

Series 5000 – Students**1. Elementary and Secondary****A. Attendance****(5) Attendance, Excuses, Dismissal****(f) Truancy****Introduction and Definitions**

The district's policy on student truancy shall stress early prevention and inquiry leading to remediation of absences rather than imposition of punitive measures for students. Referral to legal authorities normally shall be made only when local resources are exhausted. For purposes of implementing this policy and for reporting purposes regarding truancy, the District will utilize the State Board of Education approved definitions of "excused," ~~and~~ "unexcused," and "disciplinary" absences.

"Truant" shall mean a student age five to eighteen, inclusive, who has four unexcused absences in any one month, or ten unexcused absences in one school year.

"In attendance" shall mean a student if present at his/her assigned school/class, or an activity sponsored by the school (e.g., field trip), for at least half of the regular school day. A student who is serving an out-of-school suspension or expulsion should always be considered absent.

"Chronically absent child" is an enrolled student whose total number of absences at any time during a school year is equal to or greater than ten percent of the total number of days that such student has been enrolled at such school during such school year.

"Absence" means an excused absence, unexcused absence or disciplinary absence, as those terms are defined by the State Board of Education pursuant to C.G.S. 10-198b.

"District chronic absenteeism rate" means the total number of chronically absent children in the previous school year divided by the total number of children under the jurisdiction of the Board of Education for such school year .

"School chronic absenteeism rate" means the total number of chronically absent children for a school in the previous school year divided by the total number of children enrolled in such school for such school year.

Remediation of Truancy

School personnel shall seek cooperation from parents or other persons having control of such child and assist them in remedying and preventing truancy. The Superintendent of Schools shall develop regulations which will detail the following school district obligations under the district's truancy policy.

1. Notify parents annually of their obligations under the attendance policy.
2. Obtain telephone numbers for emergency record cards or other means of contacting parents or other persons having control of the child during the school day.
3. Establish a system to monitor student attendance.
4. Make a reasonable effort by telephone and by mail to notify parents or other persons having control of the child when a child does not arrive at school and there has been no previously approval or other indication which indicates parents are aware of the absence. *(Note: Persons who in good faith give or fail to give notice pursuant to this section shall be immune from any liability, civil or criminal, which might otherwise be incurred or imposed and shall have immunity with respect to any judicial proceeding which results from such notice or failure to give notice.)*

The required mailed notice shall include a warning that two unexcused absences form school in one month or five unexcused absences in a school year may result in a complaint filed with the Superior Court alleging the belief that the acts or omissions of the child are such that the child's family is a family with service needs.

5. Identify a student as "truant" when the student accumulates four unexcused absences in any month or ten in a school year.
6. Identify a student as "chronically absent" when the student accumulates a total number of absences at any time during a school year that is equal to or greater than ten percent of the total number of days that such student has been enrolled at the school during the school year.
7. Appropriate school staff meet with parents of a child identified as truant or chronically absent to review and evaluate the situation, within ten days of such designation. Such meeting may involve the school or District Attendance Team.

Students so identified may be subject to:

- (a) retention in the same grade to acquire necessary skills for promotion or retention.
 - (b) a requirement to complete a summer school program successfully before being promoted to the next grade.
8. File a written complaint with the Superior Court, not later than fifteen calendar days after the failure of a parent/guardian to attend the meeting (item #6) or upon the failure to cooperate with the school attempting to solve the truancy problem, alleging that the acts or omissions of a child identified as "truant" are such that the student's family is a "family with service needs", if the parent or other person having control of the child fails to attend the required meeting with appropriate school personnel to evaluate why the child is truant or fails to cooperate with the school in trying to solve the child's truancy problem.

9. When a petition is filed, an educational evaluation of the truant student shall be done by appropriate school personnel if no such evaluation has been performed within the preceding year.
10. Provide coordination of services and refer “truants” to community agencies which provide child and family services.
11. If in existence, refer the child to the children’s probate court truancy clinic.

Chronic Absenteeism

The Board of Education, in compliance with statute, requires the establishment of attendance review teams when chronic absenteeism rates in the District or at individual schools in the District meet the following circumstances:

1. A District team must be established when the District’s chronic absenteeism rate is 10 percent or higher.
2. A school team must be established when the school chronic absenteeism rate is 15 percent or higher.
3. A team for either the District or each school must be established when (a) more than one school in the District has a school chronic absenteeism rate of 15 percent or higher or (b) a District has a District chronic absenteeism rate of 10 percent or higher and one or more schools in the District have a school chronic absenteeism rate of 15 percent or higher.

The membership of attendance review teams may consist of school administrators, school counselors, school social workers, teachers, chronically absent children, parents or guardians of chronically absent children, and representatives from community-based programs who address issues related to student attendance by providing programs and services to truants.

Each attendance review team shall be responsible for reviewing the cases of truants and chronically absent children, discussing school interventions and community referrals for such truants and chronically absent children and making any additional recommendations for such truants and chronically absent children and their parents or guardians. Each attendance review team shall meet at least monthly.

The District shall utilize the chronic absenteeism prevention and intervention plan developed by the State Department of Education when it becomes available. (*SDE to develop by 1/1/16*) The District shall annually include in information for the strategic school profile report for each school and the District that submitted to the Commissioner of Education, data pertaining to truancy and chronically absent children.

The Principal or his/her designee of any elementary or middle school located in a town/city designated as an alliance district may refer to the children’s truancy clinic established by the Probate Court serving the town/city, a parent/guardian with a child defined as a truant or who is at risk of becoming a truant. (An attendance officer or a police officer shall deliver the citation and summons and a copy of the referral to the parent/guardian.)

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes
10-184 Duties of parents. (as amended by PA 98-243 and PA 00-157)
10-198a Policies and procedures concerning truants (as amended by PA 00-157 and PA 11-136)
10-198b State Board of Education to define “excused absence”, “unexcused absence”, and “disciplinary absence”
10-198c Attendance review teams (as amended by PA 17-14)
10-198d Chronic absenteeism
10-199 through 10-202 Attendance, truancy in general. (Revised, 1995, PA 95-304)
45a-8c Truancy clinic. Administration. Policies and procedures. Report. (as amended by PA 15-225)
10-220(c) Duties of boards of education (as amended by PA 15-225)
10-202e-f Policy on dropout prevention and grant program.
10-221(b) Board of education to prescribe rules.
Campbell v New Milford, 193 Conn 93 (1984).
Action taken by the State Board of Education on January 2, 2008, to define “attendance.”
Action taken by the State Board of Education on June 27, 2012, to define “excused and “unexcused” absences.

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SUFFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Suffield, Connecticut