

April 20, 2016

Dear Chief State School Officers:

On behalf of the U.S. Department of Education (ED), and in collaboration with the U.S. Departments of Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, and Justice, I am pleased to invite your state educational agencies and state-level and local partners to participate in the ***Every Student, Every Day National Conference: Eliminating Chronic Absenteeism by Implementing and Strengthening Cross-Sector Systems of Support for All Students***, on June 8-10, 2016, in Washington, DC. This conference is planned both in support of President Obama's My Brother's Keeper (MBK) Initiative and to support state and local efforts to address and eliminate chronic absenteeism among our nation's most vulnerable students, particularly those attending low-performing schools. By catalyzing nationwide action to implement and strengthen effective cross-sector early warning and response systems, which are proving integral to addressing chronic absenteeism, we can more effectively improve student achievement and other critical youth outcomes.

As we work to implement the new *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA), it is incumbent upon us to think differently and innovatively about the systems we use to identify and support students who are chronically absent or who are at risk of becoming chronically absent from school. Research strongly suggests that chronic absenteeism—or missing at least 10 percent or more of the school year for any reason—affects at least five to seven and a half million students each year, is a leading cause of school dropout, and is a proven early warning sign that a student is off track for school success and graduation. It is for these reasons that the federal government, in [guidance](#) released last October, called on states and local school districts to reduce chronic absenteeism by at least 10 percent each year.

I invite you to send a cross-sector, cross-functional team (limit 10 participants per state team) to the ***Every Student, Every Day National Conference***. Ideally, this team is charged with implementing and strengthening your state plan to support local school districts in developing comprehensive, multi-tiered, cross-sector approaches to combating chronic absenteeism. State teams should include appropriate state education department officials; state-level leaders from the early learning, health, housing, child welfare, and justice sectors, among others; two or three leading local superintendents who are committed to implementing effective early warning and response systems in their schools; and other essential partners in the labor, nonprofit, community-based, and philanthropic sectors who are necessary for successful state and local plan implementation. If your state includes school districts that are participating in the [My Brother's Keeper School Success Mentor Initiative](#), we recommend that you consider including the superintendents from these districts on the state team.

At the conference, state teams will have the opportunity to collaborate with teams from other states and share best practices in order to gain critical insights into what works to build the awareness, political will, and the necessary state and local early warning and response system infrastructure to address and eliminate chronic absenteeism. Therefore, I encourage you to be creative and strategic in the creation of your state team.

Please register your state team to participate at the ***Every Student, Every Day National Conference***—including the name of the official who will serve as your team lead—using the official conference registration site (<http://www.cvent.com/d/4fqr2q/4W>) **no later than Friday, April 29, 2016**. Please note that ED may not be able to guarantee registration for state teams that register after this date. For more information or to ask any follow-up questions about the conference, contact the conference organizer, Joaquin Tamayo, Director for Strategic Initiatives, at [Joaquin.Tamayo@ed.gov](mailto:Joaquin.Tamayo@ed.gov).

We look forward to engaging states and local school districts in this challenging but essential work, and to supporting your efforts to identify, serve, and ensure the success of all our students, particularly those who struggle to come to and succeed in school every day. Thank you for your commitment to our students and for your interest in participating in the ***Every Student, Every Day National Conference***.

Sincerely,

John B. King, Jr.