

This Alabama county cut school truancy in half after reinstating one program

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MCPSS Superintendent Chresal Threadgill and Mobile County DA Keith Blackwood holding a press conference on truancy declining. Patrick Darrington

Truancy by Mobile County Public School students fell by 50% over the last year, according to the Mobile County District Attorney's Office. Local officials said the reinstatement of [a longtime support program](#) originally created in Mobile, the **Helping Families Initiative**, helped address chronic absenteeism and truancy.

"As educators, we recognize that attendance is one of the most important factors in a student's success," Superintendent Chreshal Threadgill said in a rare public appearance. "We do all that we can to encourage students to be present, however, we must also rely upon our parents and the community to make sure children are in class every day."

Along with truancy falling by 50%, the amount of chronically absent students also saw a 58% decline, according to the announcement. Those numbers equated to a total 9,284 truant students and 7,433 chronically absent students.

Prior to the Helping Family Initiative being implemented there were 18,722 truant students and 17,767 chronically absent students during the 2022-23 school year. In the 2023-24 school year, the most recent year of data publicly available, Mobile schools reported a chronic absenteeism rate of 18%.

[The Helping Families Initiative](#) partners with school systems and community organizations to intervene and assist families before students are sent to the juvenile justice system. “Attendance isn’t just a school issue, it’s a community responsibility,” Mobile County District Attorney Keith Blackwood said. “These numbers prove that when schools, parents, and students lock arms, we can rewrite the story for thousands of kids across Mobile County. Fewer absences mean fewer suspensions, fewer dropouts, and fewer court cases down the line. That’s the kind of win that changes everything.”

Examples of support vary, but [in the past](#), Helping Families has provided students and parents with washing machines and stoves, clean clothes, mental health appointments and grocery coupons.

The statewide program, which operates in 21 school districts, got [increased funding](#) from the legislature last year.

Truancy and absenteeism remain problems at schools around the country, AL.com and other news organizations [found last year](#).

Six Mobile schools were identified as having the highest truancy decline in the 2024-25 school year.