

# Understanding Chronic Absenteeism and How to Reduce it

## DEFINITIONS

It is important to use common language and definitions when developing student support strategies to reduce chronic absenteeism. Below are several definitions Ohio uses to describe student attendance and student supports as defined by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), Ohio Revised Code, and Ohio Administrative Code. This list is not exhaustive and will be updated periodically.

**Chronic Absenteeism:** ESSA defines chronic absenteeism as missing 10 percent or more of the school year for any reason — excused absences, unexcused absences and absences due to out-of-school suspensions. Students who are chronically absent are missing a significant amount of school, thus, missing out on important classroom time. Chronic absenteeism is different from truancy and from average daily attendance.

**Habitual Truancy:** Ohio Revised Code defines habitual truancy as “any child of compulsory school age who is absent without legitimate excuse from the public school the child is supposed to attend for thirty or more consecutive hours, forty-two or more hours in one school month, or seventy-two or more hours in one school year.”

**Excessive Absences:** Ohio Revised Code defines excessive absences as a child of compulsory school age who “is absent with or without a legitimate excuse from the public school the child is supposed to attend for thirty-eight or more hours in one school month, or sixty-five or more hours in one school year.”

	<b>Consecutive hours</b>	<b>Hours per school month</b>	<b>Hours per school year</b>
<b>Habitual Truancy</b>	<b>30</b> <i>without</i> legitimate excuse	<b>42</b> <i>without</i> legitimate excuse	<b>72</b> <i>without</i> legitimate excuse
<b>Excessive Absences</b>	--	<b>38</b> <i>with or without</i> legitimate excuse	<b>65</b> <i>with or without</i> legitimate excuse
<b>Chronic Absenteeism</b>	--	--	<b>10%</b> <i>with or without</i> legitimate excuse

While chronic absenteeism, habitual truancy and excessive absences are not interchangeable, there is overlap in definition. Truancy only looks at unexcused absences, whereas, chronic absenteeism and excessive absenteeism take all absences into account. Research from Attendance Works shows that the reason a student misses school does not matter, but the amount of days he/she misses has an impact on learning. Responses to truancy are typically administrative and can lead to court intervention. Schools and districts should create a plan to reduce chronic absenteeism by implementing strategies in partnership with families and community organizations that address root cause in an effort to prevent student absences.