

Multiple-Choice Texts: Practice Overview

Help Parents Choose Support for Their Student with Self-Service SMS Messages

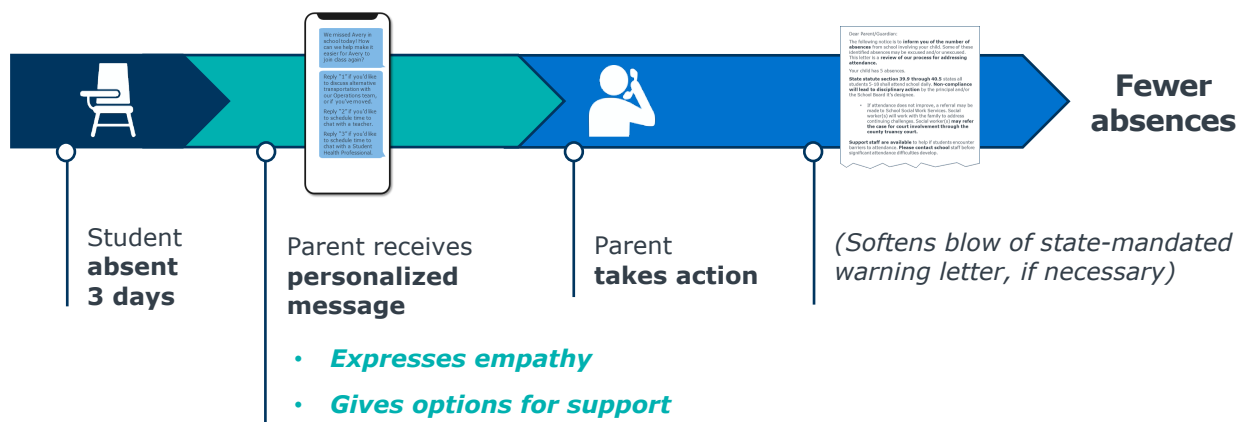
Problem to Solve

Often, the first communication parents receive after their child regularly misses school is the traditional state-mandated 5-day absence letter. Unfortunately, these letters can push parents further away with confusing legal jargon, impersonal language, and an overall punitive message. As a result, parents react with fear, denial, or even silence, which creates more barriers to combatting and preventing their child’s chronic absence.

Practice Overview

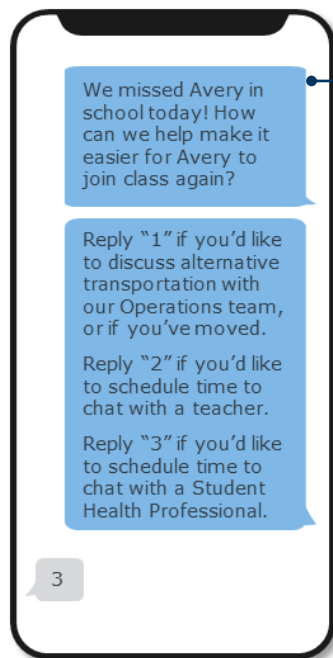
Get ahead of the 5-day letter by sending a multiple-choice text message that presents parents with options to receive support for their student and helps identify the root cause of the absences.

- STEP 1** Source ideas for support options from district staff with stake in absenteeism
- STEP 2** Choose an SMS provider capable of two-way messages (see *guidance below*), and identify number of consecutive absences to trigger text message (e.g., >3 unexcused days)
- STEP 3** Delegate one staff member in each school building to triage replies and ensure follow-up



Essential Elements

- Predetermined list of options prompts immediate action and self-efficacy
- Text messages more reliable and accepted than mail/email
- System for prompting parents to take action from list of available support options
- Faster, more direct line to parents and guardians



The text prompts the parent to reply with "1," "2," or "3" based on the option that would work best for them. Choices are simply listed in plain language.

Some districts implementing this practice use "[Remind](#)." EAB has not vetted Remind or other 3rd party options for price and features at this point, but districts looking to automate these messages should ask the following when evaluating vendors:

1. Is **conditional messaging** available (can messages be sent based on daily attendance data)?
2. Is **personalization** of conditional messages possible (including the student's first name in the message)
3. Is **two-way messaging** available (so that parents can reply with the number that correlates with their best fit option for support)?