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THE COUNCIL OF STATE GOVERNMENTS SOUTHERN OFFICE

Georgia Senate Study Committee on Combating Absenteeism in Schools

CSG South Presentation

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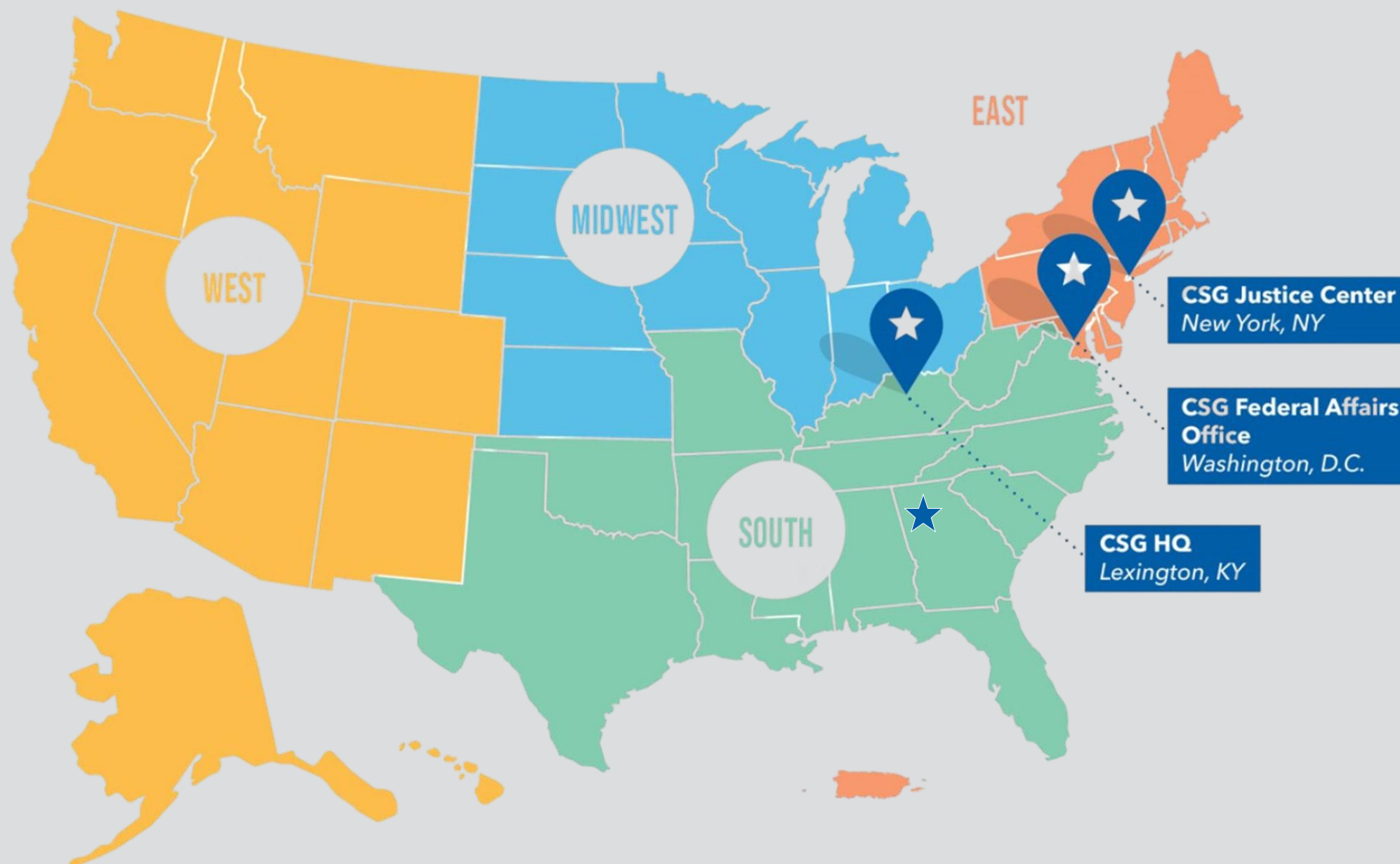
August 7, 2025



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CSG 101: A REGIONALLY-BASED NATIONAL ORGANIZATION



- Founded in 1933 by Colorado State Senator Henry Wolcott Toll
- Serves all three Branches of State Government
- Nonpartisan/Not for Profit 501(c)(3)
- \$58 Million Budget
- 300+ Employees
- Four Strong Regions
 - **CSG South**
 - CSG East
 - CSG Midwest
 - CSG West
- 56 Member States & Territories
- Justice Center
- 11 Affiliated Organizations

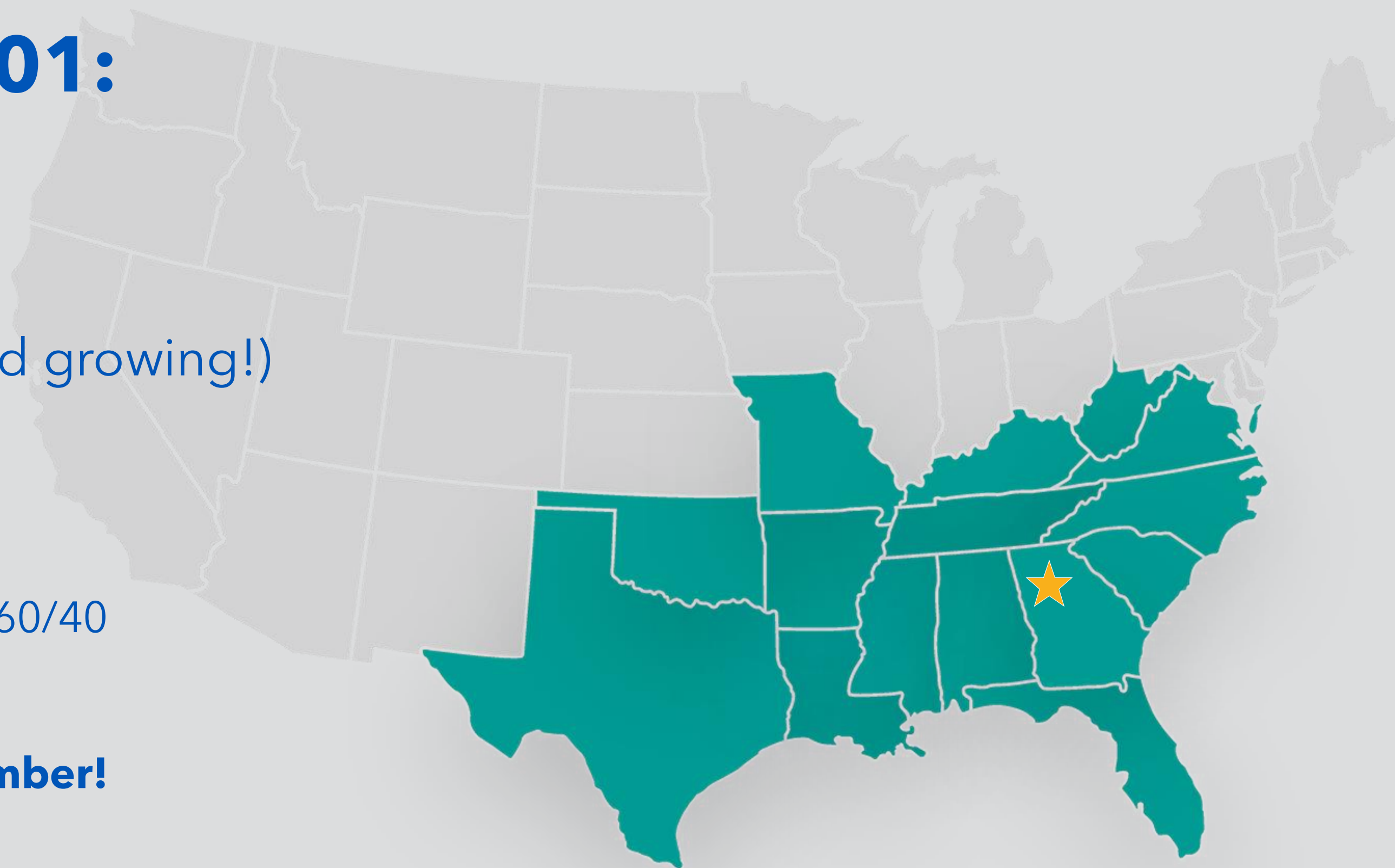


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CSG SOUTH 101:

- Established in 1947
- Executive Committee
- 15 Southern States
- 13 Staff Members (and growing!)
 - Policy & Research
 - Programs & Marketing
 - Events & Admin
- Funding
 - State Appropriations – 60/40
 - Private Sector
 - Grants & Foundations
 - **You are already a member!**





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CSG SOUTH: POLICY RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS

- **Six Standing Policy Committees**

- Education
- Economic Development and Transportation
- Fiscal Affairs & Government Operations
- Human Services and Public Safety
- Energy and Environment
- Agriculture and Rural Development

- **Member Services**

- Policy Information Requests
- Policy Publications
- State Session Visits
- Policy Masterclasses
- Domestic & International Delegations



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Saved by the Bell:

State Approaches to Bring the Chronic Absenteeism Crisis to a Screeching Halt



5 Key Focus Areas in State Efforts to Combat Absenteeism

- 01** Post-pandemic absenteeism surge
- 02** Understanding truancy v. chronic absence
- 03** Policy shifts from punishment to support
- 04** Team-based and community responses
- 05** Real-time data for decision-making



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The Growing Crisis



Sharp Increases Since 2018

Chronic absenteeism rates nearly doubled nationwide between 2018 and 2023, climbing from 14 % to 26 % overall. Southern states saw a similar or even steeper rise.

Pandemic Amplified the Problem

While absenteeism existed pre-COVID, the pandemic accelerated disengagement, disrupted routines, and increased challenges in tracking attendance reliably.

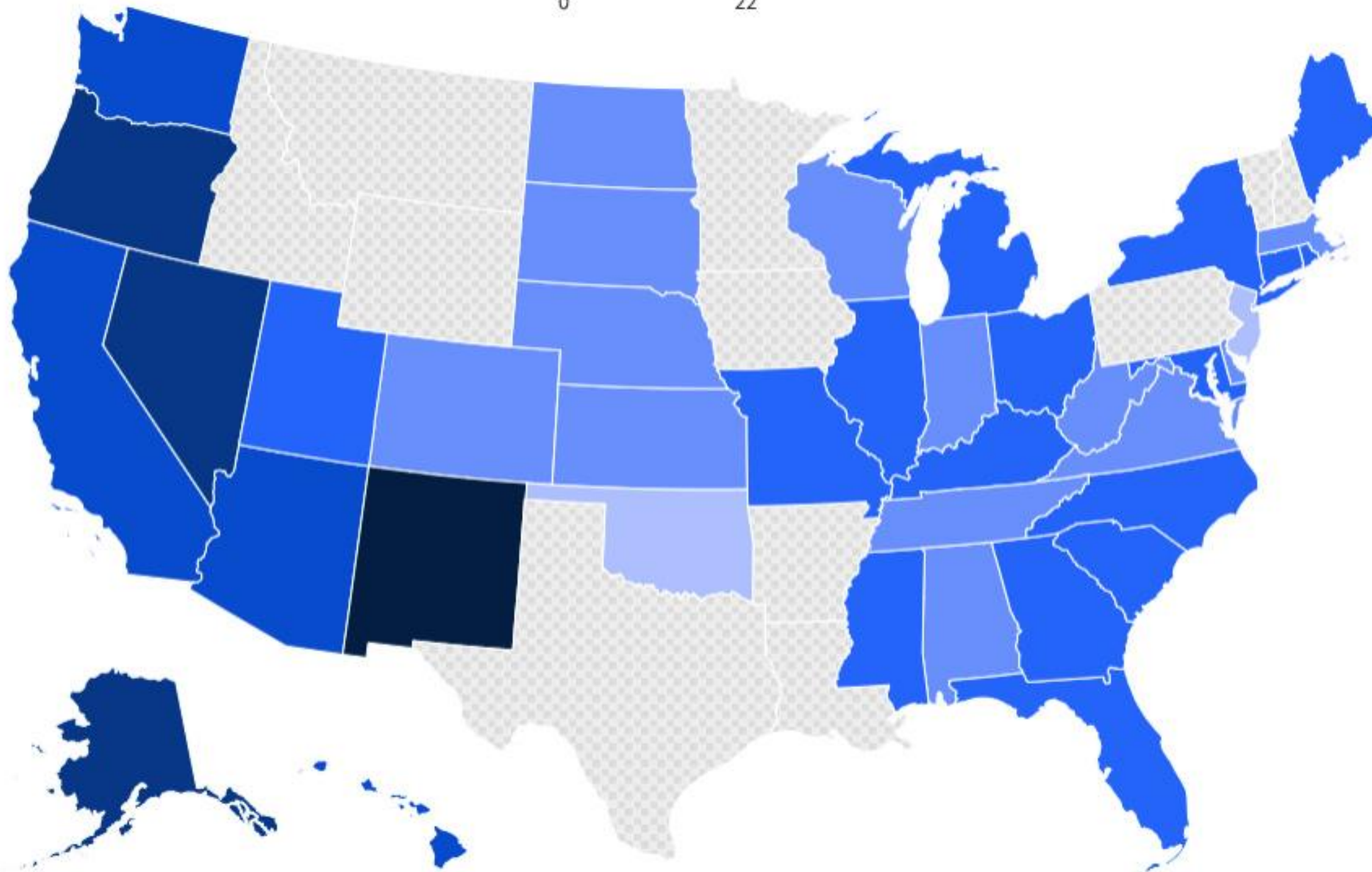
Limited and Delayed Data

By late 2023, only 12 states had published full absenteeism data for the previous academic year, complicating timely interventions.



Chronic Absenteeism Trends 2018-19 to 2022-23

Percentage point difference 2018-19 to 2022-23



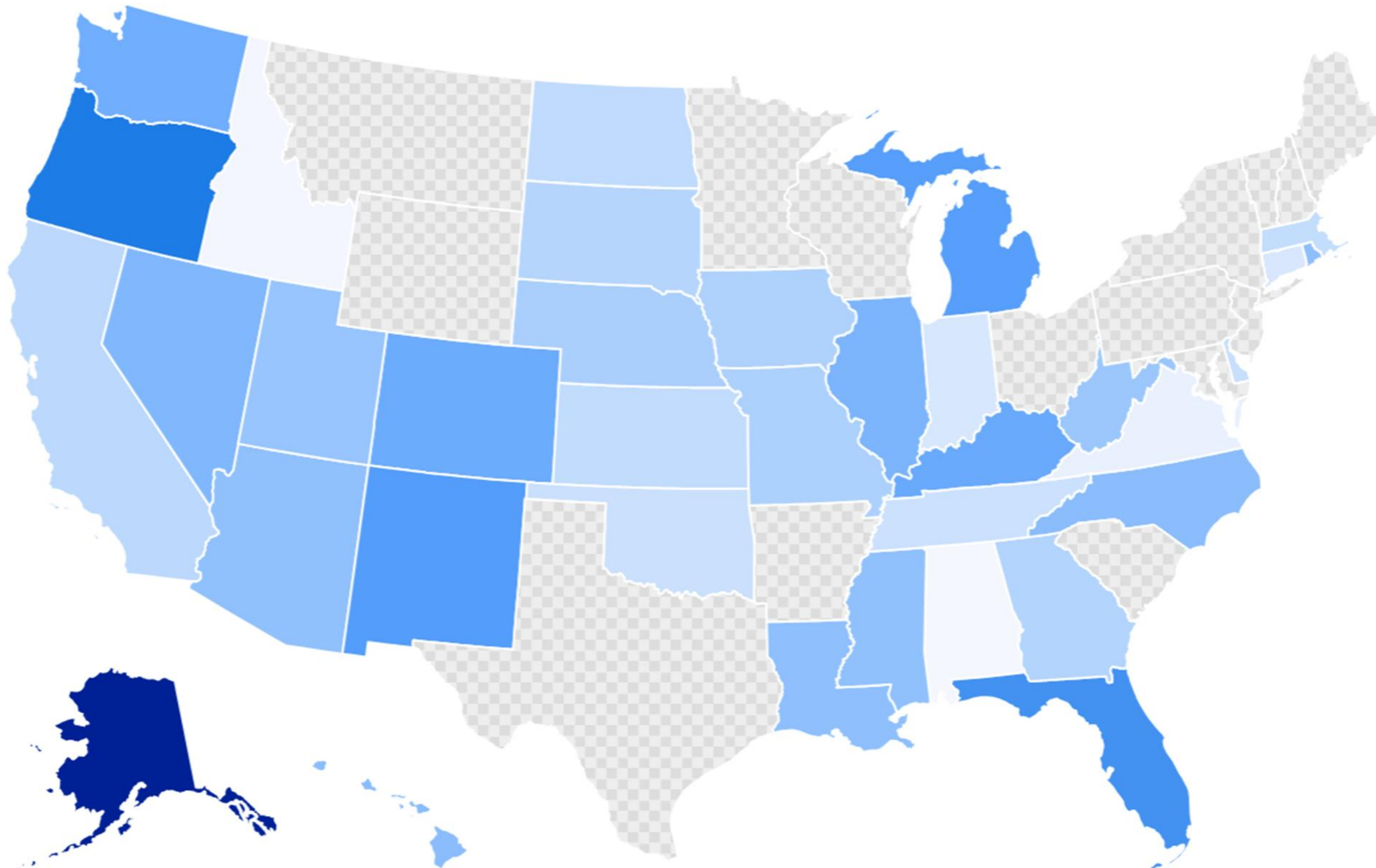
STATE	PRE- TO POST-PANDEMIC CHANGE (%)
Texas	+ 13.6
Kentucky	+ 12.0
South Carolina	+ 11.6
Florida	+ 10.9
Mississippi	+ 10.9
North Carolina	+ 10.8
Missouri	+ 10.7
Georgia	+ 9.9
Virginia	+ 8.7
Arkansas	+ 8.5
West Virginia	+ 7.6
Louisiana	+ 7.2
Tennessee	+ 7.1
Alabama	+ 6.7
Oklahoma	+ 6.0
CSG South Average	+ 9.5 %



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Chronic Absenteeism Rates (2023-2024) 14.8 43.4



CSG South States Above U.S. Average:

- ❑ *Florida 31.4%*
- ❑ *Kentucky 28.0%*
- ❑ *North Carolina 25.0%*
- ❑ *Louisiana 24.6%*
- ❑ *Mississippi 24.4%*
- ❑ *West Virginia 23.5%*



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Understanding the Distinction



Chronic
Absenteeism

Truancy

Chronic absenteeism includes all absences—excused, unexcused, and suspensions—that exceed 10 % of the school year.

Truancy refers strictly to unexcused absences and often triggers legal or disciplinary action. Policy responses must distinguish between the two to be effective.



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Policy Shift: From Punishment to Support

Suspension Restrictions

States like Arkansas, Florida, and Tennessee have passed laws to prohibit suspensions solely due to absenteeism, focusing on keeping students in school.

Intervention Before Punishment

Tennessee law mandates schools to assess and intervene before punitive actions—offering counseling and community services to at-risk students.

Supporting Learning During Suspension

Arkansas requires schools provide alternative learning option even when students face suspension for non-attendance-related violations.





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Team-Based & Community Interventions



State-Defined Attendance Teams

States like Connecticut and Maine require school attendance review teams, including educators, counselors, and community representatives, to identify causes and solutions.

Case Reviews and Action Plans

Attendance teams meet regularly to analyze chronic absentee cases and recommend both in-school and external supports tailored to each student.

Collaboration Emphasized

Mandated consistency in the involvement of families and mental/behavioral health professionals to develop effective and compassionate strategies.



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Real-Time Data Dashboards

The Ocean State Way

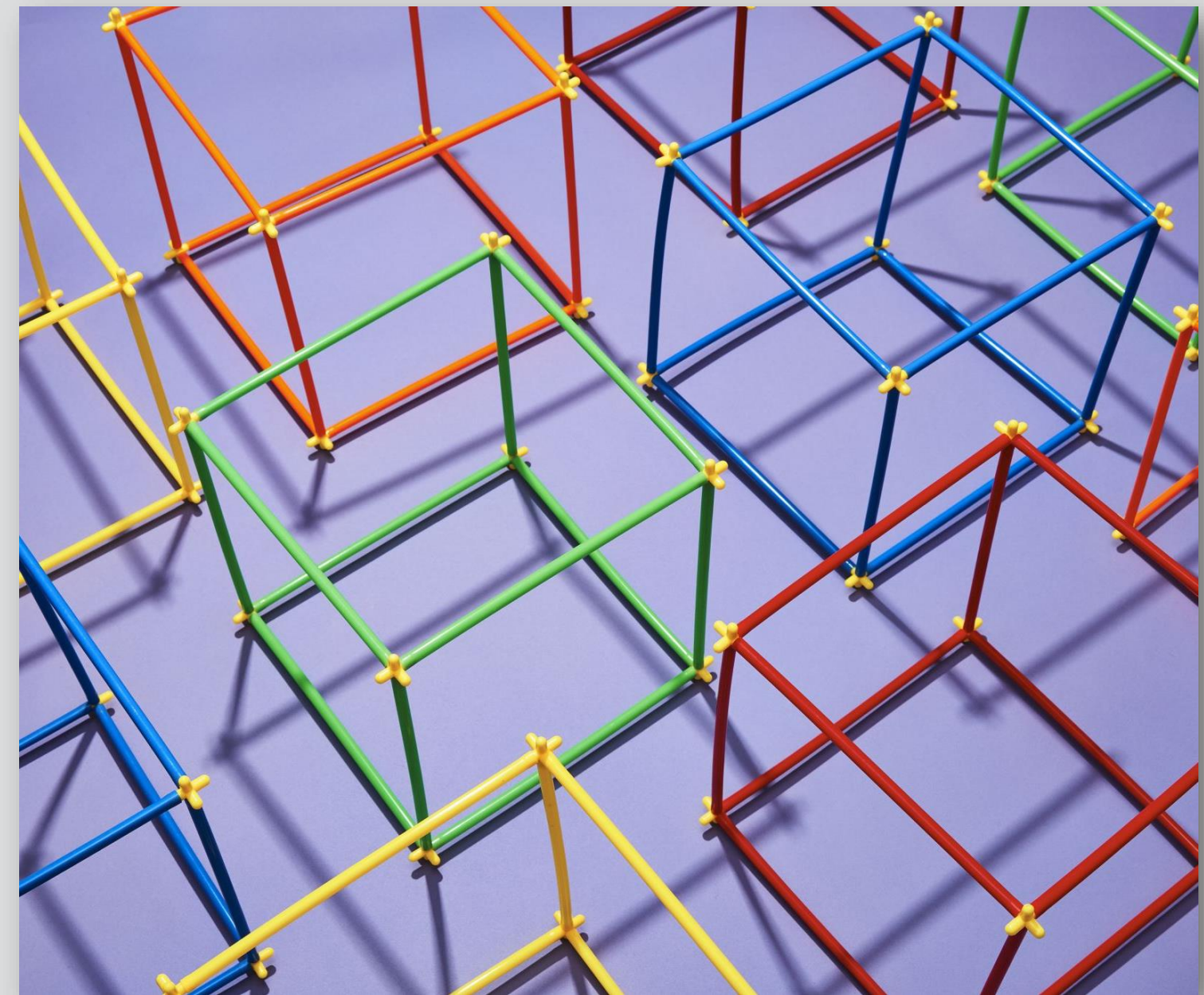
Rhode Island pioneered a daily real-time dashboard offering transparent and actionable insights into chronic absentees by district and individual schools.

Tracking Risk to Target Interventions

Connecticut and Indiana also use dashboards to identify at-risk students to better direct timely supported interventions and improve outcomes.

Building a Data-Driven Culture

Tools are only as useful as the data they are based on. They require consistently accurate and updated data to empower policymakers, educators, and families to collaborate and adjust interventionary policies on the fly.





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Combating Chronic Absenteeism: Closing Thoughts



- ❑ “Garbage in, Garbage Out” = Policymakers need timely and accurate data to act
- ❑ Collaboration between different state entities, schools and parents, and community support is needed to address the root causes
- ❑ Consider building on the model set by SB123 (2025) to require interagency tracking for stronger, more personalized interventions



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