Make sure the child gets enough **sleep** each night.
 - Make sure there is a set time to **wake up to get ready for school** each day.
 - Make sure the child eats a **healthy breakfast** each morning

Let the child know that you value school.



- Have **regular conversations** with the child about school.
- Ask the child what s/he is learning in school.
- Let the child hear you **express excitement** about school and about learning.

Talk to the child about the importance of school attendance.



- Tell the child that it is important to **attend school every day**.
- Tell the child that it is important **to be on time** for school every day.
- Talk to the child about the **reasons why** this is important.

Monitor the child's school attendance.



- Ask the child's school for an attendance report.
- Access the child's grades, attendance through the school's online portal or regularly ask the child's teacher for this information.
- If you believe there are problems with the child's attendance record, contact the school district's foster youth liaison for help.

Remember the special rules regarding attendance for foster youth.



- If a child's school placement changes, the new school must **enroll the child immediately**.
- If a child misses school because of a change in placement, a court appearance, or court-ordered activity, **the school can't lower the child's grades because of the absence**. (The school can, however, ask that the child do make-up work or take a make-up test.)

What if the child is resistant to attend school?



- If the child is resistant about attending school, find out why and work together towards a solution.
 - Talk to the child about why s/he doesn't want to go to school.
 - Talk to the teacher to find out if the child is struggling with schoolwork or having any social or behavior issues.
 - Ask the school for help in solving the problem.
 - Find out if the school has any resources or programs focused on improving attendance.

Foster youth face extra challenges at home.



Foster youth face extra challenges that may make them feel resistant towards school.

- Foster youth cope with transitions in home placement, such as:
 - Change in environment
 - Change in daily routine
 - Change in school and homework routines

Foster youth face extra challenges at school



- Foster youth cope with transitions in school placement, such as:
 - Adjusting to a new school
 - Making new friends
 - Catching up in classes

Help the child develop positive goals for school.



- Talk to the child what s/he hopes to get out of school.
- Together, you can set goals like:
 - Academic goals (Example: Get an A on my next math test.)
 - Extracurricular goals (Example: Join a school club.)
 - College and career goals (Example: Become a teacher someday.)
 - Social goals (Example: Make more friends in my class.)



Encourage the child to get involved in activities at school.



- Talk to the child about what activities he/she is interested in.
- Talk with school staff, a foster youth education liaison, or your mentor about activities that the child can get involved in.

Communicate with the child's school.



If the child needs to miss school for a valid reason (for example, the child is sick), always notify the school right away so that the child is marked as having an “excused” absence, not an “unexcused” absence.

Special considerations for Ed Rights Holders.



- Know your responsibilities as the educational decision-maker for the child.
- You have an important role to play in ensuring that the child attends school regularly.
- If you are the child's parent/guardian and are potentially facing penalties for a child's truancy, contact your attorney right away to ask for legal advice.
- If the child is potentially facing penalties for truancy, tell the child's attorney right away.



Consider getting input from other adults involved in the child's life.



Especially if the child does not live with you, you may want to ask other adults in the child's life for support and feedback.

My Goals:



What I will do:

How often I will do this:

Resources.



This PowerPoint, Tip Sheets, Mentoring Modules, and supporting materials can be found at: www.foster-ed.org.

If you have questions about the materials, please contact: info@fostered.org

Other Resources:

- *Help Your Child Succeed in School*, available at www.attendanceworks.org and www.reachout.org
- *Fact Sheet: Dropout Prevention & Academic Intervention*, available at www.fldoe.org
- *Present, Engaged and Accounted For, The Critical Importance of Addressing Chronic Absence in the Early Grades*, by H.N. Change and M. Romero, National Center for Children in Poverty
- *Education is the Lifeline for Youth In Foster Care*, written by the National Working Group on Foster Care and Education with support from the Stuart Foundation
- *Student Engagement and School Completion: Strategies for Educators*, by A. Reschly and M. Lovelace, National Assoc. of School Psychologists