

The Healthy Mentality

A mental health newsletter courtesy
of North Central West Virginia Community Action

September 2017

Attendance Awareness Month

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September is Attendance Awareness Month. Attendance to school, even in the preschool years is important. According to Attendance Works, a national and state initiative that promotes awareness of the importance of school attendance in achieving academic success, “Too many absences—excused or unexcused—can keep students from succeeding in school and in life.” Attendance Works identify that a child missing 10% of the school year—that’s 18 missed days or 2 days a month—can significantly effect a child’s success.

Sometimes due to illness, family schedules or unplanned events, absences happen. Talk to your child’s teacher on how you can continue the learning process when your child misses school. Your teacher will be able to identify topics discussed in the classroom or books read, that will help your little one keep the course for positive learning.

If you are finding that your little one is struggling with attendance to school, please contact your teacher, Family Community Engagement staff or myself, Fe Whoolery, to identify how we can support.

The information below is used with permission of Attendance Works.

ATTENDANCE in the early grades

Many of our youngest students miss 10 percent of the school year—about 18 days a year or just two days every month. Chronic absenteeism in kindergarten, and even preK, can predict lower test scores, poor attendance and retention in later grades, especially if the problem persists for more than a year. Do you know how many young children are chronically absent in your school or community?



Who Is Affected

Kindergarten and 1st grade classes often have absenteeism rates as high as those in high school. Many of these absences are excused, but they still add up to lost time in the classroom.

1 in 10 kids

in kindergarten and 1st grade are chronically absent. In some schools, it's as high as 1 in 4.¹



2 in 10
low-income kids
miss too much
school. They're also
more likely to suffer
academically.²



2.5 in 10
homeless kids
are chronically
absent.²



4 in 10
transient kids
miss too much
school when
families move.²



Why It Matters

If children don't show up for school regularly, they miss out on fundamental reading and math skills and the chance to build a habit of good attendance that will carry them into college and careers.

Preliminary data from a California study found that children who were chronically absent in kindergarten and 1st grade were far less likely to read proficiently at the end of 3rd grade.

Who Can Read on Grade Level After 3rd Grade?³



What We Can Do



Engage Families

Many parents and students don't realize how quickly early absences can add up to academic trouble. Community members and teachers can educate families and build a culture of attendance through early outreach, incentives and attention to data.



Fix Transportation

The lack of a reliable car, or simply missing the school bus, can mean some students don't make it to class. Schools, transit agencies and community partners can organize car pools, supply bus passes or find other ways to get kids to school.



Address Health Needs

Health concerns, particularly asthma and dental problems, are among the leading reasons students miss school in the early grades. Schools and medical professionals can work together to give children and families health care and advice.



Track the Right Data

Schools too often overlook chronic absence because they track average attendance or unexcused absences, not how many kids miss too many days for any reason. Attendance Works has free data-tracking tools.

These are a few steps that communities and schools can take. How do you think you can help?

¹ Chang, Hedy; Romero, Marijose. Present, Engaged and Accounted For: The Critical Importance of Addressing Chronic Absence in the Early Grades, National Center for Children in Poverty, NY: NY, September 2008.
² Chronic Absence in Utah, Utah Education Policy Center at the University of Utah, 2012.

³ Attendance in Early Elementary Grades: Association with Student Characteristics, School Readiness and Third Grade Outcomes, Applied Survey Research, May 2011.

National Suicide Prevention Week

September 10-16 was National Suicide Prevention Week. According to NAMI, "Suicidal thoughts can affect anyone regardless of age, gender or background." Often times, suicidal thoughts can leave us feeling scared, alone and at a loss for what to do. If you or someone you know may be struggling with with overwhelming situations or thoughts, the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline provides free and confidential emotional support to people in emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.



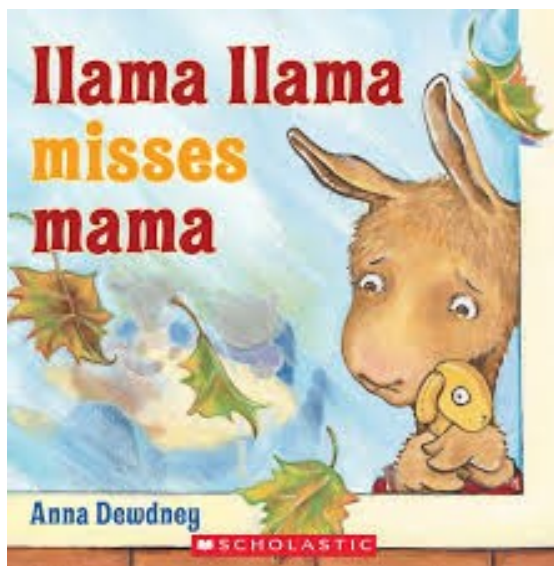
The following is guidance from the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline when contacting them.

"When you dial [1-800-273-TALK](tel:1-800-273-TALK) (8255), you are calling the crisis center in the Lifeline network closest to your location. After you call, you will hear a message saying you have reached the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. You will hear hold music while your call is being routed. You will be helped by a skilled, trained crisis worker who will listen to your problems and will tell you about mental health services in your area. Your call is confidential and free."

Please visit <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/> for more information.

Reading is FundaMENTAL:

Books can be a great way to connect with your child while learning valuable life skills. This month's suggested book is: **Llama Llama Misses Mama** By Anna Dewdney



The transition from spending days with mama to attending school can be a difficult and an emotional experience for both the caregiver and child. Llama Llama Misses Mama by Anna Dewdney share the experience of Llama Llama's first day of school. He struggles with saying goodbye to his mother but by the end of the day, Llama Llama has had new experiences and has made friends. This book may be helpful if your little one is struggling with the transition from home to school. Please see http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/booknook/bn_llama.pdf for information and activities that you can do with your little one or classroom supporting a positive transition from home to school.

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The information provided in this newsletter is for educational purposes and is not intended to replace discussions with your healthcare provider.