



Spring 2024

# Truancy Prevention Learning Communities

Learn from and connect with communities who are addressing attendance with best practice strategies. Each session will highlight promising practices and feature school district and county human service staff from across the state of Wisconsin.



## Family Engagement Strategies

Wednesday, February 21, 8:30am-9:30am



## Using Data to Improve Attendance

Wednesday, March 6, 8:30am-9:30am



## School-County Collaboration

Tuesday, March 19, 8:30am-9:30am

Find link to register for sessions on [DPI's School Attendance page](#).



**SAVE THE DATE**

# UPCOMING WEBINARS



**9**

APR

Supporting Attendance Through the IEP Process

11:00 AM – 12:00 PM

**23**

APR

Evidence-Based Practices for Identifying & Managing School Refusal

1:00 PM – 2:00 PM

[wsswa.org](http://wsswa.org)

Registration open soon for members and Non-members

CEHs have been applied for through NASW WI

*FREE for student members!*

April 9<sup>th</sup> Presenters:

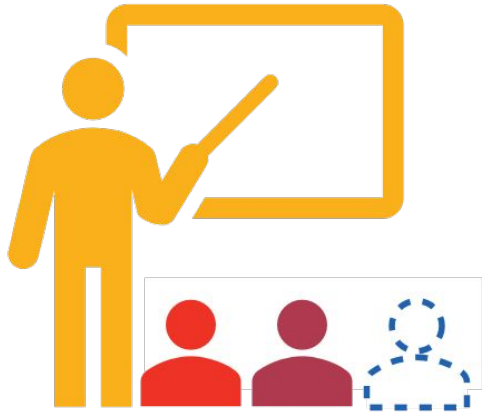
Tim Peerenboom - DPI

Eva Shaw - DPI



April 23<sup>rd</sup> Presenter:

**Dr. Becky Thompson,**  
Clinic Director at Thriving Minds Family Services



# Truancy

## Wisconsin Statute and Strategies for Success

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Youth Justice Policy Coordinator  
DCF

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School Social Work Consultant  
DPI



Wisconsin Department of  
Children and Families



WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF  
**Public Instruction**

# Agenda



**Summarize current research and Wisconsin data on truancy referrals**



**Review important information from Wisconsin Statutes**

- Attendance and truancy basics
- Truancy committees



**Dive into Strategies for Success**

# Compulsory Attendance

- Children ages 6 through end of term in which they turn 18
- **All students** have a right to attend through age 20





# Remember the Purpose

- Encourage Attendance
- Deter Skipping

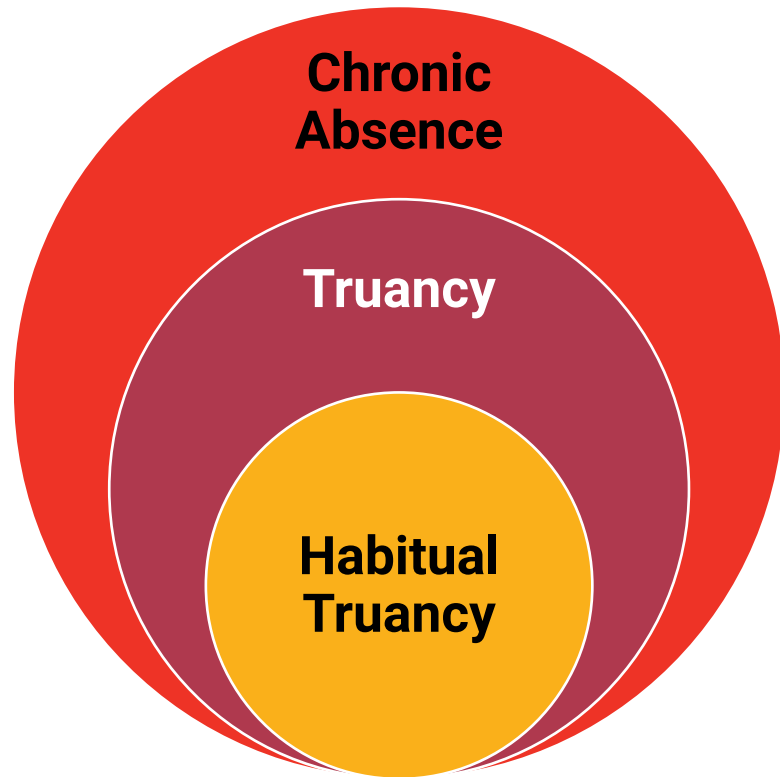




# Current Research



# Shift in Focus to Chronic Absence



## **Students who regularly miss school are:**

- More likely to miss early learning milestones
- Less likely to graduate on time
- More likely to drop out of school
- More likely to experience poor outcomes in adulthood





# Factors Contributing to Chronic Absence



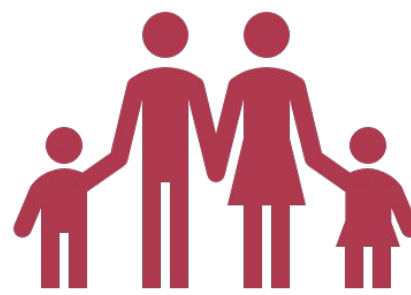
## COMMUNITY

- Unsafe path to/from school
- Poor transportation
- Financial, social, medical or other barriers



## SCHOOL

- Bullying
- Pressure for academic success
- Unwelcoming/unsafe school climate



## FAMILY

- Housing/ food insecurity
- Conflicting family responsibilities/ obligations



## STUDENT

- Unmet mental health needs
- Frequent school changes
- Substance abuse



# Takeaways from Recent Literature

1

Students who feel **connected and supported in school** have better attendance, grades, and test scores and stay in school longer



# Takeaways from Recent Literature

2

- The most effective truancy reduction efforts are **multi-tiered and collaborative**
- **Youth Justice system is a last resort**



# Takeaways from Recent Literature

**3**

**Matching services to identified needs is critical for long-term behavior change**



# Takeaways from Recent Literature

4

Truancy is a **stronger indicator of youth needs** than future delinquent behavior



# Takeaways from Recent Literature

5

**Punitive, harsh sanctions** are more likely to *increase* the incidence of truancy

- Justice system involvement resulted in 5 additional missed days



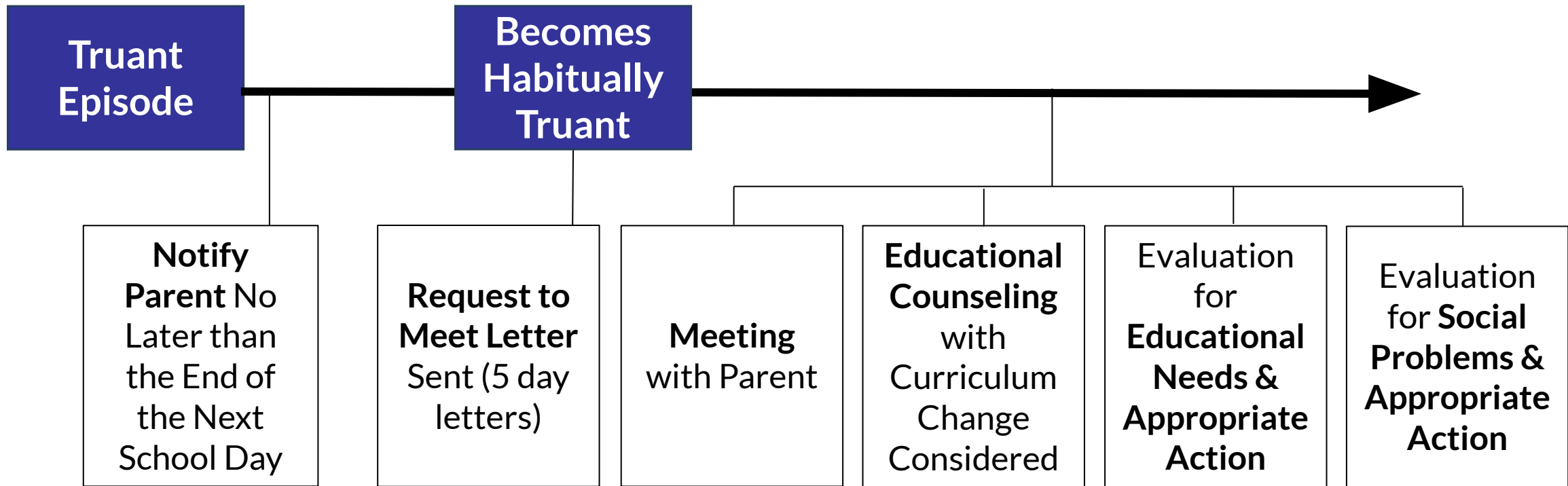


# Wisconsin Practice & Data

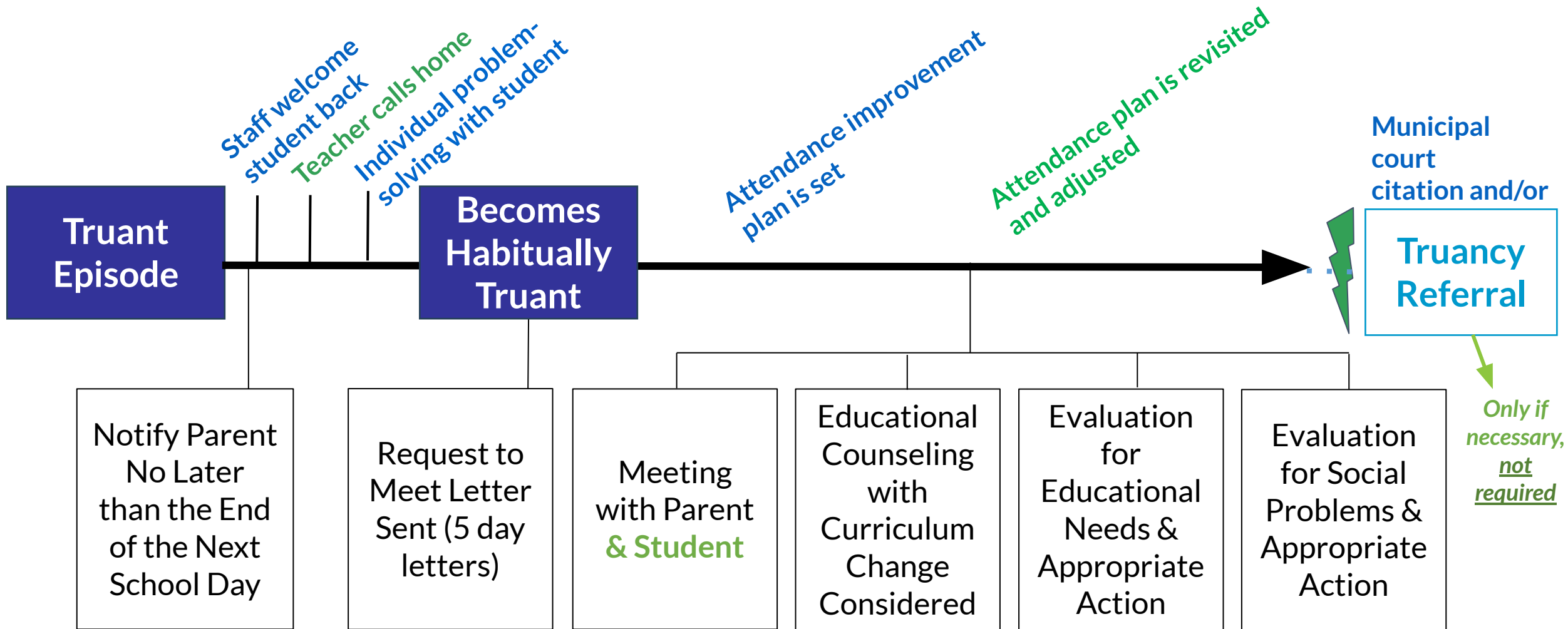




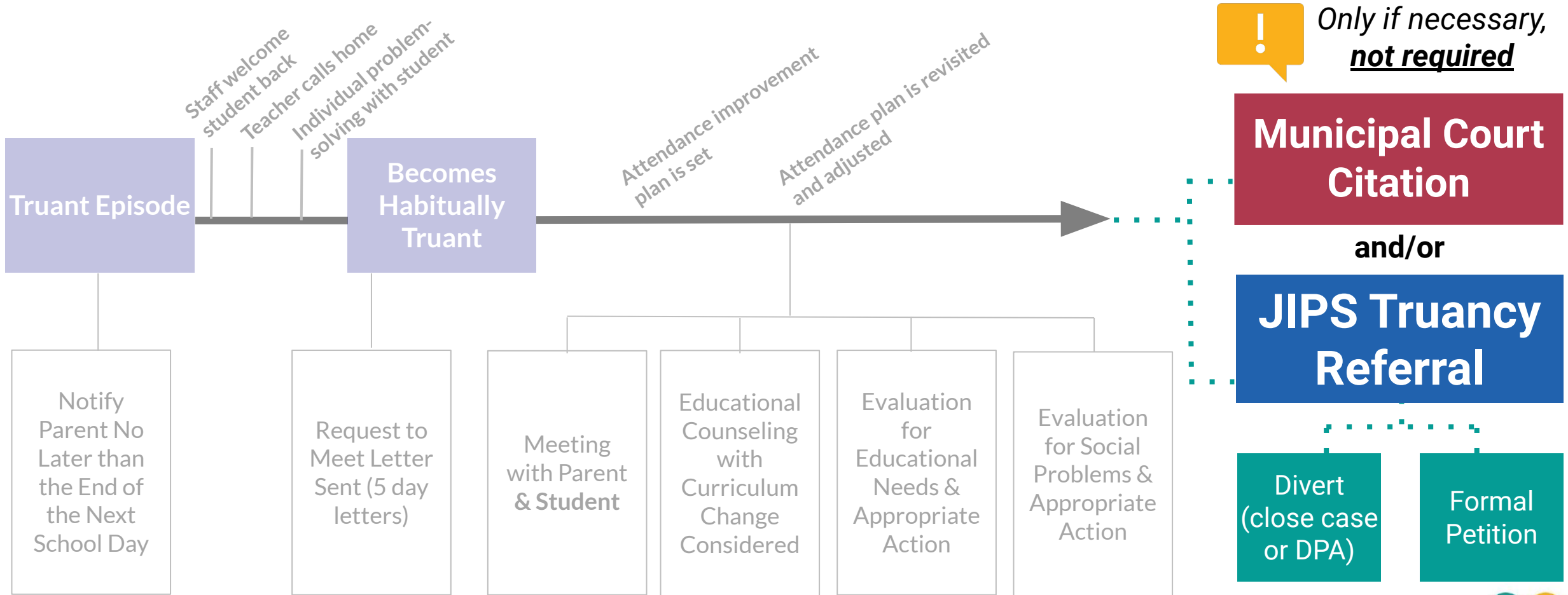
# Required School Actions



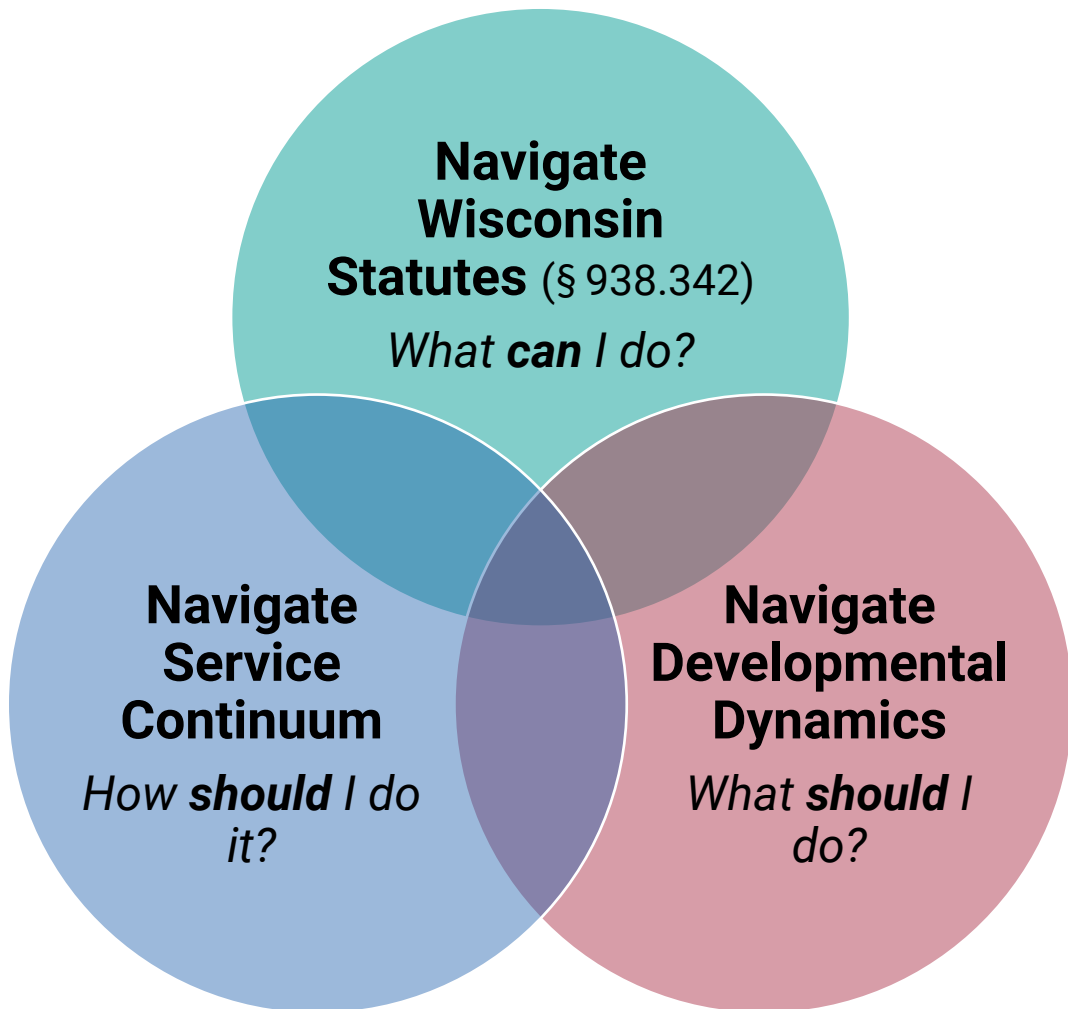
# Timeline with Basic Additions



# Where YJ Fits into Timeline



# Evidence-Informed Decision-Making



## Important YJ System Considerations:

- Cannot address academic concerns
- Not appropriate for young children
- Involvement not necessary to access mental health services
- Formal involvement has “social cost”



# Strategies for Tailoring Conditions

- Conditions should be **active, specific, enforceable**, and **clearly understood**.
  - More is not always better!
- **Frame conditions positively and use simple language** that is easy to understand.
- **Success requires buy-in**; drafting conditions should be a collaborative process.

Check out the [Wisconsin Tailored Dispositional Orders Project](#) page for more info.



# Katie's Case Plan Goals

1. Learn to stop and think about the consequences of my behavior to get along with my mother.
2. Learn the connection between my thoughts about mom's authority and violent behaviors.
3. Develop appropriate consequences by parents.



## BROAD & UNCLEAR COURT CONDITIONS

- Shall abide by parental house rules
- Parent/Guardian shall ensure technology is used responsibly
- Attend school daily
- Follow all school rules and expectations
- Shall achieve academic success
- Comply with urine testing upon request
- Refrain from violent behavior toward any person and/or object in any event whether at school, home, treatment, or in the community.
- Refrain from use of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs
- Cooperate with all mental health professionals and any recommendations.



## Katie's Case Plan Goals

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## TAILORED COURT CONDITIONS

**Follow all laws, statutes, and ordinances.** Notify your case manager of any police contact within 48 hours.

**Participate in developing a case plan that will help support your success.** This may require participating in assessments, treatment, programming, and alcohol and/or drug testing.

**Meet with your case manager regularly.** Meet at least monthly, or as directed by your case plan.





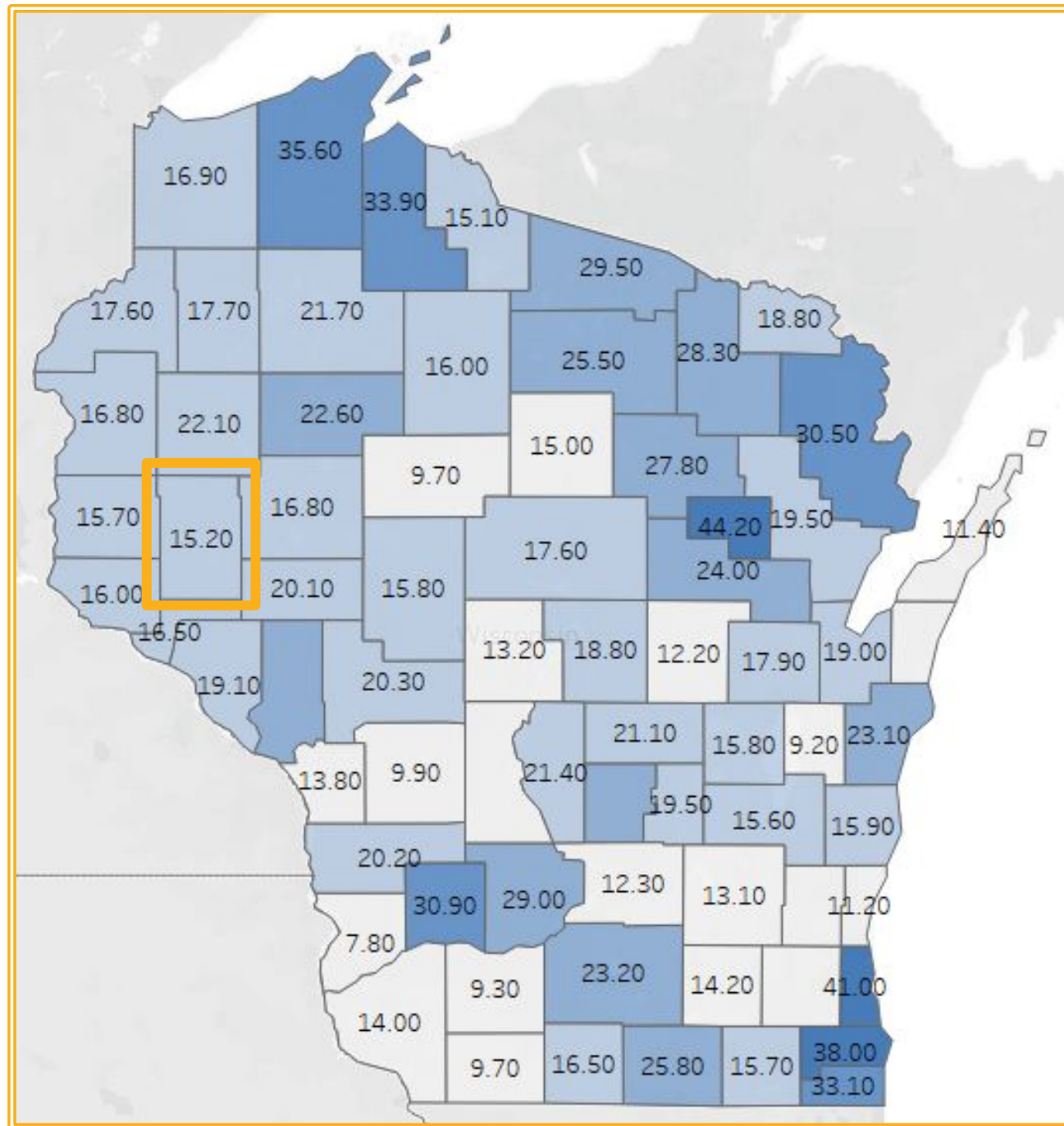
## 2019-2022 JIPS Truancy Referrals by Youth Age

■ 4-5 Years ■ 6-9 Years ■ 10-13 Years ■ 14-17 Years



# 2021-22 Absence Rate

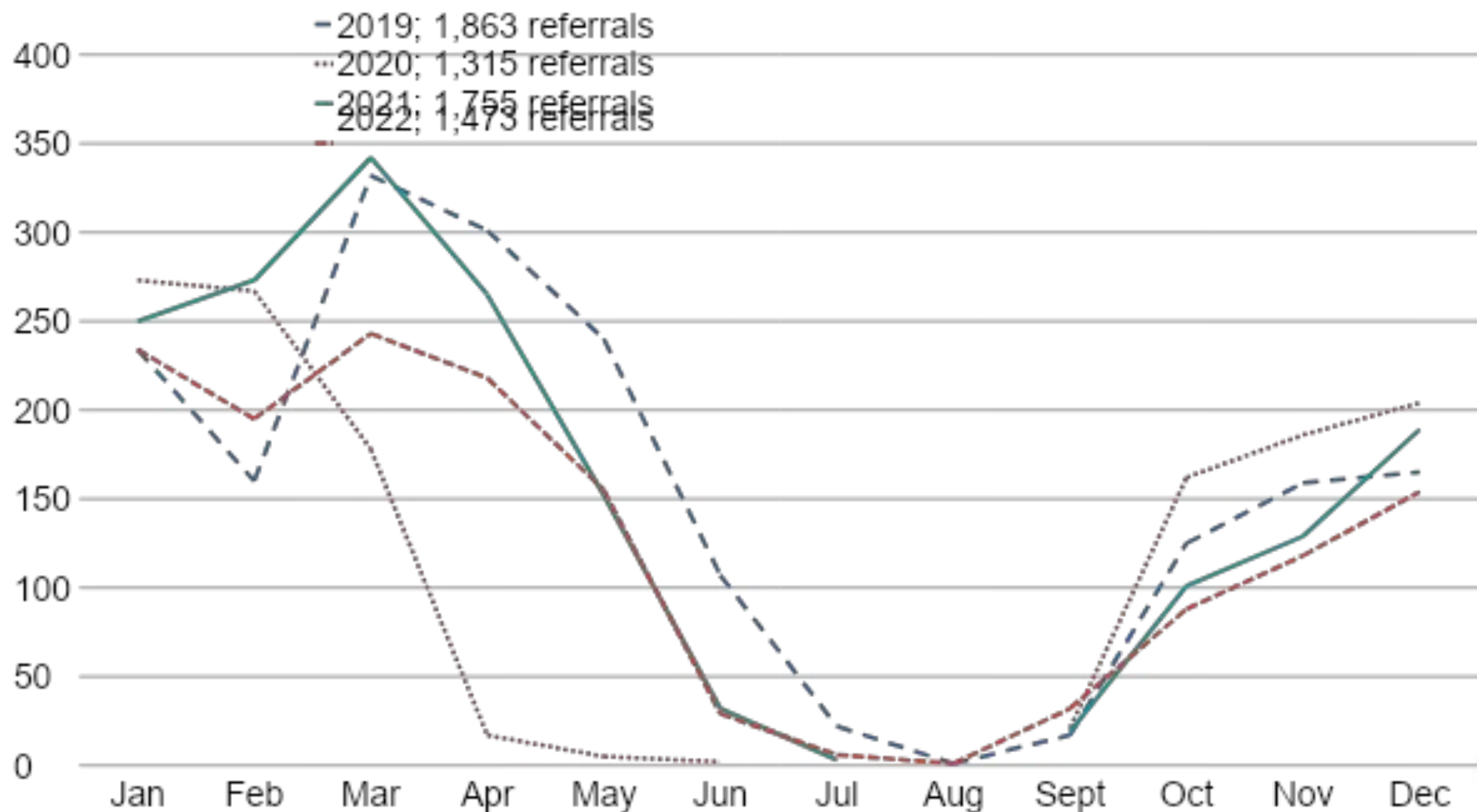
Percentage of students enrolled in county who were chronically absent (Sept 2021-June 2022)



Data Source: DPI WISEdash Portal



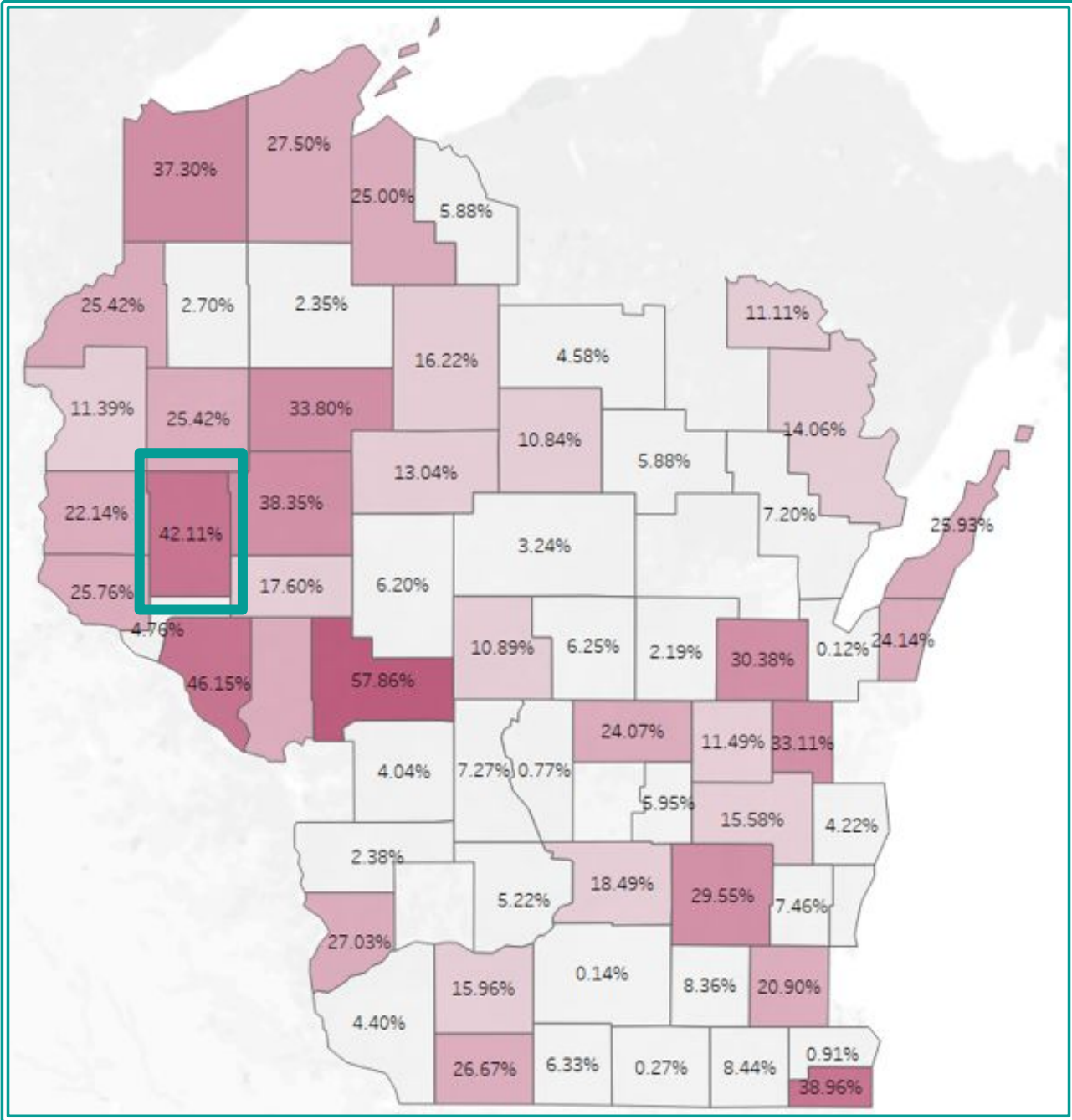
## 2019-2022 Truancy Referrals



# Truancy Referrals as Proportion of all YJ Referrals - 2022

Percentage of all county received YJ referrals for JIPS Truancy (Jan. 2022 – Dec. 2022)

Data Source: eWiSACWIS





# Strategies for Success

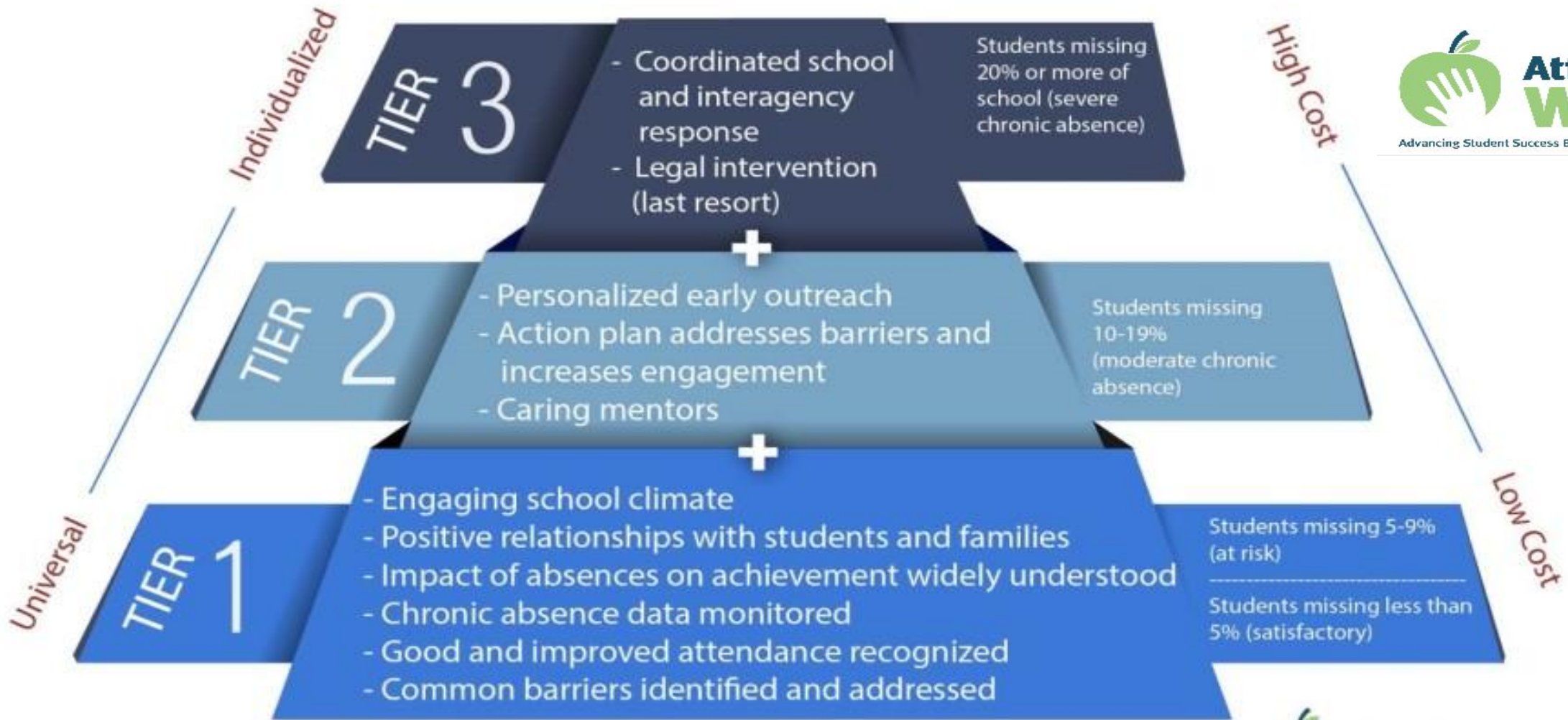


# Positive Conditions for Learning



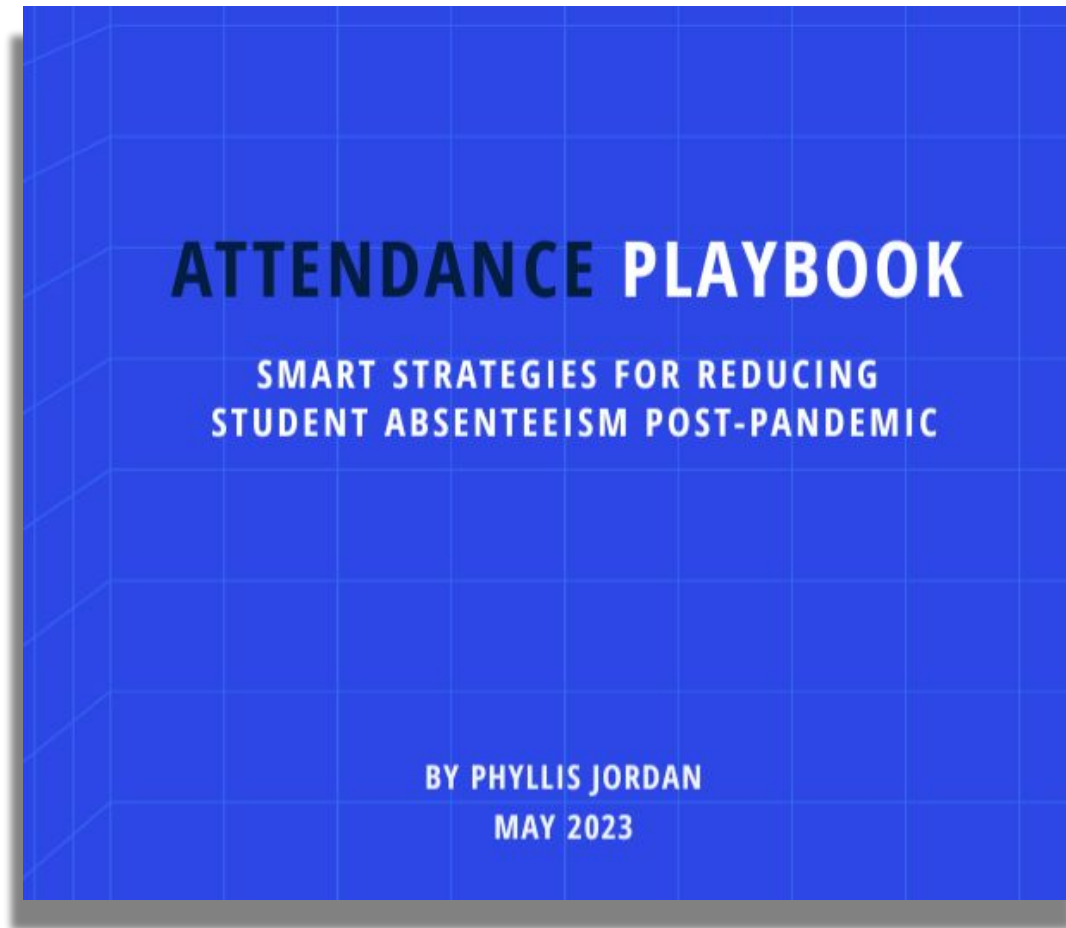


# A Continuum of Supports





# Future Ed and Attendance Works



# Healthy Student Strategies



- School nurses & school-based health centers
  - Asthma programs, dental programs
- Healthy school buildings (physical aspects)
- Comprehensive School Mental Health Systems
- More frequent supervised recess



# Identify and Support Mental Health Challenges



- Partner with the family and mental health team
- Recognize achievable goals and progress
- Consider laws related to Special Education
- Understand when an evaluation for a disability and plan are required



# Promote Family Engagement



- Alerting parents to how many days their children had missed was most effective
- General messaging campaigns
- More direct, personalized outreach to families, through letters or texts
- Nudging - text messages
- Targeted and proactive Home visits

# Promote Student Belonging

- Student-teacher and peer relationships
- Relevant, and culturally relevant, instruction
- Welcoming and community-building practices
  - Positive greetings at the door, morning meetings, circle discussions
- Youth engagement and leadership opportunities



# Provide Mentors and Tutors



- **Mentors and tutors**
  - School staff
  - Community volunteers
  - Older peers
- **Check & Connect Program**
- **Youth Advocates**



# Basic Needs Connections

- Free meals for all
- Improved transportation
  - Walking School Bus
- Address housing and reduce student mobility
- Create [resource maps](#)



# System Improvements

- Restorative Discipline Practices
- Tracking data and early intervention
- Provide summer learning and afterschool programming
- [Address truancy through IEP team process](#)
- Shift away from punitive responses to truancy





# Consider Your Data

- What are the reasons students frequently miss school?
- What interventions do we offer to students who are habitually absent?
- Do our interventions address the reasons students regularly miss school?
- When students are referred for habitual truancy to a court or YJ/CPS:
  - *Does their attendance improve?*
  - *Does their sense of school belonging and engagement improve?*
  - *Do they ultimately graduate at a higher rate than those students who have struggles with attendance but are not referred?*
  - *Do we know the type of students for whom referrals are effective? Or which groups of students have improved outcomes?*

# Habitual Truancy Letters to Families



## Example Habitual Truancy Letter per [118.16\(2\)\(cg\)](#)

Dear Parent/Guardian & Student:

Date

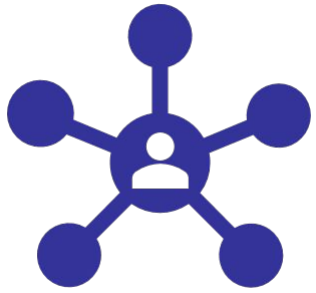
We would love to connect with you. We notice that **[student]** has missed **X** number of partial or whole days of school this semester unexcused. We wish the best for your student and want them to reach their goals. We are inviting you to meet with us, so we can hear more about the challenges related to attendance and so we can problem-solve together.

**Attendance Matters!** By 9th grade, regular and high attendance gives us a better idea of who will graduate than 8th grade test scores. Students who miss just one or two days of school each month can fall seriously behind.

\*Read more about the research on the [Attendance Works Seminal Research website](#).



# Reminders for Tier 3 Interventions



## Match services to identified needs

- *More is not always more!*
- *Harsh sanctions are more likely to **increase** the incidence of truancy*



## YJ system involvement is a last resort

- *Consider “social cost” of formal system involvement*
- *YJ system not designed to address academic needs or needs of young children*



# Collaboration is Key



## Shared Understanding, Shared Vision, Shared Responsibility

- **Prioritize Collaboration:** meet regularly with other systems
- **Proactive Planning:** talk about approaches, goals, and best practices
- **Regular Consultation:** learn from others in community, the state, and country





# Wisconsin Statutes: **Truancy Committees**



# 118.162 Truancy Committee

**Committee convenes at least once every four years with representatives from:**



- Each school district
- Each tribal school
- Office of the DA
- Sheriff's department
- Local law enforcement
- Circuit court
- Social services (including juvenile court intake unit)
- Parent of a pupil enrolled in private school
- Parent of pupil enrolled in public school
- Parent of pupil in home-base private ed program
- Parent of pupil enrolled in tribal school

# 118.162 Truancy Plan

- Write a report describing factors that contribute to truancy
- Each school board shall adopt a truancy plan (with specific elements)
- At least once every 2 years, school boards review and, if necessary, revise the plan.









# Key Messages

- Attendance improvement starts with improvements to policy and practice at the systems level
- Collaboration is essential – with students, families, school staff, and community partners
- Effective solutions draw on a continuum of supports that are matched to identified needs
- Use a trauma sensitive, student-centered, non-punitive approach

# Pause and Reflect

- What was new information?
- What resonates with your thinking?
- What is one step you can take towards improvement in your work?
- Are there any strategies that have worked for your community that were not shared today?





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# Contacts

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## **Julie Incitti**

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[julie.incitti@dpi.wi.gov](mailto:julie.incitti@dpi.wi.gov)



# Helpful Resources

- [Attendance Playbook Future Ed & Attendance Works](#)
- [DCF Youth Justice Issue Brief #3: Truancy](#)
- [Answers to Frequently Asked Compulsory School Attendance Questions](#)
- [When Mental Health Challenges Contribute to Truancy](#)
- [Rethinking Juvenile Justice in Schools \(CSG Justice Center\)](#)
- [What Works Wisconsin Truancy Fact Sheet](#)
- [Collecting Data and Sharing Information to Improve School-Justice Partnerships](#)
- [Key Ingredients for Systemic Change \(Attendance Works\)](#)
- [School and District Assessments \(Attendance Works\)](#)

