



COVID-19 FAQ: Student Attendance: Uncontactable Student Guidance

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This document focuses on guidance and best practices related to locating uncontactable students during the COVID-19 pandemic. For more information on enrollment and attendance issues, including how to document attendance related matters, questions on instructional minutes, etc., please see the ***Attendance and Enrollment FAQ and Virtual Enrollment FAQ*** located on the [TEA Coronavirus webpage under Funding and Waivers](#).

For purposes of this document, an **uncontactable student** is defined as a student in a school district or charter school (school system) that has not participated in continuing instruction and for whom the district has made multiple efforts to contact to no avail. This document will address common questions relating to uncontactable students, including best practices for attempting to locate them.

Uncontactable Students: Section Topics

- [Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- [Best Practices for attempting to make contact with uncontactable students](#)

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Who would be considered an uncontactable student?

School systems across the nation are reporting difficulties in locating a significant percentage of students during the COVID-19 shut-downs. An uncontactable student is a student that is not participating in the continuing instruction formats being provided by the school district and for whom multiple efforts to contact them or their relatives listed as the student's contacts have failed.

2. What strategies are school districts employing to find these students?

If the student's teacher is unable to contact a student, typically efforts are escalated to the administration level as administrators attempt to contact all persons listed on the student's contact list. In addition, administrators will work with teachers who may know friends of the students either in the same class or other classes and attempt to contact those individuals to see if they know the whereabouts of the uncontactable student. Attempts to contact students can also be made using popular social media applications. When these efforts fail, some districts have success conducting home visits using the known address for the student, contacting neighbors or asking apartment managers for assistance in locating the student and their family or relatives.

3. Should school districts be tracking the number and percentage of uncontactable students?

School districts should be tracking the number and percentage of uncontactable students. More specifically,

- School districts should track the number of students who are infrequently engaging in their distance learning instruction under COVID-19 circumstances.
- School districts should be tracking the number of students who they have been unable to contact since school closures began.
- School districts should be tracking the number of students they had difficulty contacting for multiple days, reengaged in their continued learning activities, but then lost track again.
- School districts should also record the above information in terms of the various categories of special population students such as those that live in foster homes and the homeless.
- Finally, all the foregoing information should be collated demographically to include gender, race and grade level in order to ascertain whether there are disparate impacts that also need to be addressed.

4. How should school districts report the status of uncontactable students?

This issue is addressed in the [COVID-19 Reporting Guidance: Crisis Codes](#) document. Please refer to this link for continuing updates on this process.

Best Practices for Attempting to Make Contact with Uncontactable Students

- **District leadership awareness** - School district leadership, including the superintendent, should be aware of the absolute number and percentage of students that are considered uncontactable. In addition, they should be developing or adopting best practices to organize and track the efforts used to locate the uncontactable students. Such best practices should include a district-wide method to capture the information listed in the above FAQ number 3. Further guidance regarding this data will be posted under the [COVID-19 Reporting Guidance: Crisis Codes](#) as additional information becomes available.
- **Daily teacher contact with students**-All participating teachers and staff should be supplied with scripts for initial conversations with parents and students. For example, when talking with students, the scripts begin with an affirmation telling them they are missed, and then contain prompts regarding how to inquire about supports they might need to stay engaged in school. Every time they reach a student, the educator should log notes of the call in a secure database—for example, if a student is having problems connecting to online learning or if a family member lost a job putting the family into further crisis mode. Subsequently, counselors, principals, and case managers should use such notations to connect the families to additional support resources.
- **Attendance office procedures** – Below are some additional sequential steps that should be taken after a teacher reports an uncontactable student.
 - Check the student contact database to determine whether the uncontactable student has any siblings and check their enrollment status.
 - Conduct an advanced search in the student contacts database on the address of the uncontactable student. This address search should provide a list of all students whose

address-on-file is the address you searched. If so, attempt to contact those other students for information on the uncontactable student.

- Search the TSDS Unique ID Enrollment Tracking system to see if the student has enrolled in another school district.
 - Conduct a home visit, ideally using a Care Team as described in the below best practice bullet point regarding home visits and care teams.
 - Finally, If the student was enrolled on an *Address Affidavit*, try to contact the homeowner to inquire about the family's whereabouts.
- **Home visits and Care teams** – Create teams comprised of counselors, social workers, attendance officers, military and family specialists, and social emotional learning specialists.
 - Provide each member of the CARE team with a mask and gloves.
 - Ensure the team follows CDC/DSHS COVID-19 guidelines to stay safe.
 - During the home visit request correct phone numbers and email addresses.
 - Upon making contact begin with an affirmation statement that the student is missed.
 - Take a care package which may consist of:
 - paper curriculum packets,
 - hygiene kit,
 - school supplies, and
 - a stress reliever for the student(s) (e.g., fidget spinner, squeeze ball etc).
 - Observe the students and make sure they are safe.
 - Provide/refer mental health services if needed.
 - Develop CARE team forms used to track the visit and track all services provided or recommended during the home visit.
 - **Use family engagement staff to assist**-some districts found their family engagement staff may have better knowledge of the student's family situation and therefore be able to provide information on other relatives that may know the whereabouts of the student.
 - **Create incentives.** All districts should create incentives for perfect attendance and improved attendance of their students. Educate students and their families on the positive impact of school attendance on performance. Provide opportunities for students and parents to address causes of absences with district staff and link families to relevant community programs and support.
 - **Engage the district's homeless liaison personnel** –A significant number of uncontactable students are homeless. Districts should include their homeless liaison personnel and local community partners in the effort to locate such students. Additional information can be found in TEA webpage on the [Texas Education for Homeless Children and Youth \(TEHCY\) Program](#) as well as TEA COVID-19 FAQ regarding [Guidance for Students Experiencing Homelessness](#).