



FACT SHEET

Attorney General Kamala D. Harris has issued her third annual statewide report on elementary school truancy & chronic absence in California, *In School + On Track 2015*. The report finds that California still faces an attendance crisis: **230,000 California elementary school students are chronically absent (missing 10% or more of the school year) & more than 1 in 5 are truant.**

California is taking notice that improving elementary school attendance is a critical piece of a smart, cost-effective approach to economic development, public health & public safety.

The facts are clear: when students are chronically absent from elementary school, they fall behind academically, are less likely to graduate from high school, & are more likely to be unemployed, on public assistance, or victims or perpetrators of crime.

Factoring in the costs of incarceration, lost economic productivity, and tax revenues, **California loses over \$46 billion/year due to high school dropouts.**



This trajectory is far from inevitable; it is a solvable problem.

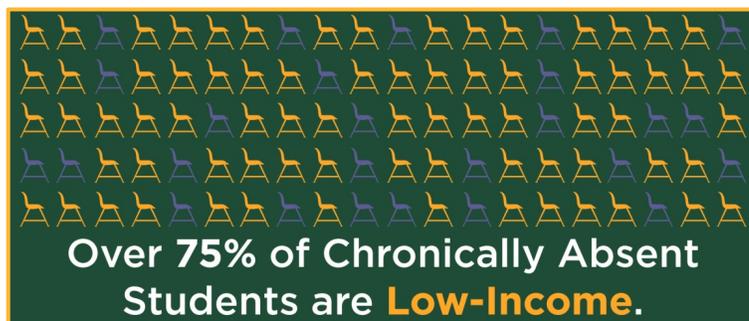
Attorney General Harris releases this annual report to track changes in statewide attendance rates, highlight the importance of elementary school attendance, promote effective practices for reducing absences & call state leaders to action.

Attendance Gaps in Early Grades & for At-Risk Children

According to the report, **absences are particularly stark in the earliest grades:**

- Nearly 15% of kindergarteners are chronically absent & the kindergarten truancy rate is near 30%.
- Racial disparities are alarming in these early grades: in 2015, chronic absence rates for Native American & African American students were almost 30% in kindergarten.
- These gaps have long-term repercussions: 83% of kids who are chronically absent in kindergarten & 1st grade won't read proficiently in 3rd grade & will therefore be 4 times more likely to drop out of high school.

Racial & income disparities persist throughout elementary school:



- Close to 20% of African American & Native American students are chronically absent.
- Over 75% of the elementary school students who are chronically absent are low-income.
 - African American elementary school students are 4 times more likely to be suspended than white students.
 - Overall, in 2015 CA elementary school students missed an estimated 110,000 days of school due to suspensions alone.

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Signs of Progress

In School + On Track 2015 outlines significant progress made in the past year in increasing awareness of the importance of attendance within school districts, using Local Control and Accountability Plans (LCAPs) to set clear goals to reduce truancy and chronic absenteeism, tracking attendance year over year, and investing in discipline policies that reduce time away from the classroom:

- Over 95% of districts reported that they have made changes to policies & programs to improve attendance, or plan to do so in 2015-2016.
- More than 60% of districts cited increased awareness as a reason for changes in their attendance programs.
- There has been a 10% increase in districts collecting and monitoring attendance data longitudinally (year over year) since last year's report (from 72% to 82%).
- For the past 2 years, 25% of districts each year have changed discipline policies so that students miss less time in school due to suspensions.



Despite progress at the individual district level in monitoring and tracking attendance, the report points out that California still lacks a statewide longitudinal system for tracking student attendance and chronic absence.

Background from Previous Reports

Attorney General Harris' 2013 *In School + On Track* (<https://oag.ca.gov/truancy/2013>) report contained the first statewide statistics on California's elementary school truancy crisis & directly linked public education and public safety. Annually, dropouts cost California taxpayers an estimated \$46.4 billion in incarceration, lost productivity & lost taxes.

The 2014 *In School + On Track* report (<https://oag.ca.gov/truancy/2014>) released updated data & looked specifically at gaps in state infrastructure for collecting attendance information & at disparities in student attendance & discipline by race, income, & other subgroups such as foster youth.