



National Center for  
Homeless Education

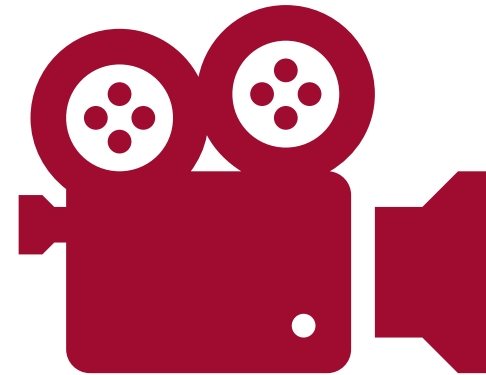
# **In School Every Day: Addressing Chronic Absenteeism Among Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness**

**We'll begin momentarily. Feel free to say hello in the chat.**

# Webinar Logistics

- This webinar is being recorded and will be posted to the NCHE website at <https://nche.ed.gov/self-paced-online-training/>.
- The webinar recording and materials also will be sent to webinar attendees following the webinar.
- All attendees are muted.
- Attendees may turn on or disable closed captioning; please look for the “Live Transcript” button in your Zoom toolbar to enable them.
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National Center for  
Homeless Education

# In School Every Day: Addressing Chronic Absenteeism Among Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness

**Wednesday, February 25, 2026, 2:00-3:30 PM ET**

*Presented by NCHE Staff*

# About NCHE



The National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE) is the technical assistance (TA) center for the U.S. Department of Education's Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) Program.

NCHE provides training and technical assistance (TA) to State Coordinators, local liaisons, community partners, parents, students, and other stakeholders to support the education of children and youth experiencing homelessness.

**Visit the NCHE website at  
<https://nche.ed.gov/>.**

**Join Our  
Listserv:**



# Meet Your Presenters

Leading us through  
today's session



**Julie Ratekin**

*Technical Assistance (TA) Lead*  
National Center for Homeless  
Education (NCHE)

*Julie.Ratekin@safalpartners.com*



**Jamie Dorr**

*Executive Director*  
Midcoast Youth Center

*jamie@midcoastyouth.org*



**Christina Dukes**

*Strategic Advisor*  
National Center for Homeless  
Education (NCHE)

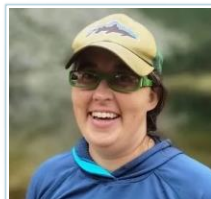
*christina@pearlstrats.com*



**Katie Joseph**

*Assistant Superintendent*  
Regional School Unit 1 (RSU 1)

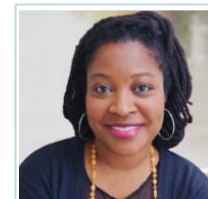
*kjoseph@rsu1.org*



**Jess Anderson**

*Executive Director*  
Count Me In!

*janderson@countmeinmaine.org*



**Cynae Punch Brown, Ed.D.**

*Deputy Director and  
TA Lead*

*Student Engagement and  
Attendance Center (SEAC)*

*cpbrown@manhattanstrategy.com*

# Today's Agenda

- 1 "Making the case": The importance of regular school attendance
- 2 Understanding chronic absenteeism: Definition, data, causes and effects
- 3 Strategies: Preventing and addressing chronic absenteeism among children and youth experiencing homelessness (CYEH)
- 4 Field spotlight: Maine's [Count Me In!](#) and [Midcoast Youth Center](#)
- 5 Additional resources

# Objectives

**By the end of this webinar, attendees will**

- 1** have a clear understanding of chronic absenteeism, including its effects on CYEH and, more broadly, schools and local educational agencies (LEAs);
- 2** be aware of key strategies to address chronic absenteeism among all students and CYEH specifically; and
- 3** learn from a field spotlight about their experience understanding and addressing chronic absenteeism among CYEH.

# Resource Spotlight

## Updated NCHE Chronic Absenteeism Issue Brief



The cover of the issue brief features the NCHE logo on the left and a photograph of students in a classroom on the right. The title and subtitle are prominently displayed at the top.

**This NCHE brief:**

- provides an overview of the issue of chronic absenteeism,
- explains the effects of chronic absenteeism on school and student performance, and
- suggests strategies to address the issue of chronic absenteeism among children and youth experiencing homelessness.

**INTRODUCTION**

The U.S. education system is founded on the idea that students are in class every weekday; simply put, to benefit from school, a student must be in attendance (U.S. Department of Education [ED], n.d.). Despite this, many students miss school on a regular basis, thus missing out on valuable instruction. Statistics on absenteeism among children and youth experiencing homelessness (CYEH) are particularly concerning, with federal data demonstrating that CYEH are chronically absent at a rate almost double that of the overall student population (National Center for Homeless Education [NCHE], 2024, p. 19). Missing school can have significant impacts, as research correlates chronic absenteeism with lower reading scores and high school graduation rates (ED, n.d.) and higher rates of grade retention and dropping out (Institute for Children, Poverty, & Homelessness [ICPH], 2015). Research and practice also demonstrate that efforts that lead to increased student attendance yield dividends in the form of greater student success in school (Chang et al., 2025). In fact,

**THE MCKINNEY-VENTO HOMELESS ASSISTANCE ACT DEFINITION OF HOMELESS (McKinney-Vento Act section 725(2))**

The term "homeless children and youth"—

A. means individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence...; and

B. includes —

- children and youths who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; or are abandoned in hospitals;
- children and youths who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings...;
- children and youths who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and
- migratory children... who qualify as homeless for the purposes of this subtitle because the children are living in circumstances described in clauses (i) through (iii).

In School Every Day: Addressing Chronic Absenteeism Among Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness 1

Download [\*In School Every Day: Addressing Chronic Absenteeism Among Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness\*](#)

Note: Source citations for information included in this webinar are provided throughout the brief.

# “Making the Case”

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Why Chronic Absenteeism Among CYEH Matters

# The Importance of Attendance

- Students cannot learn and receive support from teachers if they are not in class every day, and yet many students miss school regularly.
- CYEH are chronically absent at a rate almost double that of the overall student population, impacting their educational success significantly.
- Efforts to support regular school attendance yield positive results for students, schools, and LEA.

***Supporting regular school attendance alone, even without improvements in the overall American education system, will drive up achievement, high school graduation, and college attainment rates for students experiencing poverty.***

# About the McKinney-Vento Act

## Subtitle VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Act

- is the key piece of federal legislation addressing educational access and success for CYEH
- requires state educational agencies (SEAs) and LEAs to develop, review, and revise policies to remove barriers to the school identification, enrollment, and retention of CYEH, including to enrollment and retention due to outstanding fees or fines, or absences
- requires LEAs to immediately enroll CYEH in school even if the student has missed application or enrollment deadlines during any period of homelessness

# Understanding Chronic Absenteeism

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Definition, Causes and Effects, Data

# What is Chronic Absenteeism?

- A commonly used definition of *chronic absenteeism* is **missing 10% or more of the school year** for any reason, whether excused or unexcused.
- Chronic absenteeism is **not the same thing as truancy**, which typically measures unexcused absences only and underestimates total absenteeism.
- Chronic absenteeism also **differs from measures of attendance**, which focus on students who are present in—rather than absent from—school, and may obscure troubling patterns of absenteeism among student subgroups.

# Common Causes of Chronic Absenteeism

- **Health issues** (chronic and acute illness; mental health challenges)
- **Unmet basic needs** (housing and food insecurity; lack of access to reliable transportation, technology needed for schoolwork, and the wraparound services that might address these needs)
- **School disconnection** (avoidance due to bullying, academic struggles, or school climate; disengagement due to lack of stimulating instruction or meaningful connection with teachers or peers)
- **Competing responsibilities** (needing to care for a family member or attend work at a time that conflicts with the school day)
- **Misconceptions about the importance of school attendance** (underestimating the effects of missing school or believing that only unexcused absences are an issue)

Source(s): RAND, [Chronic Absenteeism Still a Struggle in 2024-2025](#); Attendance Works, [Chronic Absence: Identify the Root Causes of Absence](#); U.S. Department of Education (ED), [Chronic Absenteeism: Supporting Student Attendance and Combatting Chronic Absenteeism in Our Nation's Schools](#)

# Educational Effects of Chronic Absenteeism on Students

## Effects on students in general

- Chronically absent students exhibit lower reading scores, lower high school graduation rates, and higher rates of grade retention and high school non-completion.

## Effects on CYEH (New York City data)

- Chronically absent CYEH repeated the same grade at over three times the rate of CYEH who were not chronically absent.
- CYEH who were not chronically absent passed state assessment tests at approximately the same rate as their low-income housed classmates (38% compared to 37%), while only 12% of chronically absent CYEH achieved proficiency on state assessment tests.

**These statistics suggest that lower standardized test scores and higher rates of grade retention cannot be attributed to homelessness alone; rather, chronic absenteeism intensifies the educational challenges experienced by CYEH.**

# Long-Term Effects of Chronic Absenteeism on Students

## **Chronic absenteeism is linked with negative outcomes over the course of a student's life.**

- Students who are chronically absent have a decreased likelihood of enrollment in a post-secondary education program.
- Students who are chronically absent experience substantial adverse outcomes across economic, occupational, and health-related domains.



# Effects of Chronic Absenteeism on Schools

## **Chronic absenteeism affects not only individual students, but the schools they attend**

- High rates of chronic absenteeism among CYEH have academic consequences for all students in the school, not just those who are chronically absent.
- Irregular student attendance makes it harder for teachers to maintain classroom norms and instructional pace, leaving peers waiting for absent classmates to catch up.



# Effects of Chronic Absenteeism on LEAs

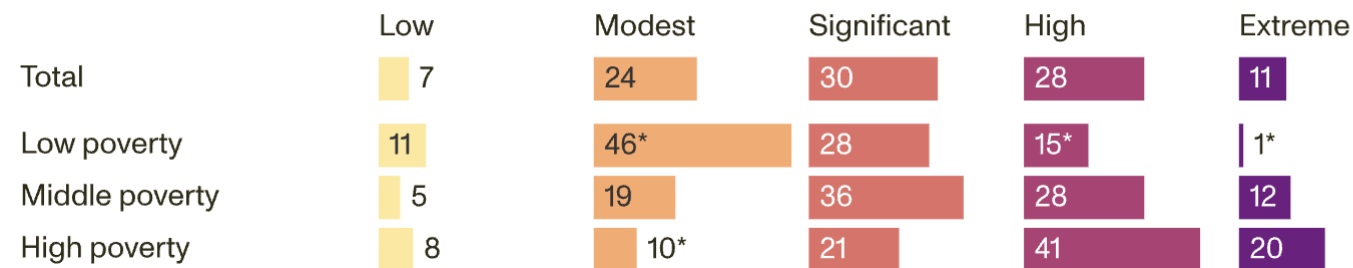
## **Chronic absenteeism affects not only individual students, but the LEAs they attend**

- At least six states award state funds to LEAs based on student attendance data, meaning that LEA efforts that reduce chronic absenteeism may result in increased LEA funding.
  - The Coeur d'Alene School District (ID) estimated forfeiting \$4.8 million in state education funding due to absenteeism in the 2024-25 school year (Hocker, 2025).
  - The El Paso Independent School District (TX) and Oakland Unified School District (CA) estimated losing \$3.25 million and \$55 million, respectively, during the 2023-24 school year as a result of absenteeism.
- The effects of chronic absenteeism also will be reflected in student achievement data reported by schools and LEAs.

# Chronic Absenteeism Incidence and Prevalence

- Approximately **one in four students in the United States (28%)** was **chronically absent** during the 2022-2023 school year.
- Students from low-income families are more likely to be chronically absent than their higher income peers.
- LEAs with high levels of poverty are more likely to report more severe levels of chronic absenteeism.

**Figure 2. Percentage Distribution of Districts by Severity of Chronic Absenteeism Levels, by District Subgroup**



**Low:** Less than 5% of students  
**Modest:** 5% to 9.9% of students  
**Significant:** 10% to 19.9% of students  
**High:** 20% to 29.9% of students  
**Extreme:** 30% or more of students

# Chronic Absenteeism Incidence and Prevalence Among CYEH

**CYEH are more likely to experience chronic absenteeism than the overall student population and than their low-income housed peers.**

- Data from **California** show that socioeconomically disadvantaged students were chronically absent at a rate of 21.7% in the 2024-25 school year, compared to 30.7% of CYEH
- Data from **New York City** show that the more times a student changes schools, the more likely the student is to be chronically absent
- Data from **Utah** show that students who change schools one or more times during a school year are four times more likely to be chronically absent than students who do not change schools

# Chronic Absenteeism Incidence and Prevalence by Grade and LEA

**Absenteeism is more likely during certain parts of a student's K-12 educational career.**

- Younger and older students tend to miss school the most.

**Absenteeism is not distributed evenly across all schools.**

- Half of the nation's chronically absent students are concentrated in just 6% (1,000) of LEAs, which are located in every state.
- The remaining half of the nation's chronically absent students are spread across the other 94% (16,000) of LEAs.

**Information about the “who, where, and when” of chronic absenteeism can help schools target efforts to the students and schools where they are most needed.**



## True or False?

**Chronic absenteeism measures all school absences, whether excused or unexcused.**

(Poll will appear on screen for voting.)



# Questions or Comments?

(Please share questions using the chat feature)

# Strategies

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## Preventing and Addressing Chronic Absenteeism Among CYEH

# Strategy: Data Collection and Analysis

- **Monitor chronic absenteeism data regularly** to identify which students may need early intervention and which schools may need targeted support.
- **Identify the root causes of chronic absenteeism** based on insights from student and parent engagement and consider how to address these causes.
- **Inventory all available school and community resources** to address student and family needs and attendance barriers and connect students and families to these resources.
- **Use supportive and personalized communication with families** rather than adopting a punitive approach.

# Accessing Chronic Absenteeism Data

## LEAs can access chronic absenteeism data on CYEH by

- [contacting their state coordinator for homeless education](#)
- [consulting SchoolHouse Connection's Child and Youth Homelessness Data Profiles](#)  
(Select options such as *state*, *county*, and *school district* to access data at the desired level)



# Strategy: Student-Level Interventions

- **Pair at-risk students with mentors** who encourage them to attend school every day.
- **Incentive student attendance** through positive recognition.
- **Monitor attendance and follow-up promptly** with parents whose children miss school to understand and help address what is causing the student to miss school.

Visit Attendance Works' [Chronic Absence: 3 Tiers of Intervention webpage](#) to learn more about useful practices for addressing chronic absenteeism using a multitiered support approach.

# Strategy: LEA-Level Strategies

- **Offer before- and after-school activities** that increase students' desire to attend school.
- **Provide school-based dental and health services** for students who may not have access to these services outside of school.
- **Revise policies that may inadvertently decrease student attendance**, including policies that establish severe penalties for tardiness or suspend students from school because of excessive absences.

Source(s): Institute for Children, Poverty, & Homelessness (ICPH), [Empty Seats: The Epidemic of Absenteeism Among Homeless Elementary Students](#); Everyone Graduates Center, [The Importance of Being in School: A Report on Absenteeism in the Nation's Public Schools](#); Attendance Works, [Mapping the Early Attendance Gap: Charting a Course for School Success](#); Utah Education Policy Center (UEPC), [Research Brief: Chronic Absenteeism](#)

# Strategy: Community Partnerships

- **Homeless shelters:** Shelters can provide a space for CYEH to do homework and encourage families to send their children to school every day.
- **Human services:** Local human service agencies can
  - encourage families receiving public benefits to send their children to school every day
  - help address root causes of chronic absenteeism that are beyond the school's capacity
- **Local public transit and media:** Local public transit authorities and media can assist with public messaging.

Source(s): Everyone Graduates Center, [The Importance of Being in School: A Report on Absenteeism in the Nation's Public Schools](#); Institute for Children, Poverty, & Homelessness (ICPH), [Empty Seats: The Epidemic of Absenteeism Among Homeless Elementary Students](#); National Forum on Education Statistics (NFES), [Every School Day Counts: The Forum Guide to Collecting and Using Attendance Data](#)

# Scenario

(Please share responses using the chat feature)



You're the local liaison in an LEA with 25 schools. Your LEA's federal programs director asks you to review chronic absenteeism data on CYEH and propose next steps for how the LEA might improve attendance among CYEH.

What data points do you look at?  
What are you hoping these data might tell you?  
What possible next steps would you consider?



# Questions or Comments?

(Please share questions using the chat feature)

# Field Spotlight

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## School-Community Partnerships in Maine

**Established  
in 2013**

**1 in 4  
students  
experiencing  
chronic absence**

**Focus on Whole-  
School and Whole-  
Community  
Approach**



**COUNT  
ME IN!**

**Community of  
Educators &  
Youth-Serving  
Organizations**

**To increase student  
attendance through data-  
driven strategies so that every  
child is an engaged,  
successful learner.**

**Serves all  
of Maine**



**RSU 1,  
Brunswick,  
MSAD 75,  
and Richmond  
School Districts**



**Midcoast  
Youth Center**

**Merrymeeting Support  
Collaborative for Youth  
Experiencing Homelessness**

supporting nearly **300** students who  
are unstably housed



**Donna Verhoeven (she/her/hers)**

McKinney-Vento Youth Outreach Coordinator - RSU  
1, MSDA 75  
(207) 751-5738



**Danielle Bailey**

McKinney-Vento Youth Outreach & Housing  
Specialist - Brunswick



**Jena Beaulieu**

McKinney-Vento Youth Outreach & Housing  
Specialist - Richmond

# Merrymeeting Support Collaborative for Youth Experiencing Homelessness

- Housing navigation
- Medical and mental health appointments
- Workforce development
- Education
- Financial literacy
- Legal
- Anything and everything!

**Three full-time  
case managers  
covering four  
school districts:  
RSU1, MSAD75,  
Brunswick, and  
Richmond School  
Districts**

# Adventure

# Engagement

# Stability



- No-barrier programming
- Meals and take-home food
- Clothing closet and laundry
- Transitional housing
- Homeless youth outreach in schools and community





# Questions or Comments?

(Please share questions using the chat feature)

# Additional Resources

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## Quick Overview

- What is the SEAC?
- Meet the SEAC Team
- Resources and Tools
- Why Connect with the SEAC?
- Technical Assistance (TA) Initiatives
- Contact Us



# What is the SEAC?



Supports SEAs and LEAs in their efforts to reduce chronic absenteeism and increase student engagement



Operated by the Manhattan Strategy Group (MSG)



Authorized under section 4103(a) of Title IV, Part A, Subpart 3 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), as amended

# The SEAC Team



**Cynae Punch Brown, EdD**

Deputy Director and  
TA Lead



**Tiffany Major, LMSW**

Deputy Director and  
Project Coordinator



**Borjan Zic, PhD**

Effectiveness Coordinator and  
Needs Assessment Lead



**Thomas (TJ) Horwood**

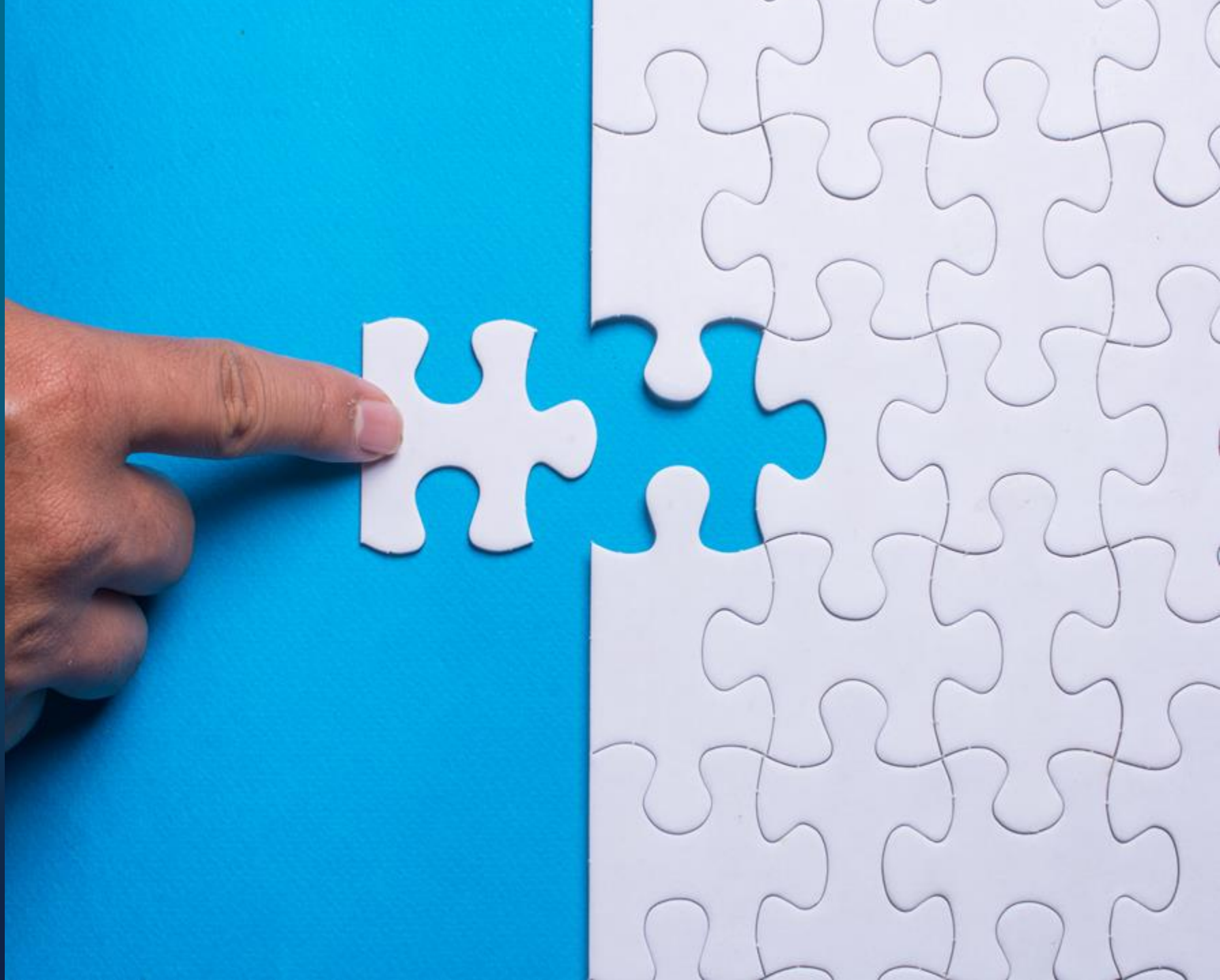
Corporate Monitor and  
Interim Project Director

- Resources from two learning series
  - “Proactive Schoolwide Strategies for Supporting Attendance”
  - “Serving Historically Marginalized Populations”

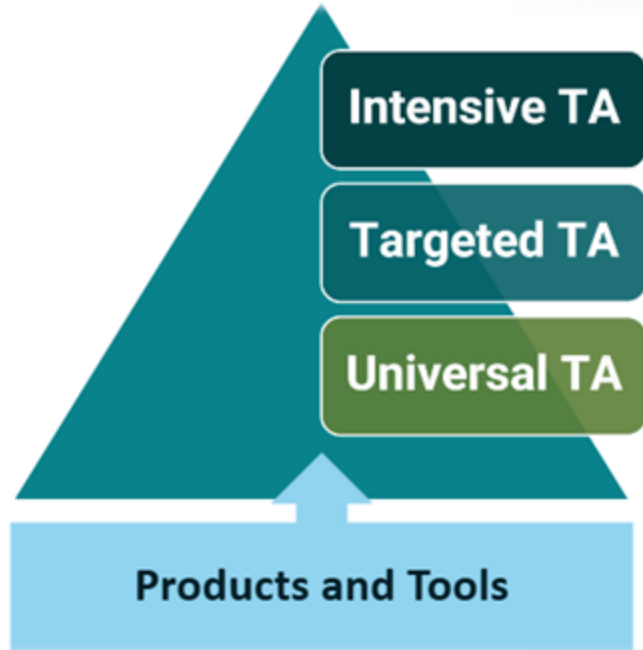
<https://www.ed.gov/teaching-and-administration/supporting-students/seac>
- Practical planning and reflection tools
  - [Action Planner for Reengaging Students to Support Everyday Attendance](#)
  - [SEA Attendance Reflection Tool](#)
  - [LEA Attendance Reflection Tool](#)
  - [Youth Engagement Tool](#)
  - [Family Engagement Tool](#)



**Making  
Connections.  
Supporting  
Engagement.  
Improving  
Attendance.**



# TA Initiatives



**Enhancing evidence-based attendance and engagement systems aligned with ESEA/ESSA accountability**

**Empowering families as partners to improve attendance under Title I**

**Strengthening school-community partnerships to improve student attendance**

**Supporting statewide communities of practice that scale evidence-based attendance intervention**

**Learn More  
+  
Request  
Support**

**Website: [Student Engagement and Attendance Technical Assistance Center \(SEAC\) | U.S. Department of Education](https://www.ed.gov/teaching-and-administration/supporting-students/seac)**

<https://www.ed.gov/teaching-and-administration/supporting-students/seac>

**Request SEAC Support. Join Our Listserv!**  
**[SEACenter@manhattanstrategy.com](mailto:SEACenter@manhattanstrategy.com)**



# Questions or Comments?

(Please share questions using the chat feature)

# Additional Resources

- [Attendance Works: Advancing Student Success by Reducing Chronic Absence](#)
- [SchoolHouse Connection: Chronic Absence & Homelessness](#)
- [ED: Chronic Absenteeism: Supporting Student Attendance and Combatting Chronic Absenteeism in our Nation's Schools](#)
- [ED: Student Engagement and Attendance Technical Assistance Center \(SEAC\)](#)

# Takeaways and Next Steps

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What is **one key takeaway** from today's webinar?

What is **one next step** you'll take as a result of today's webinar?

# Big Session Takeaways

- ✓ CYEH have higher rates of chronic absenteeism than the overall student population and their low-income housed peers.
- ✓ Implementing targeted approaches to preventing and addressing chronic absenteeism benefits students, schools, and LEAs.
- ✓ Best practices for addressing chronic absenteeism include leveraging data, implementing student- and LEA-level strategies, and partnering with the community.
- ✓ Additional resources are available to help states and LEAs make informed decisions about addressing chronic absenteeism.

# NCHE Helpline



**Operational hours:** 9:00 AM to 5:30 PM  
ET, Monday through Friday



**Phone line:** +1 305-306-8495



**Dedicated email address:**  
[NCHE.helpline@safalpartners.com](mailto:NCHE.helpline@safalpartners.com)

# Thank you! We'd love to hear from you.

- Please take ~3 min to complete our feedback form
- Link to survey:  
<https://safalpartners.jotform.com/260085664991972>

As a reminder, **today's objectives** were:

1. Having a clear understanding of chronic absenteeism and its effects on CYEH, schools, and LEAs
2. Becoming aware of key strategies to address chronic absenteeism among all students, including CYEH
3. Learning from a field spotlight about their experience understanding and addressing chronic absenteeism among CYEH

