

The aims of the pilot analyses were as follows: 1) Evaluate frequency of both full-day and partial absences in a sample of school-aged autistic youth using a prospective design, 2) evaluate the frequency of different reasons for absences as measured by the SNACK, and 3) Explore open-ended parent responses to identify variables not captured by the SNACK that might inform more precise measurement of school attendance problems and potential interventions

Aim 1: Evaluate frequency of both full-day and partial absences in a sample of school-aged autistic youth using a prospective design in addition to retrospective report.

Variable	M	SD	range
% Days Fully Absent	8.80	8.66	0 - 35.0
% Days Tardy	8.44	14.88	0 - 47.5
% Days Left Early	4.09	5.77	0 - 22.5
% Days Any Absence	21.28	20.34	0 - 72.5
Unique Absence Episodes*	2.5	2.3	0 - 10
Average Episode Length*	1.2	2.2	1 - 3
% Days Any Absence – Monday/Friday Only	23.13	21.23	0 - 75.0
% Days Any Absence – Tuesday-Thursday Only	19.96	20.40	0 - 66.7

*A unique episode is an episode of one or more consecutive full day absences separated from other full day episodes by at least one day of partial or full attendance

Note: Forty-five percent of participants (n=9) met the threshold for chronic absenteeism (10% or greater school missed) across the 40-day period.

Visual analysis of absence data across individual participants was conducted to identify potential patterns in absence behavior.

- 20-day evaluation periods did not reliably identify students who were chronically absent:
 - o N=4 participants met the chronic absenteeism threshold according to both retrospective and prospective reports. N=4 reached the chronic threshold according to retrospective data, but not prospective data. N=4 did not reach the chronic threshold according to retrospective data, but did according to prospective data.
- Absence rates on Mondays/Fridays ($M = 23.1\%$, $SD = 21.2\%$) were not significantly higher than those on Tuesday-Thursdays ($M = 20.0\%$, $SD = 20.4\%$), $t(19) = 1.2$, $p = .254$.

Aim 2: Evaluate the frequency of different reasons for absences as measured by the SNACK

SNACK Percentages of Absence Reasons, Retrospective Report

Reason	% full absences	% partial absences
Appointment	2.9	7.8
Sickness	38.2	29.7
Reluctance/Refusal	23.5	32.8
Skipped/Truanted	0	0
Parent Gave Day Off	8.8	3.1
Parent Kept Child Home for Other Reasons	17.6	0
Vacation	0	0
Urgent Family Situation	0	1.6
Other Family Difficulties	5.8	6.2
Religious/Cultural Observance	0	0
Child sent home due to behavior	5.9	1.6
School asked child to stay home	0	3.1
Other	5.9	0

SNACK Percentages of Absence Reasons, Prospective Survey

Reason	% full absence	% partial absences (tardy or left early)
Appointment	0	14.3
Sickness	40.0	14.3
Reluctance/Refusal	20.0	50.0
Skipped/Truanted	0	0
Parent Gave Day Off	10.0	2.4
*Parent Kept Child Home for Other Reasons	0	0
Vacation	0	0
Urgent Family Situation	0	2.4
Other Family Difficulties	0	7.1
Religious/Cultural Observance	0	0
Child sent home due to behavior	3.4	2.4
School asked child to stay home	0	0
Other	20.7	9.5

Aim 3: Explore open-ended parent responses to identify variables not captured by the SNACK that may be informative to school attendance problems and potential interventions

Reasons listed for “other” and expansion of selected reasons – “Got no sleep”; Complaining of headaches and stomachaches; Constipation; “Just hard getting out the door”; no sleep; depression/anxiety; “Leave out of state for soccer”; trouble following morning routine; refusing to get ready

Additionally, parents reported on if their child expressed any refusal or resistance to attending school. Children expressed reluctance to attend school on an average of 23.5% of days ($SD = 26.9\%$, range 0-75%). On days that parents reported their child was resistant to attending school, they provided open-ended responses describing the reason their child didn’t want to go or the behaviors they observed (if the child could not express the reason for their refusal).

Descriptions of refusal – preferred adult not available at dropoff; wanted to play with sister; “Noise in the classroom. Temperature in the classroom (too hot). There is a classmate that screams frequently, sometimes for hours each day. This student is encouraged to use a alcove within in the classroom to regulate. It does not reduce the noise the rest of classroom experiences. My child can take unlimited breaks outside the classroom to help with regulation but that means missed academics and that leads to stress about being falling behind or missing instruction. He tries to tolerate the overwhelming noise, masking his discomfort. It comes to a head at least once a week. Complained of a headache after school, cried for a while, said he can’t take the noise any longer and doesn’t want to go to school anymore”; “they felt tired. they didn't feel like going. They have gym today. It's raining. Want to stay home with Mom. Feel cozy and don't want to get out of bed”; “she missed me”; headache/stomachache; resisting putting on clothes; sleepy; “I don’t ever want to see my teacher again”; “Can’t ask directly (escalates)”, “My teacher hates me”; “He would not get out of the car, and I carried him to the school door and still would not walk in. I had to get the school workers to help get him inside”