

2014-15 PSESD Early Learning Self-Assessment: Average Daily Attendance ¹ - Staff Input

- What is current level of staff knowledge about the 90% Average Daily Attendance minimum requirement? What training or supports are needed to help staff meet that requirement?

Strengths

- **PSESD Staff/Center Director Awareness of 90% Average Daily Attendance (ADA) minimum requirement**
 - 91% of 42 center leaders ($n=38$) are aware that the PSESD Early Learning Program adopted 90% as the minimum average daily attendance in the 2014-15 school year.
 - 79% of 67 PSESD EL staff ($n=53$) are aware of the minimum 90% ADA requirement.
- **Efforts to promote attendance**
 - Site staff and leaders shared several examples of how they promote attendance:
 - Talking with parents at the beginning of the school year about the importance of regular attendance.
 - Although they did not clearly state that they have shared this rationale with parents, a number of site staff and center leaders observed that 90% is a reasonable expectation for preschool attendance given their understanding that there is a requirement for 95% attendance in kindergarten.
 - Talking with parents about the importance of contacting staff when their child is absent.
 - Calling families when their child is absent to express your concern about the absence and to emphasize the importance of regular attendance, and to offer support.
 - Sharing with parents about how to keep their child healthy, including hand washing, how to cough into your arm, when to keep a child at home and when to send them to school.

Challenges

- **Site Staff Awareness of 90% Average Daily Attendance (ADA) minimum requirement**
 - 34% of the 219 site staff ($n=74$) are not aware that the PSESD Early Learning Program adopted 90% as the minimum average daily attendance in 2014-15. An additional 3% ($n=6$) were not sure if they are aware of the requirement.
- **Site staff and Center Leaders cited several barriers to meeting minimum ADA requirement:**
 - There are many different needs for many families that affect attendance including lack of transportation, illness in the family, homelessness, work hours, lack of laundry money, separated parents, family transitions, and unknown moves or changes in telephone access that have made it difficult for site staff to figure out whether and when children might come back.
 - Attendance may not be a priority for parents. Some staff noted that some parents may not have adopted the mindset that attendance is important for their child's success—which some staff noted seems to be a greater challenge for those parents with children younger than 4 years old who may not be thinking of kindergarten yet.

¹ Data sources: Surveys from 264 site staff, 50 center director surveys, 81 PSESD Early Learning Staff, and 15 focus groups with 115 site staff and center leaders. Total N's/number of respondents for surveys may vary because not everyone answered all survey questions.

Suggestions for Improvement

- **Site staff and center leaders, regardless of level of awareness of the minimum 90% ADA requirement, indicated what support sites would find helpful in meeting the requirement:**

	Site Staff (n=219)	Center Leaders (n=42)
Group training to learn about common attendance & effective strategies	32%	34%
Individual coaching to identify attendance barriers and strategies at my site	16%	38%
Informational resources that explain the importance of attendance in early learning programs in family-friendly ways	44%	46%
Other supports	10%	12%

- **Site staff and leaders and PSESD staff** suggested the following support to help sites meet the minimum Average Daily Attendance requirement:
 - Reinstatement of transportation funds or provide transportation.
 - Include efforts to work with districts to provide transportation.
 - Reconsider 90% as a target or goal instead of minimum, especially considering the population of families served.
 - Align new minimum ADA of 90% with 85% requirement in ChildPlus. A number of site staff and leaders noted the discrepancy between the program requirement and ChildPlus. They recommended that the discrepancy be addressed, preferably towards the 85% in ChildPlus.
 - Provide reminders to families in different languages and methods (e.g., center phone number reminders; emails) that emphasize importance of attendance.
 - Have clear and firm attendance policy and procedure for exiting children that do not meet attendance requirements when it is due to choice and not barriers. (It was observed that some families choose not to have their child attend regularly.)
 - The current attendance policy allows for dozens of absences and states that we offer an opportunity to withdraw. This vague and weak attendance policy creates a barrier for maintaining the 90% attendance requirement.
 - Institute an attendance commitment to be signed by parents.
 - Define what absence means. Provide clear, across-the-board guidelines about what are considered absences.
 - For example: For centers with 2.5 day models, what does absence mean versus for home-based programs versus for full day programs versus for a program that serves college students following campus schedules?
 - Explore with sites the challenges they face with attendance, the steps they already take, and consider the feasibility of other steps to support the 90% minimum.
 - Train staff on minimum requirements and strategies to help address barriers for families.
 - **PSESD staff** called out the need for training on what the 90% requirement means for PSESD EL staff work, including cross-service area training on how to access data to support work with staff/parents to address chronic absence, links to school readiness and healthy habits, etc.
 - Consider not requiring a corrective action plan if a site demonstrates that it has taken all possible steps to ensure strong attendance.
 - Provide means for center directors to track attendance more easily.