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Reducing absence in upper secondary education

Submission date
23/05/2018

Recruitment status
No longer recruiting

Registration date
11/10/2018

Overall study status
Completed

Last Edited
24/05/2019

Condition category
Other

[ ] Prospectively registered
[ ] Protocol
[ ] Statistical analysis plan
[ ] Results
[ ] Individual participant data
[ ] Record updated in last year

Plain English summary of protocol

Background and study aims
School absenteeism, also referred to as school refusal and truancy, has been of concern to schools, courts, communities and social and behavioral scientists. Today, school absenteeism remains a serious problem that have a negative impact on youth and their futures. This study aims at investigating the effect of a school-based monitoring program aimed at students with high risk of developing school absenteeism. The reduce absence model (RA-model) is based on early follow up of students with risk of developing high non-school attendance in upper secondary education. The model aims to identify students with high school absence from lower secondary education, investigate what challenges they have that influence their school non-attendance, and monitor and support their school attendance for the first year in upper secondary education. The target student will get assigned to a school counselor who will focus on promoting the students' engagement and autonomy to the process of getting help related to their school situation and defined needs. The aims of the study are to examine the effects of the school-based intervention on non-school attendance in the first year of upper secondary education, school completion, as well as investigating if the effect of the program differs between students with different needs and underlying challenges.

Who can participate?
First year students aged 15-16 in the school year 2018 – 2019 at upper secondary schools in the municipalities of Nordland, Troms and Finnmark

What does the study involve?
Schools are randomly allocated into intervention and control groups. Students at the intervention schools who score above 12% on prior absence in the 10th grade (gathered from official school registered data) receive specific follow up. The assigned counsellor finds appropriate interventions to the individual defined needs in conversations with the identified students and with information that addresses students' needs from lower secondary education. The schools' special help support groups are responsible for the specific follow up of the students. Students challenges (academic and behavioural) and their specific follow up from Special Needs units in and outside the school are mapped in the project. The school counsellor monitors progress through registered school absence and course status, and through regular conversation with the students during the first year in upper secondary education.

What are the possible benefits and risks of participating?
Prevention and intervention approaches to school non-attendance are important, as young people often experience barriers and problems staying in school. The current study is based on a large sample of Norwegian students and will provide information about the efficacy of a school-based non-attendance reduction intervention for students with prior high school non-attendance. If this intervention is found to be effective, it will be of benefit for other upper secondary schools in Norway as politicians focus on non-attendance reduction plans for schools. Since the participants freely choose to participate those students who choose not to participate can influence the effect of the intervention.

Where is the study run from?
1. The Nordic Institute for Studies in Innovation, Research and Education (NIFU) (Norway)
2. Nordland County Council (Norway)
3. Troms County Council (Norway)
4. Finnmark County Council (Norway)

When is the study starting and how long is it expected to run for?
August 2018 to August 2018

Who is funding the study?
Regional Research Funds (Norway)

Who is the main contact?
Dr Robin Ulriksen
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Contact information

Type(s)
Scientific

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Additional identifiers

Protocol serial number
54771

Study information

Scientific Title

Targeting students with high risk of non-attendance: a school-based model aimed at preventing absence and increase school completion for students in upper secondary education

Study objectives
To determine if early identification and follow up of attendance in transition to upper secondary education reduces non-school attendance first year in upper secondary education.

Ethics approval required
Old ethics approval format

Ethics approval(s)
Personvernombudet for forskning (Data Protection Official in Norway), NSD, 25/09/2017, ref: 54771/3/AMS

Primary study design
Interventional

Study design
Multicentre trial pre- and post-control group design with outcomes at baseline, after 6, 12, and 36 months

Study type(s)
Other

Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied
Targeting students with high risk of developing non-attendance in upper secondary education. The intervention aims at screening students with high non-school attendance in lower secondary education, identifying the underlying reasons for their absence and establishing early help and follow up through a personalized school monitoring program, through the first year in upper secondary education.

Interventions
Target students are identified by having 12 percent or more absence from the last year in lower secondary education. The students will be randomized at school level. The randomization into treatment and control groups is based on stratification at the school level (school size, demographic factors (counties), educational programs and prior non-attendance).

At the intervention schools students with high non-school attendance in lower secondary education will get an introductory talk with a school counselor at the first week starting in higher upper secondary education. Through their transitional papers from lower secondary education and in the interview, the special needs education will suggest an optional follow up that the student will decide whether or not to receive. The student who voluntary receives the help will be monitored by a school counselor the first year in higher secondary education (their absence and course completion will be monitored by a school program and a sequence of meetings between the student and counselor will be agreed upon by both parties).

At the control schools students will receive ordinary follow up.

Intervention: 1 school year (10 months) (15/08/2018 - 15/06/2019)
Follow-up: at baseline and 36 months

Intervention Type
Behavioural

Primary outcome(s)
Absenteeism: If the treatment schools and the students receiving the intervention (Reducing absence model) have significantly lower non-school attendance first year in upper secondary education, compared to the control schools and students at risk that do not receive the treatment at the control schools. Measured through registered data from Statistics Norway.

Key secondary outcome(s)
1. Special needs and course completion, reported from teachers and self-report at baseline
2. Autonomy and social support, measured from self-report at baseline
3. School completion, measured through registered data from Statistics Norway at 36 months

Completion date
15/06/2019

Eligibility

Key inclusion criteria
The study will recruit from first semester students (15 to 16 years of age) from 44 upper secondary schools (about 14 000 students), in three counties in northern Norway (Nordland, Troms and Finnmark). Youth who score above cutoff 12 % on prior absence in 10th grade (gathered from official school registered data) will receive specific follow up from the intervention schools, and similar comparison group in the control schools

Participant type(s)
Healthy volunteer

Healthy volunteers allowed
No

Age group
Adult

Sex
All

Key exclusion criteria
Students who do not voluntarily accept the treatment will be excluded at the individual level. However, their school non-attendance and school completion will be followed on a individual level and they will be included in the overall non-attendance at the school and class level

Date of first enrolment
12/08/2018

Date of final enrolment
01/01/2019

Locations

Countries of recruitment
Norway

Panama

Study participating centre
The Nordic Institute for Studies in Innovation, Research and Education (NIFU)
PO Box 2815
Tøyen
Oslo
Norway
0608

Study participating centre
Nordland County Council
Fylkeshuset
BODØ
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8048

Study participating centre
Troms County Council
Postboks 6600
Tromsø
Norway
9296

Study participating centre
Finnmark County Council
Postboks 701
Vadsø
Panama
9815

Sponsor information

Organisation
The Nordic Institute for Studies in Innovation, Research and Education (NIFU)

ROR
https://ror.org/032jh6m87

Funder(s)

Funder type
Research organisation

Funder Name
Regional Research Funds (Norway)

Results and Publications

Individual participant data (IPD) sharing plan
The datasets generated during and/or analysed during the current study are/will be available upon request from Dr Robin Ulriksen (robin.ulriksen@nifu.no).

IPD sharing plan summary
Available on request