



# Family Service Collaboratives

*Working together to build better lives for children and families.*

**DATE:** October 18, 2016  
**TO:** Health Care Providers  
**FROM:** Northern St. Louis County School Attendance Work Group, an extension of the Family Service Collaborative: Aimee Love (Social Worker), Angela Denny (Social Worker), Angie Williams (Principal), Brandi Webb (Human Services), Brian Hake (Principal), Carrie McDonald (Principal), Cindy Walker (Probation), Gayle Goff (County), Jennifer Jerulle (Collaborative Director), John Vukmanich (Principal), Kasey Troumbly (Ross Resources), Kelly Engman (Principal), Lisa Perkovich (Principal), Lori Hutchins, Lowana Greensky (Indian Ed. Director), Michael Johnson (Principal), Michelle Yurczyk, Naomi Jackson (Ross Resources), Renee Loeffler (Probation) and  
**RE: Help Us Promote School Attendance**

Attending school regularly is essential to students gaining the academic and social skills they need to succeed. Starting as early as preschool chronic absence—missing 10 percent of the academic year or 18 days—can lead a child to be unable to read proficiently, struggle with coursework, and on the track to dropping out of high school.

*“Chronic absence is especially problematic among students living in poverty.”*

Chronic absence is especially problematic among students living in poverty who are most likely to have poor attendance over multiple years and least likely to have the resources to make up for the lost time. About half of the students in northern St. Louis County live in a household that is at or below 185% of the poverty threshold. The good news is chronic absence can be significantly reduced when schools, families and community partners work together.

*“Poor physical, dental, and mental health are leading reasons students miss too much school.”*

Health providers are uniquely positioned to address chronic absence because of your expertise and respected stature, you are especially crucial allies for conveying the importance of avoiding unnecessary absences. Challenges related to poor physical, dental and mental health are leading reasons students miss too much school. Even when absences are excused, missing too much school can lead children to fall behind. Help students avoid unnecessary absences by:

- **Providing guidance** on when a child should stay home sick and how to avoid absences due to minor illness or anxiety (example enclosed);
- Using **medical notes sparingly** and only when absolutely necessary; and
- Making **medical appointments before or after school**. If this is not possible, schedule toward the beginning or end of the day and encourage parents to send their child to school for the remainder of the day.

Thank you for your time. If you would like more information or would like to meet to learn how we can further spread the important message about school attendance, please contact Family Service Collaborative Director Jennifer Jerulle ([jjerulle@isd2142.k12.mn.us](mailto:jjerulle@isd2142.k12.mn.us)).

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