

Regular School Attendance Design Team

Work group: Parent and Family Support and Engagement

Research demonstrates that chronic absence is a community-wide issue that requires a cross-sector response. Family and community-related causes of chronic absence include:

- Violence and trauma
- Housing and homelessness
- Food insecurity
- Family socio-economic status
- Children in foster care
- Parents not actively involved in their children's school experience and monitoring their children's participation in school
- Schools not communicating effectively with parents about attendance

Outcomes related to Family Support and Engagement, as it impacts Regular School Attendance:

- Families have access to formal and informal supports
- Families have access to paid leave
- Children live in food-secure households
- Families are screened for poverty at well-child visits
- Parents report sufficient knowledge of child development and parenting skills
- Families have access to home visiting, parent education and family preservation programs

In addition to these Influencers, the Community Conditions that children and families live in impact chronic absence. Conditions like living with low-income, living in high poverty neighborhoods, homelessness, housing instability, and living with violence and trauma impact children's ability to attend school regularly and families' capacity to ensure their children's regular attendance.

North Carolina has a lot of assets in place! There has been a lot of excellent work already done in North Carolina around these issues. Pathways would like to lift up and leverage these assets. We have talked with some of you and surveyed the larger Pathways Partners (stakeholders) group to learn about some of the great initiatives that are helping us move towards these outcomes. Here is what we have learned.

Parent and Family Support and Engagement Asset Map, as related to Regular School Attendance:

- NC 2-1-1 is an information and referral service for parents.
- The Smart Start network works to support the whole child in the context of the family.

- There is work being done on expanding evidence-based home visiting and parent education programs across the state and mapping where programs exist. (NC DPH, DSS, individual home visiting and parent education programs, and others).
- The Family Support Network™ of North Carolina (fsnnc.org) enhances the lives of children who have special needs by providing support, education, and caring connections to their families. The network includes 11 regional affiliates and the FSN University Office. FSN affiliates provide parent-to-parent support, information and referral, support groups, workshops, and social activities for families with children (birth – age 22) who have disabilities or special needs and their service providers statewide. The FSN University office provides statewide information and referral for families with children who have special needs and service providers across North Carolina.
- Some NC cities are establishing paid parental and family leave for public employees.
- Paid Family Leave: A diverse advisory group composed of business, pediatricians, economics professors and other researchers, public sector agencies (e.g., Dept of Insurance), and child and family advocates is working to design a study on Paid Family Leave Insurance programs (outcomes, cost-benefit, impact on business, infrastructure needed) and how NC could implement such a program. Recommendations will be presented to the Child Fatality Task Force in October, and the Advisory Committee is looking at sources of funding and researchers to conduct the study. (NC Child, Child Fatality Task Force, MomsRising)
- A system of food banks across the state improve families' food security.
- Work is happening to expand the universal breakfast program in NC schools (NCAE and The Budget and Tax Center)
- Healthy Corner Store Initiative is working to improve food security. (The NC Alliance for Health)