

The Parent Perspective: What Texas Families Reveal About Attendance, Absences, and Engagement

Across Texas, families are navigating complex dynamics when it comes to school attendance—and their perspectives offer critical insights for district leaders. A recent statewide survey of over 200 parents sheds light on the challenges families face and the opportunities for districts to improve engagement, trust, and attendance.

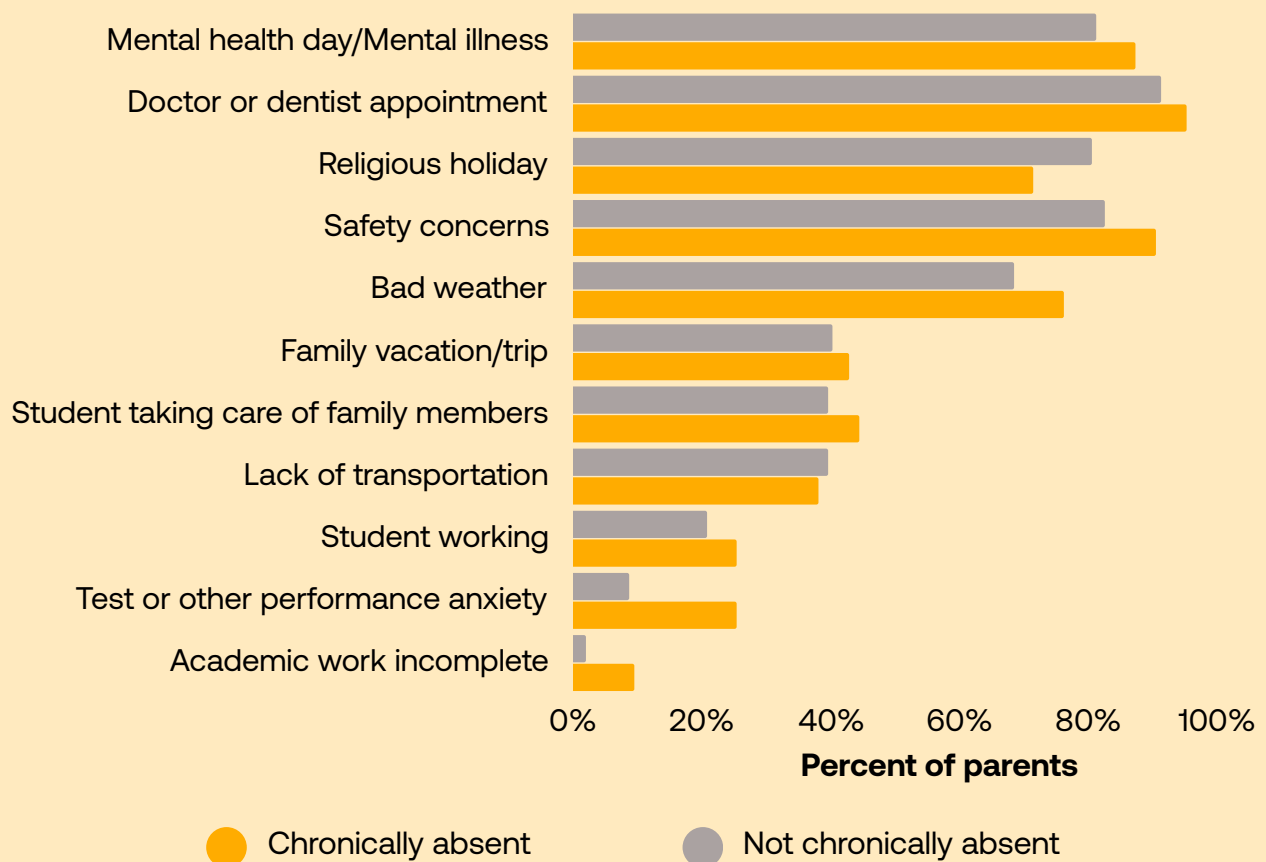


Families have misconceptions about what “good” attendance looks like

Parents of chronically absent students think it’s acceptable to miss twice as much school as parents of students who aren’t chronically absent (2.6 compared to 1.3 days per month). Misconceptions like this can contribute to higher rates of absenteeism, with parents thinking that their child’s absences are “normal.” This is exacerbated by the fact that many parents underestimate how much school their student is actually missing.

Furthermore, chronically absent students miss school for more varied reasons—and their families view more reasons as acceptable. These families are significantly more likely to say it’s okay to miss school for mental health, safety concerns, or test anxiety, among other reasons. And, they are more likely to actually report absences for reasons like bad weather, vacations, and mental health.

Acceptability of different absence reasons



Takeaway: Awareness matters. Helping families understand attendance patterns and acceptable reasons for absences is a powerful first step to addressing absenteeism.

Families need more information about student attendance

Nearly **1 in 3 families (30.6%)** say they haven't received any attendance information about their student recently. This number drops sharply among families with chronically absent students—suggesting they often receive more information—but **40.2% of families without a chronically absent student are receiving no information about attendance**. Many of these students are missing school, just at lower than chronic rates. This could be a missed opportunity to prevent them from becoming chronically absent or to reinforce strong attendance.

Among families who have received information, digital channels dominate. Many families rely on a parent portal or app for information (39%), while others report receiving robocalls, automated texts, and emails. Fewer opportunities to engage directly with staff could make it more difficult for families to get the support they need to address attendance challenges.

Takeaway: Not all families are getting attendance information. Proactive, multi-channel communication is key to early intervention.

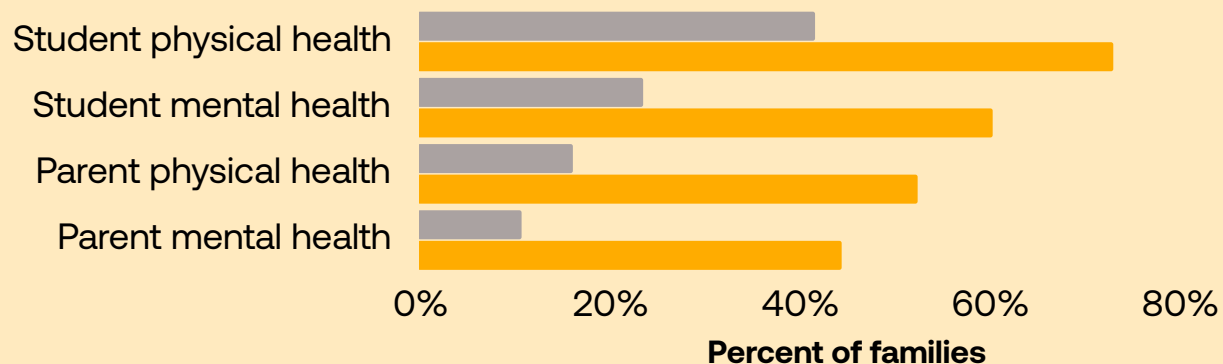
Barriers Are Higher—and Pile Up Faster—for Families of Chronically Absent Students

Families with no chronically absent students report an average of **two** barriers to attendance. Families of chronically absent students? **Six**. These include everything from student mental health to parents' physical health to a lack of clean clothes.

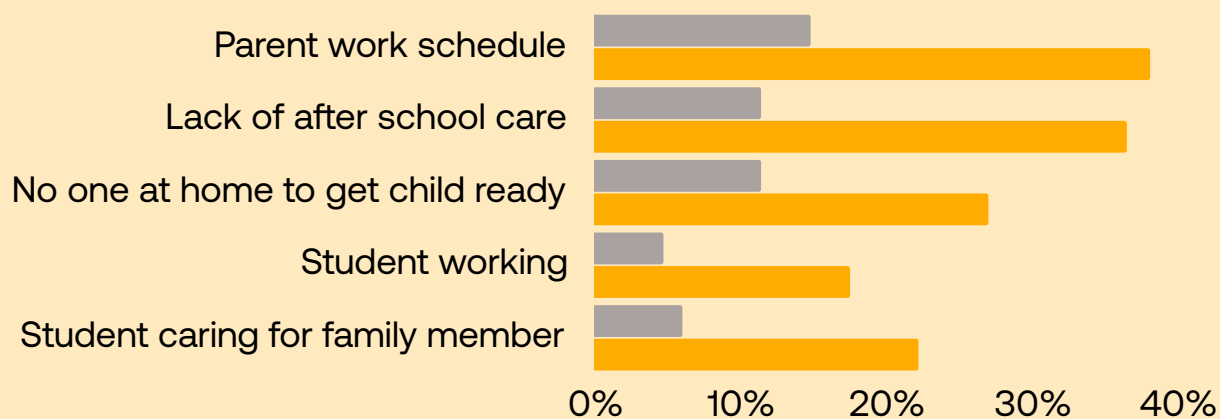
Takeaway: Attendance challenges aren't limited to the student: addressing chronic absenteeism means supporting the whole family.

Commonly Reported Attendance Barriers

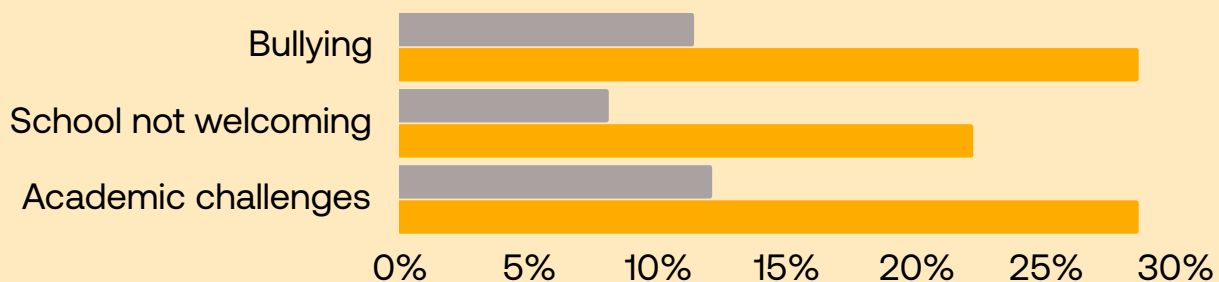
Health Barriers



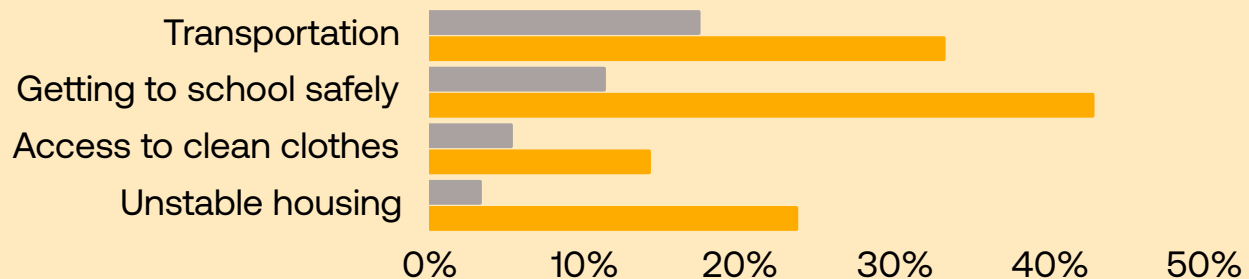
Scheduling Barriers



School Environment & Academic Barriers



Systemic Barriers



Chronically absent



Not chronically absent

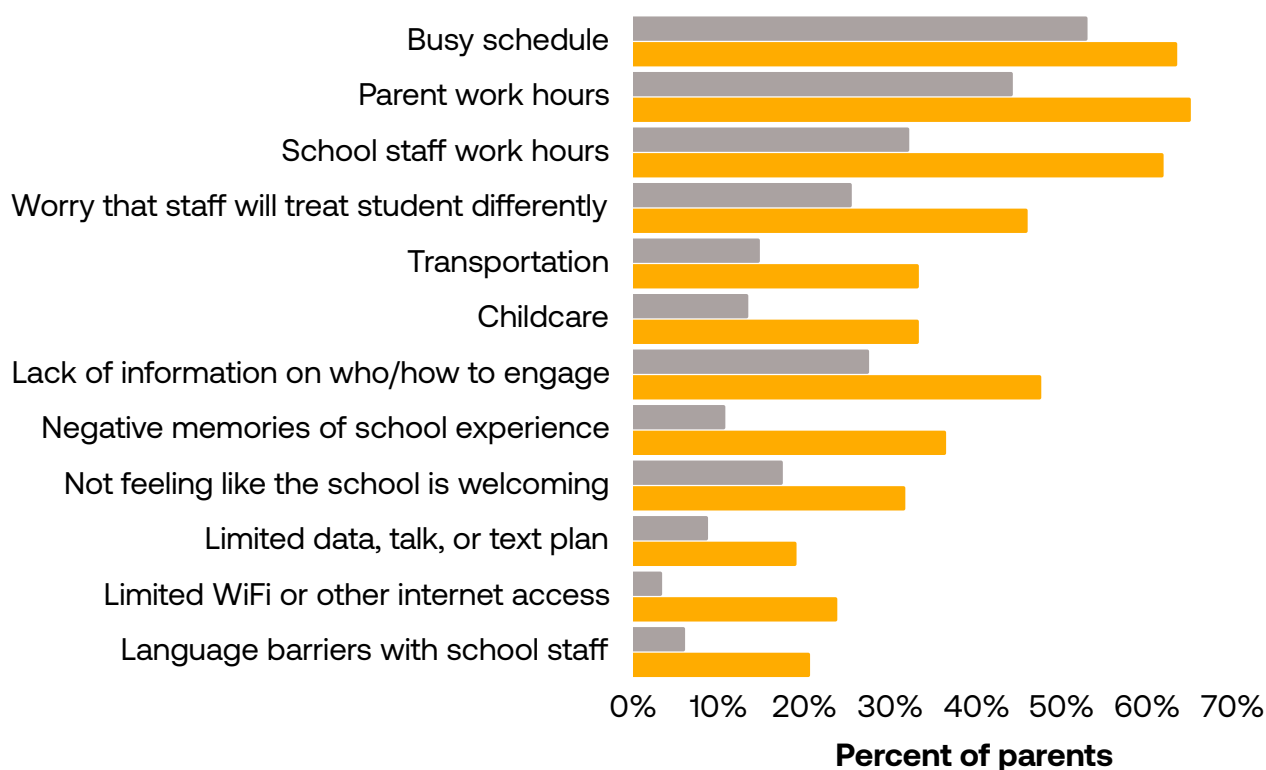
Students and their families are disconnected from their schools

Families of chronically absent students are more likely to feel their child is overwhelmed or disconnected from school, both academically and socially—and less likely to believe the school is welcoming, safe, or wants to hear from them.

Takeaway: Trust and belonging are foundational. Schools must build relationships with families—especially those who feel left out or unheard.

Time – the greatest barrier to engaging families

Time and availability were by far the biggest challenges for parents when it came to engaging with their child's school. But chronically absent families were also more likely to cite fear of judgment, lack of information, and past trauma with school.



Takeaway: Schools must meet families where they are—with flexible, judgment-free options for engagement.

Percentage of families who agreed with each statement

Statement	Not chronically absent	Chronically absent
Academics		
My student often struggles with learning the topics covered in class.	11.41%	28.57%
My student learns more from their job or other real world experiences than they do from school.	12.08%	31.75%
What my student learns in school is not relevant for their future.	6.71%	12.70%
As long as my student completes their work, it's ok for them to miss school.	9.40%	25.40%
My student is more focused when learning at home.	14.09%	26.98%
Social Interactions		
My student has positive social interactions when they're at school.	80.54%	74.60%
My student has strong peer relationships at school.	79.87%	80.95%
School Staff		
There are people who care or notice when my student isn't in school.	79.87%	73.02%
I trust the staff at my student's school	76.51%	69.84%
Staff at the school are able to help me with my student's attendance.	65.77%	65.08%
I know how to get in touch with someone at the school to discuss attendance.	89.26%	84.13%
My student's school wants to hear from parents like me.	67.11%	61.90%
I often block or screen calls from my student's school.	4.03%	14.29%
School staff are too busy to talk to me about my student's attendance.	12.75%	19.05%
Attendance Policies		
I am familiar with the school's attendance policies.	91.28%	85.71%
It is my responsibility to make sure my student is in school every day.	94.63%	93.65%
Other		
My student is motivated to go to school.	83.22%	79.37%
My student is easily overwhelmed by being at school in-person.	10.74%	31.75%
My student's school is able to keep them physically safe while they are in school.	86.58%	76.19%

Chronic absenteeism may be an early indicator of potential disenrollment

While **only 20.8%** of all families say they **plan to use private school vouchers**, interest jumps to **31.2% among families** with a **chronically absent student**. For these families, school disengagement may already be a factor.

Takeaway: Chronic absenteeism isn't just a student-level issue—it's a signal of family-level disconnection. Intervening early could make the difference in keeping students enrolled in public schools.

The Opportunity for District Leaders

This data offers a roadmap. Families—especially those with chronically absent students—are open to engagement, but face real challenges. They need trusted communication, flexible solutions, and a school environment that feels safe, relevant, and welcoming.

Districts that proactively invest in attendance communication and family engagement strategies won't just reduce chronic absenteeism—they'll rebuild trust and strengthen their community.

EveryDay Labs can help.

Methods

In late February 2025, EveryDay Labs surveyed 216 parents of Texas public school students about attendance. These parents were recruited from the general public, and were not necessarily affiliated with a district working with EveryDay Labs.



info@everydaylabs.com

www.everydaylabs.com

1 650 641 9485
