



Bridging the Gap: A Collaborative Approach to Reducing Chronic Absenteeism for Students in Shelter

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Abstract

Chronic absenteeism among children experiencing homelessness remains a critical barrier to educational success. In New York City, the Families with Children Shelter System serves thousands of children annually, providing temporary housing and support services to families facing homelessness. Given the high mobility and instability these families experience, ensuring school continuity is a persistent challenge. To bridge this gap, NYC shelters collaborate closely with the New York City Department of Education (NYC DOE) through the Students in Temporary Housing (STH) program, which provides educational liaisons, school transportation assistance, and advocacy to mitigate the impact of homelessness on school attendance and performance.

This presentation outlines a data-driven, multi-stakeholder initiative designed to improve attendance rates for children in NYC shelters. Through partnerships with the NYC DOE, Advocates for Children, and shelter-based case management teams, our approach combines real-time attendance tracking, tailored interventions, and ongoing family engagement. By identifying root causes such as transportation barriers, mental health challenges, and systemic gaps in special education services, we have developed targeted solutions that empower students to reengage with learning.

Our findings indicate that a collaborative, wraparound model leads to measurable improvements in attendance, grade promotion, and long-term educational outcomes. This session will share insights from program implementation, key successes, and lessons learned, offering a replicable framework for addressing absenteeism in similar contexts.

Keywords: Absenteeism; Chronic Absenteeism, Children in Shelter