SAC’s Bridges to School program (formerly Early Truancy Intervention) provides home-based support services to Jackson County families with elementary school-aged children, grades K-5, who have been referred by their elementary school for absenteeism. To assist, staff provide families with support services that include a comprehensive assessment, intervention plan, in-home parenting education using evidence-based curriculum, case management, advocacy, resource connections, and weekly attendance monitoring. Our goal is to identify and overcome barriers to regular school attendance.

WHO

Schools can refer students who have had 10 or more unexcused absences or 15 or more absences (excused, unexcused, or disciplinary) when they have not responded to the school’s documented efforts to intervene. Historically, B2S has been most effective with families who are impacted by poverty; have one or more family members with a chronic disease or illness; and have unmet mental and behavioral health needs. B2S appears to be least effective for students who are referred for tardiness and does not currently accept referrals for chronic tardiness. B2S accepts referrals from Jackson County schools. We are not accepting cases when the family has an open Child Protective Services case.

WHAT

To assist, B2S provides families with support services that include a comprehensive family needs assessment, the development of an Attendance Intervention Plan, the monitoring of family progress towards intervention goals, linking referred families to existing community resources and programs, in-home parenting education using the Nurturing Parenting curriculum, case management, advocacy to ensure families have access to needed supports and services and the monitoring of student school attendance.

B2S is a voluntary program that requires at least one parent/guardian to participate. B2S staff will make three attempts to engage the family and provide intervention services.

LEARN MORE

http://www.studentadvocacycenter.org/programs/b2s
Chronic absences in kindergarten have an immediate impact on performance, and the long-term consequences for children in poverty are most significant (Chang and Romero, 2008). The National Center for Children in Poverty found that chronic absence in kindergarten is associated with lower academic performance in first grade. Among poor children, chronic absences in kindergarten predicts the lowest levels of educational achievement at the end of fifth grade. Going to school regularly in the early years is especially critical for children from families living in poverty who are less likely to have the resources to make up for lost time in the classroom.

It’s so important for young learners to develop good habits as soon as possible. Studies suggest that chronic absence as early as kindergarten is predictive of chronic absence in later grades (The Baltimore City Student Attendance Work Group, 2010).

Studies have found that excessive absences in the early grades are correlated with future risk-taking behaviors, such as tobacco, alcohol, and drug use, and involvement with the criminal justice system (John W. Gardner Center, 2010; Gottfried, 2010; Sundius & Farneth, 2008b; Smink & Reimer, 2005).

And when chronic absenteeism is widespread, it impacts students who are not absent, as teachers are required to either slow down instruction for the entire class to help absent students catch up or maintain their normal pace, frustrating achievement for those chronically absent students (Chang & Jordan, 2010; Education Commission of the States, 2009; Balfanz et al., 2008; Nauer et al., 2008; Sundius & Farneth, 2008b).

History of B2S

B2S, which became a SAC program in 2015, has been successfully tackling this social problem since 2006 in Jackson. Originally called the Early Truancy Intervention, B2S was designed in Jackson by court, district and school staff. It does what a wide variety of researchers recommend, including personalized early outreach, engaging students and parents, addressing barriers to attendance, focusing on collaboration, monitoring attendance, and recognizing good attendance. Historically, 75-85% of students have improved attendance. We are thankful for our funders, including the Children’s Trust Fund and the Jackson Community Foundation.