

Reducing Chronic Absenteeism in Kentucky

Background: The Kentucky Department of Education's (KDE) Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) plan includes a new accountability measure—rates of chronic absenteeism. In addition, the compulsory education age was raised from 16 to 18 in the state, and new truancy laws have taken effect. Because of these developments, KDE established a chronic absenteeism work group in the Division of Student Success (DSS) to help districts reduce rates of chronic absenteeism. However, DSS staff also have many other responsibilities, and sought Appalachia Regional Comprehensive Center (ARCC) assistance to streamline their efforts.

The challenge: To help school districts lower rates of chronic absenteeism

What we did: Staff at the ARCC helped the state by

- Co-facilitating work group meetings
- Advising as DSS staff collaborated with other offices to reduce chronic absenteeism
- Assisting to identify evidence-based materials and tools for reducing chronic absenteeism
- Building a workflow tool to enable DSS to continually monitor progress
- Co-developing professional learning opportunities for district staff
- Assisting to develop and launch a public service campaign to increase awareness of, and urgency to reduce, chronic absenteeism
- Assisting to put in place a communication strategy for districts to engage with families and caregivers about chronic absenteeism
- Building capacity of DSS to create connections with community-based partners through recruitment of a broad-based stakeholder workgroup

What happened: By 2019, KDE:

- Disseminated a series of public service announcements to the field
- Delivered professional development for district staff
- Implemented a workflow tool to monitor progress
- Convened a workgroup with broad-based stakeholder representation
- Began to create a webpage repository of evidence-based resources for districts and stakeholders about chronic absenteeism