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**TIPS FOR PRINCIPALS**

**Issues that may impact on Habitual Non attendance**

1. Often parents do not know how to get their children to school and it is easier to allow them to stay home than have the argument to get them to school.
  - a. Talk to the parents about getting professional help via their local doctor (mental health plan) or from counselling.
  - b. Try modified programmes to get the student to school – later starts / shorter days etc. – the important thing is to keep up the routine of school and getting the student there daily even if it's for half a day.
2. Some students may be over "parentified" (where a child acts as the parent and may stay at home to help out) - this is more of a concern because there are usually child protection issues at play here.
  - a. Talk to the parents about the importance of education and the need for the child to be at school – as it is a legal requirement.
  - b. Get the student into counselling at the school – I know this may be difficult if the student is not attending but make the referral and get permission (if the student is in primary school) for the counselling to commence once the child is at school.
3. Some parents may not provide a lot of information about why their child is not attending. Often these parents will be harder to engage and will miss scheduled meetings and may actively avoid contact with the school.
  - a. Make sure that any appointments made are sent by letter (and email and phone) via registered mail to the home.
  - b. Not engaging with the school is a risk in itself – consider a Community Services report sooner – possibly even a welfare check by NSW Police if the child has not been sighted for a period of time.
  - c. Speaking with the Police Liaison Officer for your school may also assist.
  - d. Refer to the Child Protection Team - sooner – do not wait for 30 days missed – if the parents are disengaging from the school.
4. The parents may also provide you with medical certificates – some of these may simply state that the student is sick with no other explanation. In these cases;
  - a. Get a medical consent form signed by the parents so you can contact the doctor regarding the certificates.
  - b. Do not accept the certificates if you think they are not quite right – ask for more details.
  - c. Ensure that you write to the parents identifying the need for a medical/health plan regarding the child's education reiterating the legal requirements regarding education.
  - d. Refer the student to the counsellor.
5. Sometimes the child may be partially absent from school but this amounts to a lot of time over the year.
  - a. Contact the parents and discuss what the issues are around partial absence – it may be due to an occurrence (e.g. the child returns from access late on a Monday morning so the child is always late).
  - b. Refer the child to the school counsellor.
  - c. Monitor the situation – if the absences continue arrange a meeting with the family to discuss how the school can assist the family and ensure that the child attends at all times.
  - d. If you meet with the family formalise it with an Attendance Improvement Plan (AIP)
6. If the child identifies as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) please talk to the CSO Aboriginal Education Officer who may be able to assist at the onset of attendance issues. If required, the CSO CP team can also be of assistance.