

The White House

Office of the Press Secretary

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FACT SHEET: The White House Launches New National Effort and Ad Council Campaign to Eliminate Chronic Absenteeism and Drive Student Success

Today, the White House and the U.S. Department of Education announce two groundbreaking campaigns to address and eliminate chronic student absenteeism in this country: the My Brother's Keeper (MBK) Success Mentors Initiative -- with 10 initial participating cities -- and a multi-million dollar Ad Council campaign to engage parents on this critical issue. Chronic absenteeism is a nationwide challenge with devastating consequences for more than five to seven million students, and in low-income communities, the impact is even more prevalent. These efforts are part of the national Every Student, Every Day Campaign, and is in response to the MBK Task Force's recommendation that federal agencies launch a cross-sector national absenteeism initiative to improve the outcomes for young people, including those in underserved communities.

A Groundbreaking Mentorship Initiative:

The MBK Success Mentors Initiative aims to reduce chronic absenteeism by connecting over one million students with caring mentors. It is the nation's first-ever effort to scale an evidence-based, data-driven mentor model to reach and support the highest risk students – using existing resources already linked to schools, and the metric of chronic absenteeism to drive school and life success. The Initiative is a partnership between the Department of Education and Johns Hopkins University.

The Initiative will launch with participation from school districts in 10 communities – Austin, Boston, Columbus, Denver, Miami-Dade, New York City, Philadelphia, Providence, San Antonio and Seattle – that accepted the MBK community challenge. Additional communities are expected to join this effort by the spring. Over the coming months, MBK Success Mentors will work with students in the 6th and 9th grades across their communities' high needs school districts, with the goal of reaching over 250,000 students over the next two years and eliminating chronic absenteeism in these grades. At full scale when operating in grades K-12 across districts, the model aims to reach over 1 million students within the next 3-5 years. In the next phase, the initiative will be bolstered by college students from nearby colleges who will serve as MBK College Success Mentors, leveraging

federal work-study allocations. Miami-Dade College will be the first MBK community to launch this college-linked model as part of this effort.

The MBK Success Mentors Initiative model connects students to caring adults who are trained school-linked personnel. These mentors will receive additional resources and tools to help them mentor students with greater impact. Mentors will include coaches, administrative staff, teachers, security guards, educators, AmeriCorps members, tutors, after-school providers and others. They will serve as trained and supported motivators, problem solvers, connectors, and advocates to form supportive relationships, identify and celebrate student's strengths, promote their attendance every day, and connect them with the necessary supports to keep them on track and thriving. Each mentor is assigned 3-5 students as mentees. Mentors are also "connectors," helping flag challenges causing absenteeism and connecting mentees to appropriate school personnel or resources through this system that would otherwise remain untapped. Mentors meet with students 3 times per week in school all year and are trained to find a mentee's positive strengths, celebrate them, and call home as a parent engagement tool.

Key Department of Education collaborators in this work include Dr. Robert Balfanz of Johns Hopkins University's Everyone Graduates Center, MENTOR, Attendance Works, United Way, Corporation for National and Community Service, the Ad Council, Mott Foundation and the Arnold Foundation, which will provide critical assistance in identifying mentors, as well as strategic advice, training, and philanthropic support.

The Ad Council's Parent Engagement Campaign — Absences Add Up:

The Ad Council, in partnership with the Department of Education and the Mott Foundation, will simultaneously launch a multi-million dollar parent engagement campaign to elevate the conversation about the devastating impact of chronic absenteeism, specifically targeting parents of K-8th grade students.

The Ad Council has helped to address some of the country's most challenging public health and safety concerns, and through this campaign with MBK, will help to ensure that students across the country have the opportunity to succeed. The effort will include billboards and bus shelter outdoor Public Service Announcements (PSAs) and community posters for barbershops, doctor's offices and schools. A key component of the effort will include a new campaign website offering resources for parents in the key areas that contribute to student absences, including an online tool kit offering downloadable resources such as customizable posters, blog posts, infographics and absence trackers. The website will also include resources for educators, community leaders and afterschool providers.

Through this awareness campaign, the Ad Council and its partners will help raise awareness about how chronic absenteeism affects children in the short-and long-term, and share tips and resources for parents to help address chronic absenteeism.

Why This Matters:

Chronic absenteeism, or missing at least ten percent of school days in the school year, or a month or more of school, excused or unexcused, is a leading cause of low achievement and a powerful predictor of which students will eventually drop out of school. Five to seven and a half million children miss a month or more of school each year, putting them at significant risk of falling behind and not graduating from high school. Half the high-need students who fall off-track to high school graduation do so in just 65 school districts. Chronic absenteeism is often the first flag.

A recent report by *America's Promise Alliance* shows that students in our highest need communities typically experience "relationship poverty," which greatly increases the odds that they will dropout. The research showed that having a caring adult in their lives was a major counter force to dropping out. Having a caring adult *in school* had the largest impact of all – reducing the likelihood of leaving school by 25%.

Every Student, Every Day Campaign is focused on the estimated 5 to 7.5 million students who are chronically absent each year. Defined as missing at least 10 percent (approximately 18 days) of school days in a school year, chronic absenteeism puts students at heightened risk of falling behind and dropping out of school. Together, communities can address and eliminate chronic absenteeism, and ultimately boost student success and strengthen our nation's workforce and our future prosperity. As part of this initiative, the Administration is collaborating with states, local communities, and nonprofit, faith, and philanthropic organizations to support local, cross-sector efforts.

Evaluating and Planning

To build the most impactful intervention possible, a multi-year evaluation and learning agenda will be incorporated into the MBK Success Mentor Initiative, including a series of randomized variations of the model, and cutting edge components including district-based mentor and mentee text messaging, and socio-emotional skills training. Private support for this evaluation and learning agenda is being provided by the Arnold Foundation. Based on the evaluation, the Department of Education will develop guidance and tool kits for school districts to implement this model.