# Chronic Absenteeism:

## Frequently Asked Questions

## What is Chronic Absenteeism?

Chronic absenteeism is defined as missing 10 percent or more of the school year, regardless of reason. Chronic absenteeism includes excused and unexcused absences. For accountability purposes, students with a chronic absenteeism rate of 10.00 percent or greater are chronically absent.

## What is the Virginia Standards of Accreditation?

The Virginia Board of Education's *Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia* are designed to ensure that an effective educational program is established and maintained in Virginia's public schools. The accreditation standards:

* Provide an essential foundation of educational programs of high quality in all schools for all students;
* Encourage continuous appraisal and improvement of the school program for the purpose of raising student achievement;
* Foster public confidence;
* Assure recognition of Virginia's public schools by other institutions of learning; and
* Establish a means of determining the effectiveness of schools.

The Board of Education’s 2017 [Standards of Accreditation](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/boe/accreditation/) (SOA) support continuous improvement for all schools, and college, career and civic readiness for all students. The revisions include graduation requirements aligned with the Profile of a Virginia Graduate and school accreditation standards that include new measures of quality and performance.

## How is Chronic Absenteeism a part of the Virginia Standards of Accreditation?

In combination with *Graduation and Completion Index (high schools), Dropout Rate (high schools), and College, Career and Civic Readiness (high schools)*, Virginia joined [35 states](https://www.attendanceworks.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Future-Ed-TABLE_Chronic_Absenteeism.pdf) to use chronic absenteeism as a [School Quality Indicator](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/boe/accreditation/2017-soa-impact.shtml) to measure student engagement.

## How are schools rated under the new Virginia Standards of Accreditation?

The [revised SOA](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/boe/accreditation/soa-impact.pdf) simplifies the Commonwealth’s accountability system by reducing the number of overall accreditation ratings that schools may earn. Under the new system, schools earn one of the following three ratings:

* Accredited — Schools with all school-quality indicators at either Level One or Level Two
* Accredited with Conditions — Schools with one or more school-quality indicators at Level Three
* Accreditation Denied — Schools that fail to adopt or fully implement required corrective actions to address Level 3 school-quality indicators. A school rated as Accreditation Denied may regain state accreditation by demonstrating to the Board of Education that it is fully implementing all required corrective action plans.

## How is Chronic Absenteeism measured in the [Virginia Standards of Accreditation](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/boe/accreditation/2017-soa-impact.shtml)?

Chronic absenteeism is calculated using a three-step process. First, a student's end-of-year membership is determined by dividing the student’s total days present, absent, and unscheduled by the total days in session for a given school. If the student's average daily membership is 50 percent or greater in a given school year, the student is included in the school’s chronic absenteeism calculation. Next, a student is determined to be chronically absent if the rate of their days absent divided by their total days in membership is greater than or equal to 10 percent. Lastly, to determine the school chronic absenteeism rate, the number of students that are absent 10 percent or more is divided by the total number of students with membership greater than or equal to 50 percent of a school’s end-of-year membership.

In the SOA, performance on this indicator is rated as follows:

| **Indicator** | **Level One** | **Level Two** | **Level Three** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Chronic Absenteeism | 0-15 percent OR 10 percent decrease from previous year if in Level Two range  | 16-24 percent OR 10 percent decrease from previous year if in Level Three range  | 25 percent or higher OR Level Two or Three for more than four consecutive years beginning in 2018-2019 |

*Level One*: Schools with a current year or three-year chronic absenteeism rate 15 percent or lower (that is, no more than 15 percent of the students missing 10 percent of the school year), or schools within the Level Two range that decrease the chronic absenteeism rate by 10 percent or more from the previous year.

*Level Two*: Schools not meeting Level One performance and with a chronic absenteeism rate of no more than 25 percent, or schools within the Level Three range that decrease the chronic absenteeism rate by 10 percent or more from the previous year.

*Level Three*: Schools with a current year or cumulative three-year chronic absenteeism rate of 25 percent or higher, or schools with a Level Two or Level Three rating for more than four consecutive years beginning in the 2018-2019 accreditation year.

* *Students receiving homebound instruction are excluded from Chronic Absenteeism reporting.*
* *A student must attend 50 percent of the current school year to be counted in Chronic Absenteeism reporting.*

## Why does Chronic Absenteeism matter?

Research on chronic absences, summarized on the  [Attendance Work](https://awareness.attendanceworks.org/wp-content/uploads/Research2016.pdf) web page, reinforces the belief that children may experience academic difficulty if they are not in class to access instruction. Students who are chronically absent, for any reason, listed on the [Attendance Work Chronic Absentee](https://www.attendanceworks.org/chronic-absence/the-problem/) web page may have more difficulty mastering reading concepts by third grade, a higher probability of failing subjects in middle school, and an increased probability of dropping out of school once they reach high school. For these reasons, the Virginia Department of Education recognizes the need to address chronic absenteeism as necessary and good for all students in the Commonwealth.

## Is Chronic Absenteeism different from truancy?

Yes. Chronic absenteeism is a measure of absenteeism that encompasses excused absences, unexcused absences, and absences due to suspension. In Virginia, [truancy](https://law.lis.virginia.gov/admincode/title8/agency20/chapter730/section10/) is defined as “…the act of accruing one or more unexcused absences.” Truancy is a measure of unexcused absences, which is a part of chronic absenteeism, but does not provide a global look at the potential for lost instruction due to absences for any reason. Measuring rates of chronic absenteeism recognizes that many students miss school for understandable reasons, for which a compliance driven approach is not the appropriate response. For more information about the difference between chronic absenteeism and truancy, visit the [*Attendance Works*](https://www.attendanceworks.org/whats-the-difference-between-chronic-absence-and-truancy/) webpage.

## Are suspended students included in the calculation of a school’s absenteeism rate?

Yes. Students suspended from school are included in the chronic absenteeism calculation.

## **Are students receiving educational services at home due to a suspension, expulsion or other disciplinary action included in the calculation of a school’s absenteeism rate?**

No. Students receiving instructional services in their homes due to disciplinary actions are excluded from the chronic absenteeism calculation. For the purposes of calculation of the chronic absenteeism rate, instructional services include a student’s attendance at an alternative education placement, and school board approved home-based services.

If a student is suspended and subsequently removed from school by his/her parent(s) to attend an approved [home school program](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/families/private_home/index.shtml), the requirements set forth in [§ 22.1-254.1](https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacode/title22.1/chapter14/section22.1-254.1/) should be followed by the student’s parents and school division personnel prior to the student’s removal from the school roster.

## Are students receiving homebound instruction included in the calculation of a school’s chronic absenteeism rate?

No. Students receiving homebound instruction for medical illness at any point in the year are excluded from the chronic absenteeism calculations for the entire year.

## How are students who transfer after the start of the year considered in the chronic absenteeism calculation?

Transfer students are counted in a school’s chronic absenteeism rate if they are enrolled in the school for greater than 50 percent or more of the school year.

## Where can I find resources to help my school address chronic absenteeism?

Resources to address chronic absenteeism can be found through the Virginia Department of Education’s [*Truancy and Attendance*](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/support/prevention/attendance-truancy/index.shtml)webpage. Additionally, the VDOE offers a [12-part professional development web module series](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/support/prevention/attendance-truancy/attendance-truancy-va-students/index.shtml) that discuss strategies for addressing chronic absenteeism.

Additional resources for addressing chronic absenteeism can be found through [*Attendance Works*](https://www.attendanceworks.org/chronic-absence/addressing-chronic-absence/3-tiers-of-intervention/). These resources include the [*three Tiers of Intervention*](https://www.attendanceworks.org/chronic-absence/addressing-chronic-absence/3-tiers-of-intervention/) template document, to help guide action planning for your school or school division. You can also download the intervention worksheet to see universal (Tier 1), Targeted (Tier 2), and Individualized (Tier 3) intervention options. Although this is not an exhaustive list, this worksheet provides a review of strategies and interventions across the continuum of tiers.