

**UNITED WAY OF THE MIDLANDS CONTACT:**

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**United Way of the Midlands and Partners Host “Attendance Matters” Conference on October 4**

United Way of the Midlands (UWM) and the School Based Attendance Coalition will host a one-day “Attendance Matters” conference beginning at 8:00 a.m. on Thursday, Oct. 4<sup>th</sup> at the Mid-America Center, Council Bluffs. The conference will highlight the efforts of two “Bright Spot” communities working to improve attendance rates: Cleveland, Ohio and Baltimore, Md. Lorri Hobson, director of attendance for the Cleveland Metropolitan School District, and Sue Fothergill, associate director of policy at Attendance Works, will deliver the keynote address.

The “Attendance Matters” conference is a vital component of a coordinated attendance awareness campaign executed by UWM and the School Based Attendance Coalition. The regional campaign is part of a nationwide event recognizing the connection between school attendance and academic achievement. Approximately 18,500 students in our three-county area (Douglas, Sarpy and Pottawattamie Counties) missed 18 or more days of school last year. Chronic absence is a problem we can solve when the whole community works with families and schools.

**Keynote Speakers:**

***Lorri Hobson***

Lorri J. Hobson currently serves as director of attendance for the Cleveland Metropolitan School District (CMSD) in Cleveland, Ohio, the state’s second-largest K-12 school system with one of the nation’s most impoverished student populations. In her role as director of attendance for CMSD, Lorri successfully led the district’s first citywide attendance campaign, “Get 2 School, You Can Make It!” Under her leadership, the district reduced its chronic absenteeism rate from more than 44% to 28% in the first year of the campaign and received national recognition for this achievement. Lorri was inducted into the prestigious Delta Alpha Pi International Honor Society.

***Sue Fothergill***

Sue Fothergill is the associate director of policy for Attendance Works. She manages Attendance Works’ policy strategy, facilitates the National Network to Advance State Attendance Policy and Practice and provides technical assistance to help educators put in place evidence-based attendance improvement strategies. Prior to joining Attendance Works, Sue served as the director of attendance and related strategies for the Family League of Baltimore. Sue is the recipient of the John Brown Education Advocacy Award from Children First and the Distinguished Service Award from the PTA Council of Baltimore County.

**The event will have six breakout sessions featuring local moderators and panelists:**

- Improving Attendance through School and Community Partnerships
- The Voices Behind the Actions: A Student Panel on Absenteeism
- A Trauma-Informed Approach to Attendance
- Reframing School Practices to Address Chronic Absenteeism
- Building a Bridge with Data
- Developing Trauma-Informed Practices

**About the School Based Attendance Coalition**

The mission of the School Based Attendance Coalition is to increase school attendance through collective impact in the Greater Omaha Metropolitan Area.

**About the United Way of the Midlands**

Thanks to donors, volunteers and community partners, United Way of the Midlands is not only focused on addressing our community’s human needs today; it is focused on what can be, and what should be. It is building on today’s strong partnerships to create even more comprehensive human service efforts tomorrow, so our community can solve some of the root causes of poverty. United Way is community-based, community-focused. Thanks to those who share their strength, United Way is COMMUNITY STRONG. We invite you to visit [www.UnitedWayMidlands.org](http://www.UnitedWayMidlands.org) for more information.