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Andrew M. Cuomo - *Governor*

Governor Cuomo Announces "Every Student Present" Campaign Launched to Reduce High Absenteeism in New York's Schools

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One in ten students misses at least ten-percent of school days each year; Initiative aimed at reversing disturbing trend

Albany, NY (September 10, 2013)

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo today announced the launch of Every Student Present, a public awareness campaign to help school leadership, parents, and communities promote school attendance. The initiative addresses the detrimental impact chronic absences have on student performance, and promotes strategies to engage students in school, therefore better preparing them for academic success.

"Ensuring that our students get a good quality education means making sure they are in the classroom every day," Governor Cuomo said. "The Every Student Present campaign does just that, by providing tools and resources to help combat the growing trend of student absenteeism in our schools. Working with parents, schools and communities, this public awareness campaign will promote the importance of keeping our kids in school so that they do not fall behind."

The Every Student Present campaign, spearheaded by the Council on Children and Families (CCF), lends a hand to school leaders, parents, and communities to help students to make attendance a habit. The campaign is focused on building awareness of the issue, creating engaging school environments, using data to identify chronically absent students, and exploring ways to provide support that can help students and families.

According to Attendance Works, an initiative that promotes awareness of the important role that school attendance plays in achieving academic success, approximately one in ten U.S. students miss ten percent or more school days each year. As many as four in ten kindergarten and first grade students will miss about a month of school, which particularly jeopardizes early reading proficiency. Additionally, Attendance Works finds that chronically-absent sixth grade students graduate less frequently than their peers. While all children, regardless of their socio-economic background, perform poorly in school when they are chronically absent, satisfactory school attendance is particularly

problematic among children living in poverty. Reasons for chronic absenteeism include illnesses like asthma, safety concerns and bullying, academic failure, transportation problems, and family issues.

“Chronic absenteeism is one of the earliest indications we have that students are not on course,” said Deborah Benson, Executive Director of the Council on Children and Families. “By tracking the number of absences a student has, whether they are excused or unexcused, we can take early action when prevention interventions are most likely to succeed.”

“We know from common sense and research that attendance matters. The good news is that chronic absence is a solvable problem,” said Hedy Chang, Director of Attendance Works, who worked closely with the Council to develop Every Student Present. “Attendance improves when schools, communities and families partner together to monitor chronic absence data, build a local culture of daily attendance and identify and address barriers to getting to class. Reducing chronic absence can help significantly improve outcomes, especially for our most vulnerable children, and it increases students’ readiness for college and careers.”

School attendance is a critical and fundamental link to school improvement efforts. Improvements in classroom teaching and curriculum reform will not yield results unless students are physically in school. For more information about how schools, families, and communities can support children’s academic success and reduce chronic absenteeism, visit the Every Student Present website at www.everystudentpresent.org, and follow the Council on Twitter (@nysccf), Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com/NYSccf>), and Pinterest (<http://pinterest.com/nysccf>). The Council is proud to partner with Attendance Works, Children’s Aid Society, Erie I BOCES, New York State Afterschool Network, State University of New York, and United Way of New York City to promote Every Student Present.

The Council works with its 11 member agencies to coordinate the New York State health, education, and human service systems to provide more effective systems of care for children and families. Members of the Council include the Department of Health (DOH), the Department of Labor, the Division of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS), the Office of People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD), the Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS), the Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS), the Office of Mental Health (OMH), the Office of Probation and Correctional Alternatives (OPCA), the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA), the Office for the Aging, and the State Education Department (SED).

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