Policy and Support Frameworks for Using Chronic Absence as a School Quality Student Success measure in ESSA

Objective

To learn about and provide feedback on a framework to help states assess the impact of choices made regarding chronic absence indicators under ESSA. The framework includes four elements:

This Is a Watershed Moment

No Child Left Behind

| **Every Student Succeeds Act** |

Success determined by academic standards. → Success determined by academic & nonacademic standards.

Federal targets and interventions for schools; punitive system of responses. → States set goals; supportive framework.

Accountability and data for student sub-groups. → Accountability and data for student sub-groups.

Each state defines and addresses truancy which typically emphasizes court based, punitive, interventions. → Chronic absence is a required reporting & optional school quality metric. It emphasizes prevention and early intervention.

Chronic Absence Checks All of the Boxes as a Measure of School Quality and Student Success

ESSA: States must establish a measure of school quality or student success	Chronic Absence
Valid	✓
Reliable	✓
Calculated the same for all schools and school districts across the state	✓
Can be disaggregated by student sub-population	✓
Is a proven indicator of school quality	✓
Is a proven indicator of student success	✓

Validity: the degree to which an indicator actually measures what you are trying to measure.
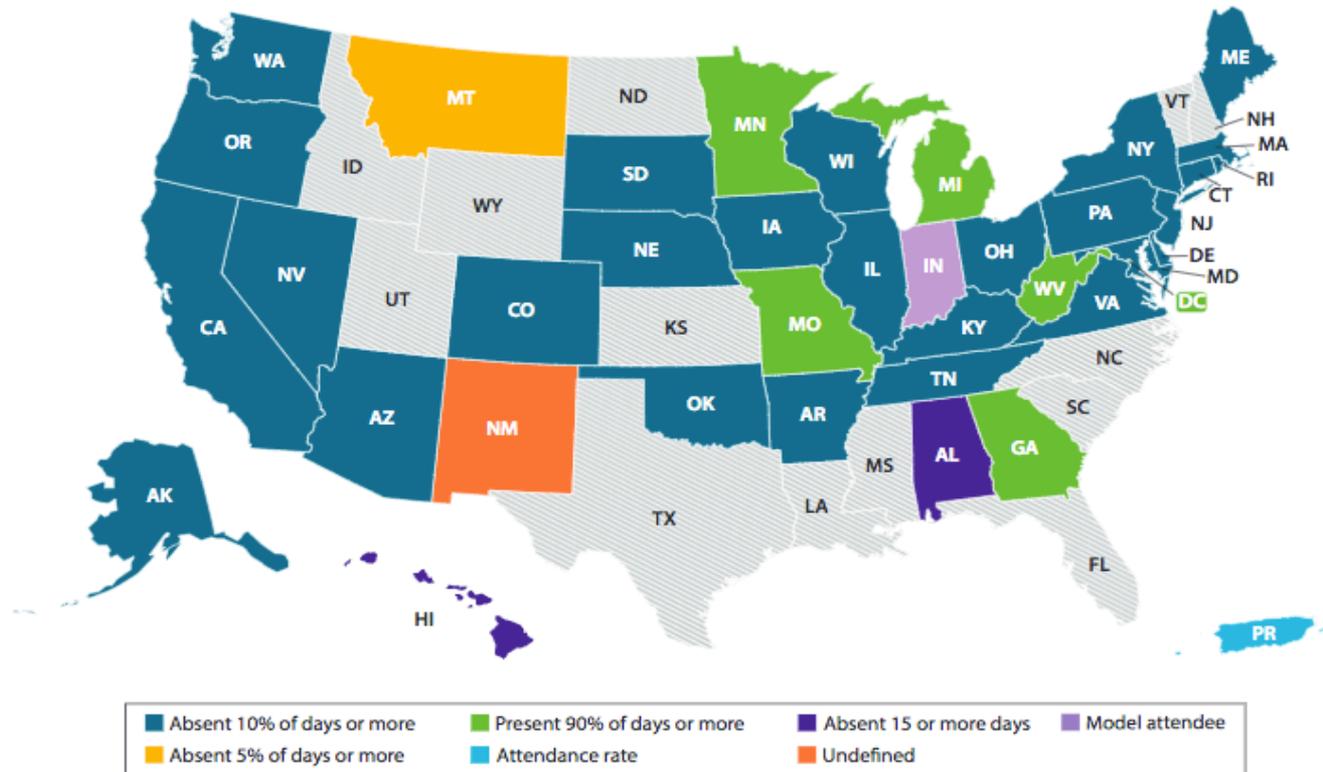
Reliability: the degree to which you will get the same answer when you ask a question/compute a measure multiple times.

Additional benefit: chronic absence can serve as a proxy for school climate and student engagement.

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A Growing Consensus on Definition

FIGURE 2.

Definitions of Chronic Absenteeism in State ESSA Plans

Legend:
- Absent 10% of days or more
- Absent 5% of days or more
- Present 90% of days or more
- Attendance rate
- Absent 15 or more days
- Undefined
- Model attendee

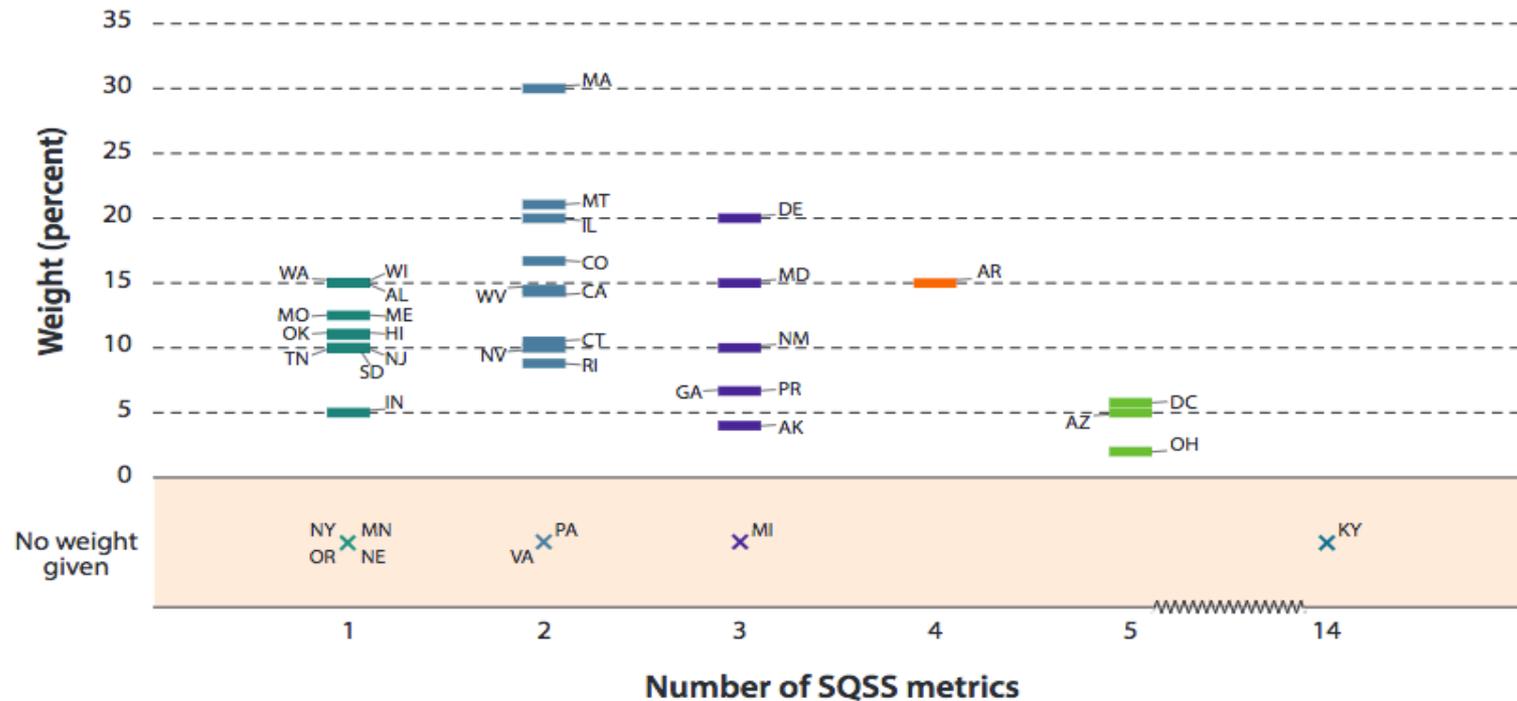Source: FutureEd 2017; authors' analysis of state ESSA plans.

Note: A model attendee is a student attending at least 96 percent of school days or a student who has made a 3 percent gain in days attended over the prior year. Attendance rate is a continuous measure.

THE HAMILTON PROJECT
BROOKINGS

But there is little consensus on weight

FIGURE 3.

Number of SQSS Indicators and Weight of Chronic Absenteeism in Elementary School Summative School Rating

And significant variability on other aspects of measuring and reporting chronic absence

- The portion of the school day that students must attend to be considered present or absent;

- The types of absences included in—and excluded from—chronic absence counts;

- The number of days students must be on school rolls to count in absenteeism calculations;

- The rules for withdrawing or dis-enrolling students;

- How the accuracy of absenteeism data is monitored; and

- The timing and content of chronic absence data that are provided to schools and the public.

Key Questions

- What is the State's Definition of Chronic Absence?
- Are All Types of Absences Included in the Chronic Absence Count? Or are some absences excluded?
- What Counts as a day of Attendance or an Absence?
- Which Students are Included in the Count?
- What is the Rubric for Awarding Points?
- How Much Does Chronic Absence Contribute to the Overall School Performance Score?
- Are there Long-term Goals and Benchmarks for Chronic Absence Improvement?
- How are Data Monitored for Accuracy?
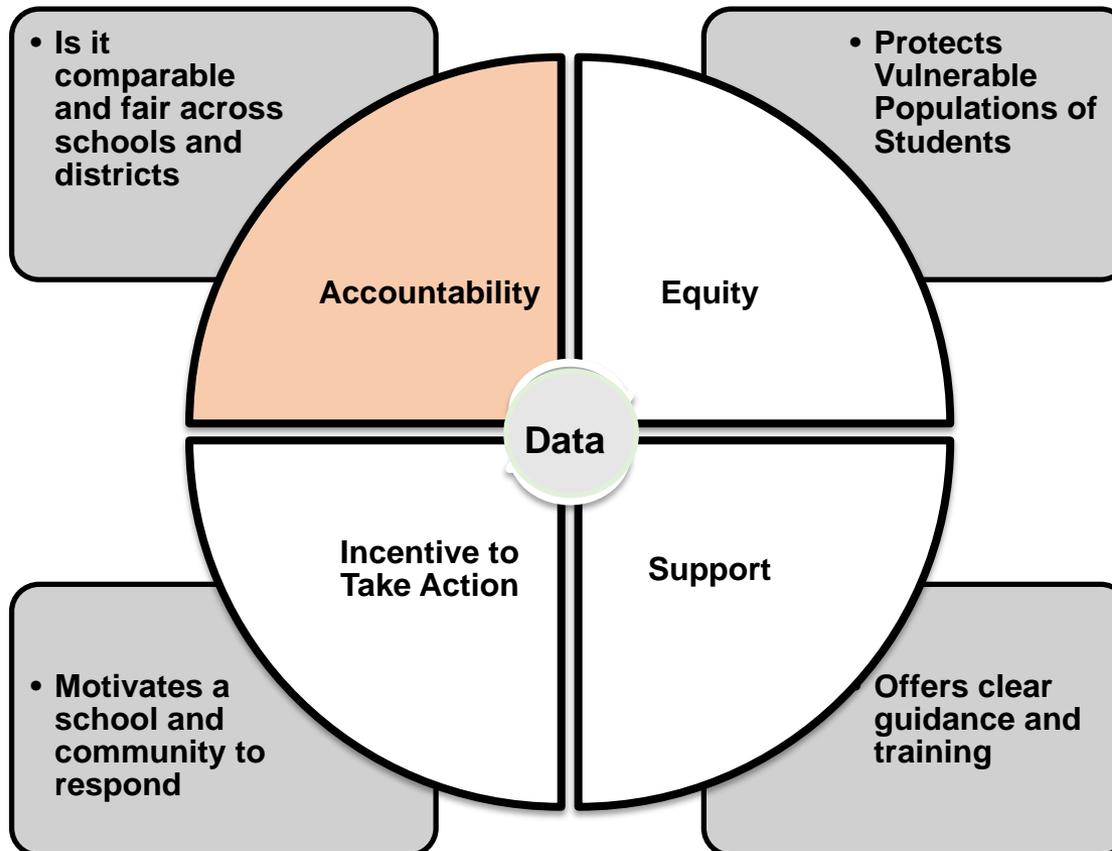- When and What Data are Shared with Schools and the Public?

Are all Types of Absences Included?

Ed Facts: A student is considered present for the day if they attended at least 50% of the time.

What is the impact if:

- Students must attend only one hour in order to be counted present? A full day?
- Suspensions do not count as absences?
- Absences due to health are not included?

- Is it comparable and fair across schools and districts

Accountability

- Protects Vulnerable Populations of Students

Equity

Data

Incentive to Take Action

Support

- Motivates a school and community to respond
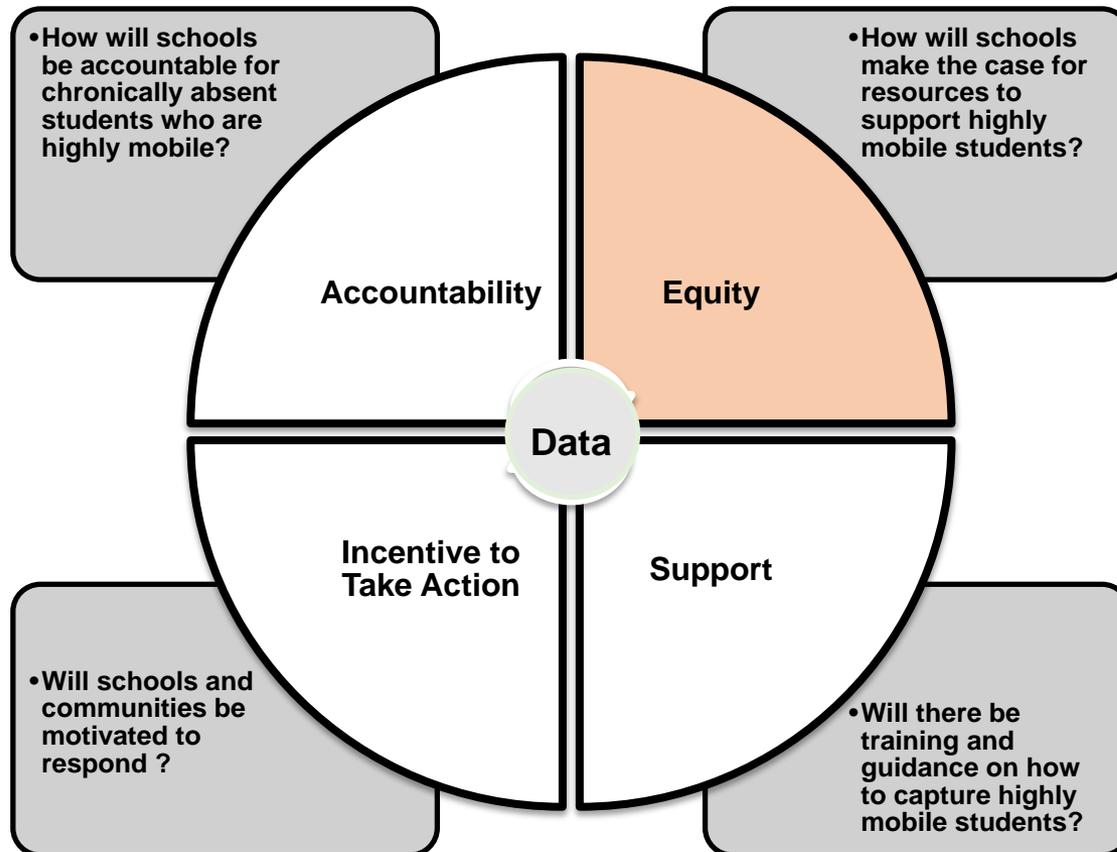
Offers clear guidance and training

Are All Students – Especially Vulnerable Students - Included in Chronic Absence Data?

Ed Facts: A student counts in any school attended for at least 10 days.
What is the impact if:

- Students must be on role a significant number of days to count? E.g. 45 or 60 days
- Students are easily dis-enrolled?

- **How will schools be accountable for chronically absent students who are highly mobile?**

- **How will schools make the case for resources to support highly mobile students?**

Accountability

Equity

Data

Incentive to Take Action

Support

- **Will schools and communities be motivated to respond ?**

- **Will there be training and guidance on how to capture highly mobile students?**
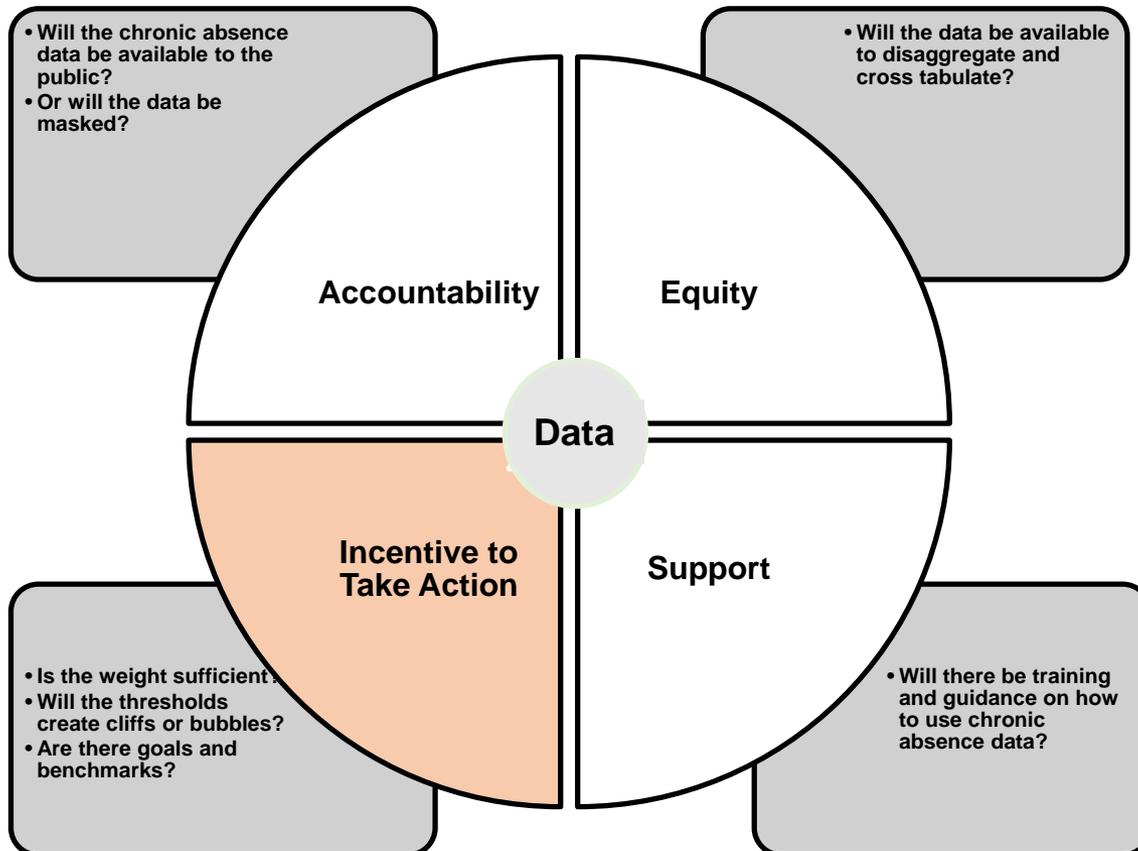
What is the Weight Given to Chronic Absence and How are Points Awarded?

What is the impact if:
- Chronic Absence is one of many indicators, or one of only a few?
- The weight varies by school level?
- Points are awarded based on a few thresholds? Continuously?

- **Will the chronic absence data be available to the public?**
- **Or will the data be masked?**

- **Will the data be available to disaggregate and cross tabulate?**

Accountability

Equity

Data

Incentive to Take Action

Support

- **Is the weight sufficient?**
- **Will the thresholds create cliffs or bubbles?**
- **Are there goals and benchmarks?**

- **Will there be training and guidance on how to use chronic absence data?**

Group Discussion Question

- Would this framework be helpful in planning strategies to address chronic absence in your state?

- Does it apply to decisions that are underway in your states?

Resources: Summary of AR, CT, KY, and MD and upcoming report by Future Ed and Attendance Works, "Setting the Rules: Ensuring Chronic Absenteeism Works for Schools and Students"

Intensive Intervention

Targeted Intervention

Support for All Districts and Schools
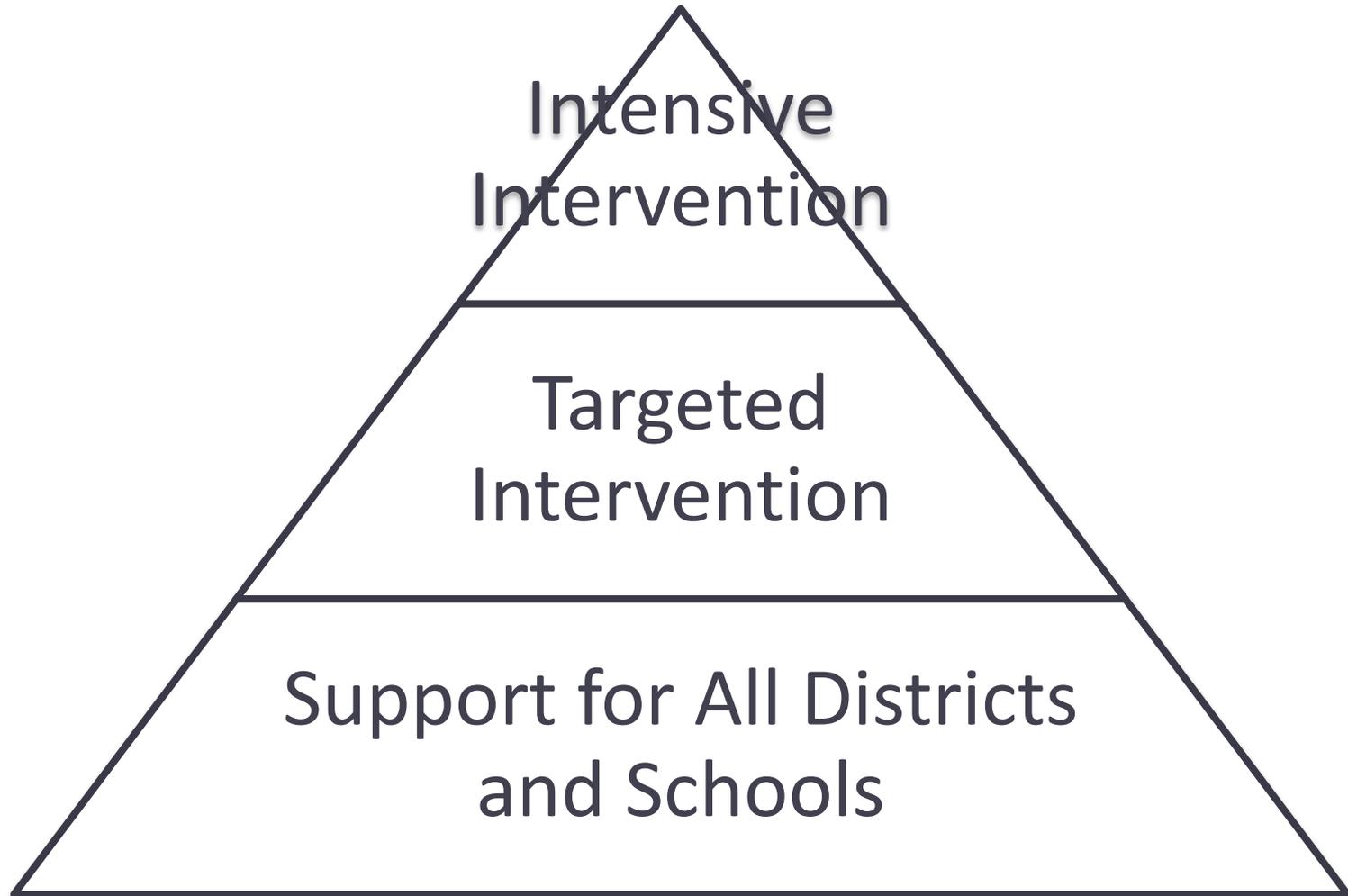
Comprehensive State Support – Tier 1

1. Create state definitions and standards to ensure the accurate and consistent collection and reporting of attendance data
2. Produce on-line public reports showing chronic absence levels by school, grade and sub-population with the capacity to cross-tabulate with other variables such as race and poverty (annual, trend over time for state, districts, schools and subgroups)
3. Provide school discipline guidance geared toward minimizing suspension
4. Offer easy to tailor attendance messaging materials
5. Identify and promote examples of effective practice
6. Ensure that Districts and Schools have attendance and chronic absence reports available in real time for monitoring
7. Ideas and materials for attendance incentives
8. Attendance Works Teaching Attendance Modules 1 and 2
9. Recorded webinars
10. Principal toolkits and other school based resources
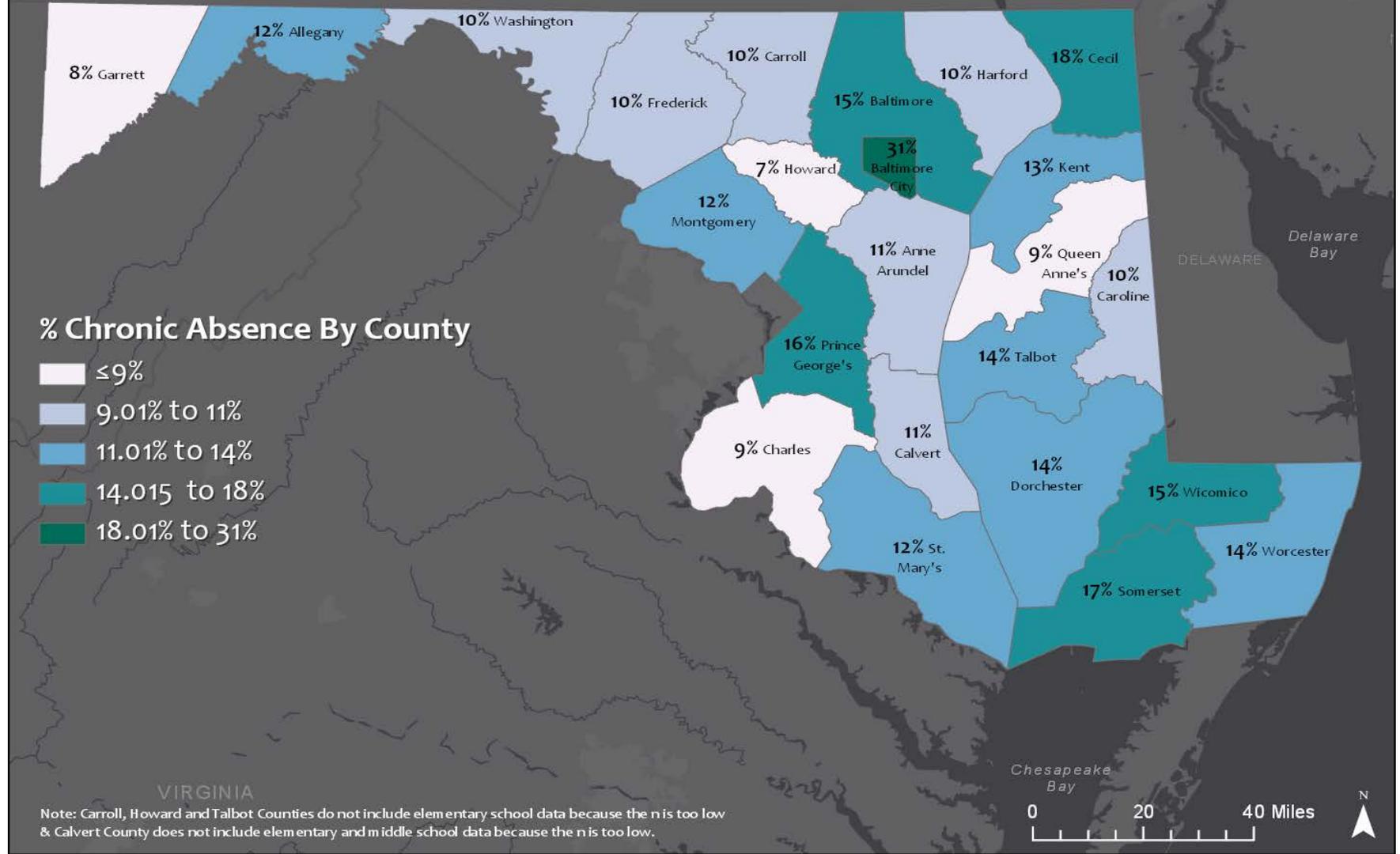
Targeted Intervention - Tier 2

1. Provide guidance for an in-depth assessment of attendance data to identify policy and practice challenges
2. Prioritize allocation of state attendance related resources to districts with high rates of absenteeism (e.g., expanded learning, health resources, and access to early childhood, etc.)
3. Identify resources to address specific identified factors that are driving absenteeism
4. Provide training and coaching via regional entities such as county offices of education, educational service districts, and area education agencies
5. Peer Learning networks run by the state education agency or experienced peer learning facilitators

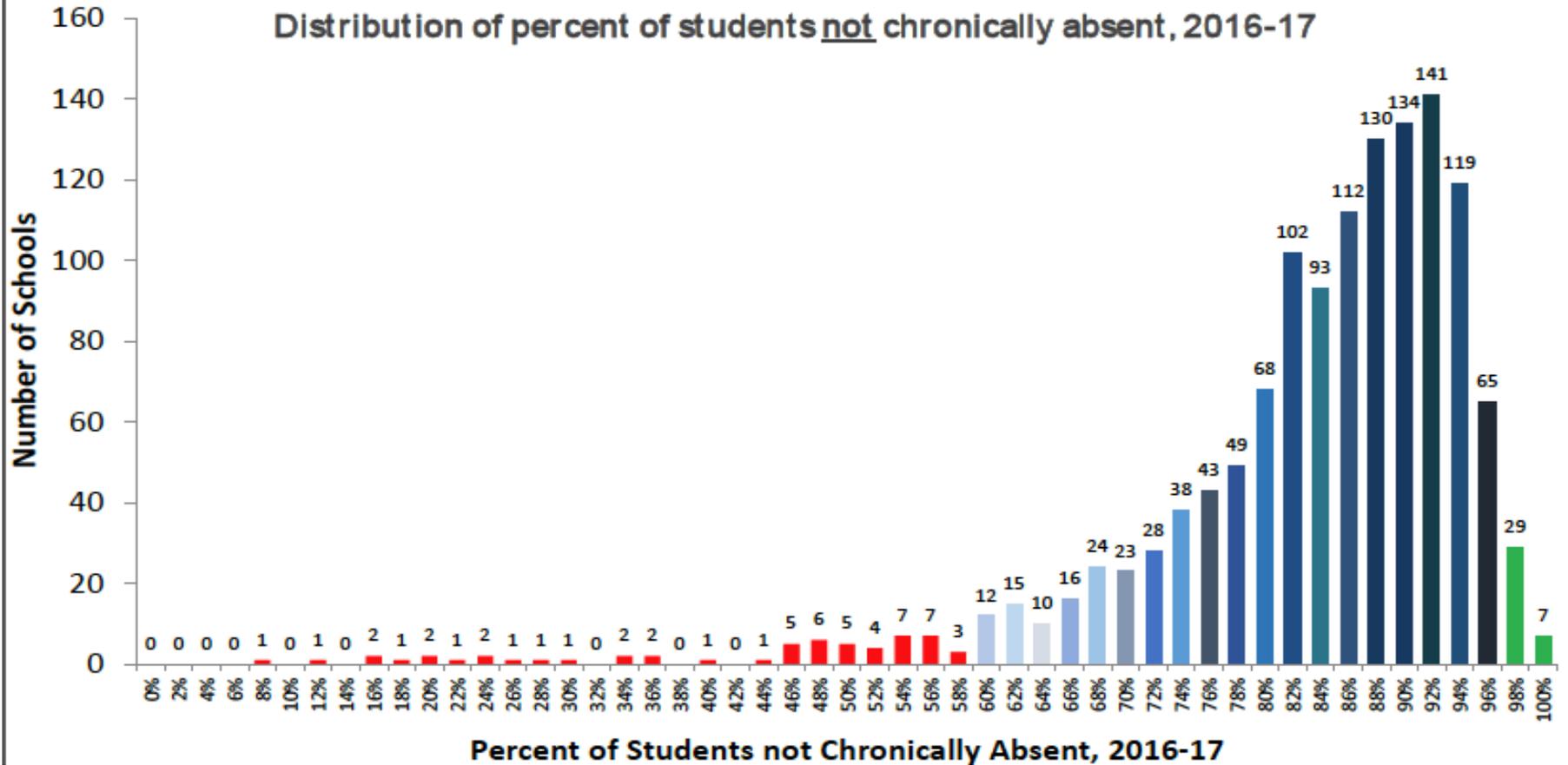## Key Questions for Targeted Intervention

- What level of chronic absence in a district or a school should trigger this support?
- What are essential tools that the TA providers need? (training on attendance teams, data, Teaching Attendance, other?)
- How many districts or schools potentially need this level of support?
- If there is a lack of capacity, how will they meet it short-term and long-term?

2017 Local Educational Agency Chronic Absence Rates

% Chronic Absence By County
- ≤9%
- 9.01% to 11%
- 11.01% to 14%
- 14.015 to 18%
- 18.01% to 31%

8% Garrett
12% Allegany
10% Washington
10% Carroll
10% Harford
18% Cecil
10% Frederick
15% Baltimore
31% Baltimore City
13% Kent
7% Howard
12% Montgomery
11% Anne Arundel
9% Queen Anne's
10% Caroline
16% Prince George's
14% Talbot
11% Calvert
9% Charles
14% Dorchester
15% Wicomico
12% St. Mary's
14% Worcester
17% Somerset

Delaware Bay
DELAWARE
Chesapeake Bay
VIRGINIA

Note: Carroll, Howard and Talbot Counties do not include elementary school data because the n is too low
& Calvert County does not include elementary and middle school data because the n is too low.

0   20   40 Miles

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Distribution of percent of students not chronically absent, 2016-17

Intensive Intervention - Tier 3

1. State team conducts audit of district attendance policies and practice and creates a plan to help the school or district develop a comprehensive and systemic approach to improving attendance.

Key Questions for Intensive Intervention
- What level of chronic absence in a district or a school should trigger this support?
- What are essential tools that the TA providers need? (training on attendance teams, data, Teaching Attendance, other?)
- How many districts or schools potentially need this level of support?
- If there is a lack of capacity, how will they meet it short-term and long-term?
- What criteria will they use to determine qualified TA providers?

Tiered Health Interventions

Asthma
- Asthma friendly schools
- Environmental assessments
- Asthma friendly homes

Nutrition
- Community eligibility
- Universal breakfast
- Food backpack programs
- Farm-to-school programs

Mental Health
- School-based mental health programs
- Universal interventions
- Screening, Brief Intervention and Referral to Treatment

Oral Health
- Community–based oral health programs
- School-based sealant programs
- Mobile clinics

Bullying
- Safe Routes to Schools
- Bullying education programs
- Support groups

Vision
- School-based vision screening programs

Discussion Questions

What should be included in a state-level tiered support and intervention framework?

What would help states develop the capacity to help districts?