



When schools should request provider support

Schools decide when to ask for help from an attendance service provider using Ministry guidance. This guidance explains what schools must do before making a referral and the situations where provider involvement is most appropriate.

To read the full school guidance follow this link: [How the attendance service works](#)

Relationships matter

Strong relationships with schools encourage better referrals. When schools trust Attendance Service providers, they are more likely to refer ākongā | students early. To encourage appropriate referrals, providers should keep communication open, respond promptly, and work with schools as partners. Good collaboration and feedback loops help schools feel supported and reduces the risk that they avoid referrals because of uncertainty.

Key points

- Referrals focus on ākongā who are **chronically absent**¹ or have persistent attendance issues.
- Schools must first try the steps in their **Attendance Management Plan**² including developing and implementing an individual attendance plan (or similar) with the ākongā and documenting these efforts.
- Providers are usually involved when barriers to attendance are complex or beyond what the school can resolve.

Summary of referral guidance

- **Highly recommended:** Ākongā has chronic absence plus risk factors (previous referrals, suspensions, frequent school moves, complex barriers).
- **Consider referral:**

¹ [Stepped attendance response – STAR - Ministry of Education](#) defined as 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 this 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 [Attendance Management Plans - Ministry of Education](#)

When to request Chronic Absence (CA) support

- The school cannot engage with whānau.
- Other services have not worked.
- The ākongā is moving schools or changing living arrangements.
- A sibling is already supported by the Attendance Service.
- **Delay referral:**
 - Attendance is improving.
 - The school's plan has not been fully tried.
 - The main barrier is school-based.
 - Another service is a better fit.
- **Do not refer:**
 - An international ākongā needs a valid visa to attend school in New Zealand, and they do not have one.
 - The ākongā consistently skips one class but are otherwise present at school (for example mathematics or physical 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.