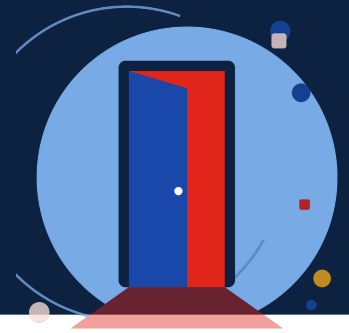




Classify Before You Consequence

What should I do in the first ten minutes after a student starts missing school?

THREE MOVES FOR THIS WEEK



Ask why first

Cost: \$0

One conversation with the student or family before any referral: what happened on the days you missed?



Write their words

Cost: \$0

Record the family's own explanation so the team can classify accurately.



Hand off with a name

Cost: \$0

Tell your attendance lead which of the four reasons you heard and who follows up by when.

FOUR QUESTIONS FOR THE FAMILY CALL

1. What does a school morning look like in your home right now?
2. When your child misses, what usually happened that day?
3. Is there a person, place or time at school your child wants to avoid?
4. What would make getting here easier this month?

CLASSIFY BEFORE YOU CONSEQUENCE

Truancy

Choice-driven, unauthorized absence. The last-resort category, confirmed only after a real conversation.

Withdrawal

Family-centered: caregiving, shifts, housing, a ride that never came, economic survival.

Avoidance

Climate-driven: a building, class, peer or time of day the student experiences as unsafe.

Refusal

Anxiety-driven, often with clinical features. Needs health and counseling partners.

AVOID THESE MISSTEPS

- x Inferring the category from the code alone
- x Skipping the conversation because a pattern looks familiar
- x Treating classification as one-time; a category can shift during the year

HOW YOU WILL KNOW IT WORKS

Leading: Share of cases classified before any letter

Lagging: Chronic absence rate for your focus students

Evidence: Schools Spared, Children Punished, Ch. 1 (Maria, composite case); RAND ASDP (2025); AEI Return to Learn Tracker (Malkus, 2026); FutureEd (2026); Economic Policy Institute (2018), Student Absenteeism: Who Misses School; Schools Spared, Ch. 1, Another Voice from the Field.



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