

Reduce Chronic Absenteeism: 4 Actions Your District Can Take Today

Chronic absenteeism risks academic success, graduation rates, and equitable outcomes for students nationwide. While many districts focus on curriculum or family engagement to solve the problem, one of the most overlooked culprits is transportation.

Without consistent, reliable transportation, students—especially those with unstable housing—can fall into attendance gaps before anyone notices. The good news? There are practical, effective strategies your district can start using right away.

Here are four actions your district can take now to remove transportation barriers and improve attendance.



Be Physically Present Where Patterns Emerge

Older students, especially those in transitional living situations, often avoid talking about housing instability or transportation challenges. That's why it's critical to have a consistent, in-person presence on campuses where absenteeism rates are highest. By assigning McKinney-Vento liaisons or attendance staff to regularly visit these schools—not just during crises—you build trust before it's urgently needed.

Students open up when they see familiar, consistent faces. Don't wait for referrals—go to where absenteeism is concentrated and become a trusted part of the school community.



Audit Your Last-Mile Barriers

Even with bus routes in place, students can still face challenges when drop-off points or walk zones fall short, especially in bad weather. If transportation doesn't get them all the way to the school door, attendance often drops with the temperature.

Review attendance patterns on rainy or snowy days, and identify neighborhoods where absences consistently spike. Targeted solutions like transportation stipends, carpooling options, or flexible ride services can help bridge these last-mile gaps. By proactively addressing these barriers, districts ensure students can focus on learning, not on how they'll get to school.

“ We are so short on drivers and they (EverDriven) have been able to transport students for us who otherwise we would not be able to transport, or we would have to have them on a bus/van for over an hour. ”

Administrative Assistant, Saucon Valley School District



Proactively Offer Transportation—Don't Wait for the Ask

For students experiencing housing instability, access to transportation should be clear from the start, not something they discover after missing school. Too often, transportation is first mentioned after a student's attendance has already declined.

Districts can change this dynamic by making transportation offers standard practice during every McKinney-Vento intake and by actively promoting ride options throughout the school year. Training administrators, teachers, and counselors to recognize early signs of instability ensures students get connected to resources before attendance declines.

Tools like QR codes on flyers or discreet text alerts make it easier to share information privately, giving students a way to access support without revealing personal challenges to others.



Spend Less Time Chasing Rides, More Time Finding Students

Many liaisons and support staff spend countless hours each week managing drivers, coordinating routes, and handling last-minute cancellations. While logistics are necessary, they don't directly reduce absenteeism—building relationships does. The real impact comes from identifying at-risk students early and providing support before absenteeism becomes chronic.

Advocating for dedicated transportation roles or partnering with third-party providers who can manage the operational side allows liaisons and staff to focus on building trust, recognizing housing instability, and intervening sooner.

By tracking how often transportation coordination pulls staff away from student outreach, districts can build a compelling case for additional staffing or outside support.

“ With our increasing McKinney Vento population, we have had to rely on Everdriven more and more to help us safely transport our students to and from school. The drivers are reliable, and the staff is wonderful to work with. ”

Assistant Director, Plano Independent School District

Let's Get Students to School—Safely, Reliably, Every Day

Getting to school may seem simple, but for many students, it's the hardest part. Transportation isn't the only factor in chronic absenteeism, but it's often the first hurdle to overcome. EverDriven specializes in helping districts provide safe, consistent, and flexible rides for students facing barriers to attendance—one student, one ride, one day at a time.

