



When to request provider support

This guidance provides direction for schools when deciding to request support from an attendance service provider for ākonga who are chronically absent.¹ It gives useful information to support your judgement and decision making.

Requests for attendance support must follow the approach set out in each school's [Attendance Management Plan](#). This means reasonable school-based strategies have been tried and documented before asking for external support (such as referring ākonga to the local Attendance Service provider).

Support requests should focus on ākonga who are chronically absent, or have persistent attendance challenges, and where attendance has not improved through school-led efforts. Support may also be appropriate for chronically absent ākonga who are known to have complex underlying barriers likely to benefit from the specific attention that an attendance service can offer.

Ākonga who receive support from the school's in-school provision may later be referred to an Attendance Service provider. This can happen if attendance has not improved or if new barriers are found that the in-school provision cannot resolve. Schools can also refer ākonga directly to an Attendance Service provider without first using in-school provision, if that is the best option for the ākonga.

If you're unsure, check your school's attendance management plan, or you can check with your local Attendance Service provider before deciding.

Deciding to refer to the Attendance Service for support

The following prompts are to help guide your assessment of whether to request support from your local Attendance Service provider.

- Is the ākonga chronically absent; do they have an attendance pattern consistent with chronic absence; or is there an exceptional circumstance that makes the referral necessary?² **Note: this is a mandatory requirement for referrals.**
- Have the actions and interventions in the school's [Attendance Management Plan](#) been followed but there has been no improvement in attendance?

¹ Chronic absence is 70% or less attendance in a term (missing around three weeks or more of the term). Referrals can be made if the student broadly meets these criteria - for example, a student misses two weeks of school towards the end of one term, and has missed another week or two early in the following term.

² For example, you may refer the siblings of ākonga already being supported by an Attendance Service provider if there is good reason to believe that the sibling is likely to disengage from school and a broader whānau-based approach may be beneficial to all.

- Does the ākonga have an [individual attendance plan](#) (or similar) which has been enacted, but there has been no improvement to attendance and more support is needed?
- Does the ākonga have specific circumstances or needs that the school does not have the ability to address?
- Does the ākonga require actions and interventions that the Attendance Service can offer?
- Does the ākonga have complex or multiple barriers to attendance that are better supported by the Attendance Service?

Referring ākonga to the Attendance Service for support is highly recommended if they:

- Have one or more of the following factors:³
 - Previous referrals to an attendance service
 - A record of stand downs, suspensions or exclusions
 - A high number of non-structural school moves⁴

Or

- The barriers to attendance are complex or beyond the control of the ākonga and you believe support from the Attendance Service could help. Examples could include:
 - Poverty, unstable housing or other social welfare needs
 - Mental health or addiction (experienced by the ākonga directly, or their whānau)
 - Disability or additional learning needs (experienced by the ākonga directly, or their whānau)

Or

- The ākonga is at risk of disengaging from education entirely (note this may include ākonga who refuse to engage with the support being offered by the school).

Referring ākonga to the Attendance Service for support should be carefully considered if:

- The school has tried to engage with whānau but has not been successful.
- There is wellbeing, behavioural or social issues contributing to non-attendance that the school has been unable to resolve.
- The ākonga is receiving support from other services but still not attending.
- The ākonga is transitioning between educational settings and is at risk of not making that transition successfully.
- The ākonga is moving between living situations.

³ These factors are education-based indicators of increased risk of ongoing chronic absence leading to poor life outcomes.

⁴ Non-structural school move: When an ākonga moves between schools outside the usual transitions (such as primary to intermediate or intermediate to secondary). When an ākonga is transient between schools.

- The ākonga is part of a whānau already being supported by a provider (for example a sibling is already working with an attendance service provider).⁵

You should consider waiting to request support if:

- The individual attendance plan has not yet been fully implemented or reviewed.
- Attendance is improving with current interventions.
- The barrier to attendance is primarily school-based and can be addressed internally (for example, timetable changes, teacher- ākonga relationships).
- The ākonga need would be better served by another service such as a health provider, and the school is able to connect the student with that service.

It is not appropriate to refer when:

- An international ākonga needs a valid visa to attend school in New Zealand, and they do not have one.
- The ākonga consistently skips one class but are otherwise present at school (for example mathematics or physical education).

If you're not sure

Please contact your local Attendance Service provider if you are not sure whether to request their support with a chronically absent student.

Contact your local Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga| Ministry of Education regional office if you need further help.

[Regional offices - Ministry of Education](#)

Please note: Criteria may be tightened or loosened to maintain quality of service in the context of referral numbers under the new model. As required this guidance will be updated and Schools and Attendance Service Providers will be alerted to any changes.

⁵ Note that in this situation, the Attendance Service provider may ask you to make a request for support for one or more siblings, or you may make the referral yourself if you consider it would be beneficial. We recommend that all such decisions are made jointly by the Attendance Service provider and the school, on a case-by-case basis.