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Institute of
Education Sciences

What are recommended methods of establishing a baseline for truancy rates in a district and assessing truancy data?



Evidence-Based Recommendations

- The National Center for Education Statistics' [Forum Guide to Collecting and Using Attendance Data](#) supports education agencies' use of attendance data to support establishing baseline measures of average daily attendance, chronic absence, and truancy rates, and developing methods to assess both. The guide recommends that education systems:
 - Identify an existing policy or develop a policy that defines terms such as attendance, excused and unexcused absences, tardy, chronic absence, and truancy. A coding scheme can ensure all teachers and schools collect comparable data.
 - Develop a tracking system that captures accurate daily attendance data with clear policies about how and when data are collected.
 - Develop a reporting system that uses data to identify students not attending school and supports staff to implement interventions as indicated.
- Example definitions of truancy and comprehensive attendance policies:
 - [Guam](#) defines a “habitual truant” as a child who has missed 12 or more days of school in a year.
 - [Northern Mariana Islands](#) defines a “truant” student as one who is absent without a valid excuse for five days in one semester under block scheduling, or ten days in one semester for schools without block scheduling.
 - The District of Columbia defines “chronically truant” as a student who misses 10 or more unexcused days in a school year. See their attendance and truancy policy for public schools [here](#).
 - The New York City Public Schools system monitors students whose attendance rate is less than 90% and provides a public portal for families. More details are provided in the [system’s attendance policy](#).
- Compulsory school attendance laws in the United States are determined by each state or territory; therefore, truancy rates are not comparable among states. Some examples of how states calculate truancy:
 - [Connecticut](#) has [guidelines for calculating and reporting attendance](#) in their Public School Information System.
 - The [Colorado](#) and [California](#) departments of education provide guidance on calculating truancy and chronic absenteeism rates, which divides the total days of unexcused absences by the number of total days possible to attend.



Additional Resources



[Attendance Works](#) provides free resources such as a district [self-assessment tool](#) and [data tools](#) that systems can use to capture and monitor attendance.



For additional examples, consult the comprehensive list of U.S. state legislation by searching for “Attendance” or “Truancy” at [The Education Commission of the States](#).