



TRUANCY VS.

CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM



Q. What is truancy?

A. Any unexcused absence according to school rules. Three unexcused absences will result in a notice sent home and possible legal action.

Q: What is chronic absenteeism?

A: Defined as missing 10% or more of a school year - including both excused and unexcused absences. This equates to 18 days per school year, or just 2 days per month.

Please remember: Chronic absenteeism and truancy are not mutually exclusive. A student can be both chronically absent AND truant.

TRUANCY

- COUNTS ONLY UNEXCUSED ABSENCES
- EMPHASIZES COMPLIANCE WITH SCHOOL RULES
- RELIES ON LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE SOLUTIONS

CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM

- COUNTS ALL ABSENCES: EXCUSED, UNEXCUSED AND SUSPENSIONS
- EMPHASIZES ACADEMIC IMPACT OF MISSED DAYS
- USES COMMUNITY-BASED POSITIVE STRATEGIES



United Way of Erie County

WHY DOES THIS MATTER?

School attendance has a direct correlation to academic performance. Research shows that chronically absent students are less likely to succeed academically, are more likely to be suspended, and are more likely to eventually dropout. In fact, 3 out of 4 sixth graders who are chronically absent will never graduate high school.

WHAT CAN WE DO?

Chronic absenteeism and truancy describe different aspects of our absenteeism problem and require different approaches. With its focus on unexcused absences, truancy naturally leads to a focus on compliance with the rules. The solution becomes a question of ensuring compliance with school attendance requirements. This is sometimes done through punitive consequences such as suspension, jail time, or fines. However, some communities and courts have devised effective alternatives such as truancy intervention classes.

Chronic absenteeism has a stronger focus on the academic consequences of school absence, recognizing that students miss school for many understandable issues such as asthma, homelessness or unreliable transportation. A data-informed, non-punitive approach should be taken by tracking attendance and working with families to share the importance of attendance to fix the underlying problems that lead to absenteeism.

That is why chronic absenteeism becomes a community-wide effort: medical providers can help address health challenges; transit and housing agencies can help reduce barriers; businesses and community leaders can provide mentorship and support to students. Using positive strategies, school staff, families, and community partners can work together to prevent students from missing so much school that they fall behind and lose hope of ever succeeding academically.

