

6.004. Policy Concerning School Attendance and Truancy

Cooperative Educational Services (C.E.S.) believes that regular school attendance is essential for an effective and productive learning experience for students enrolled in its school-based programs. Regular school attendance is both encouraged and mandated (Connecticut General Statute Section 10-184). Excessive absences inhibit both successful learning and the continuity of instruction required by students. C.E.S. recognizes that students may occasionally miss school for entirely legitimate reasons. These reasons, when documented by a parent or guardian will typically be considered "excused absences". However, absences which occur for no legitimate reason will be considered "unexcused" and will warrant appropriate follow-up action by the school program.

Pursuant to Public Act 22-47, C.E.S. will provide parents of truant students with information concerning the existence and availability of the 2-1-1 Infoline program, and other pediatric mental and behavioral health screening services and tools.

Required by Public Act 11-136, the State Board of Education has adopted definitions for "excused" and "unexcused" absences to determine which students qualify as a truant for state reporting purposes. The definitions are:

Excused Absences

A student's absence¹ from school shall be considered excused if written documentation² of the reason for the absence has been submitted within ten school days of the student's return to school or in accordance with Section 10-210 of the Connecticut General Statutes and meets the following criteria:

1. For absences one through nine, a student's absences from school are considered excused when the student's parent/guardian approves such absence and submits appropriate documentation; and
2. For the tenth absence and all absences thereafter, a student's absences from school are considered excused for the following reasons:
 - student illness (Note: all student illness absences must be verified by an appropriately licensed medical professional to be deemed excused, regardless of the length of absence);
 - student's observance of a religious holiday;
 - death in the student's family or other emergency beyond the control of the student's family;
 - mandated court appearances (additional documentation required);
 - the lack of transportation that is normally provided by a district other than the one the student attends (no parental documentation is required for this reason); or
 - extraordinary educational opportunities pre-approved by district administrators and in accordance with Connecticut State Department of Education guidance.

Unexcused Absences

A student's absence from school shall be considered unexcused unless they meet one of the following criteria:

1. the absence meets the definition of an excused absence (including documentation requirements); or
2. the absence meets the definition of a disciplinary absence.

Disciplinary Absences

Absences that are the result of school or district disciplinary action are excluded from these definitions.

¹ The Connecticut State Board of Education policy states that "*A student is considered to be 'in attendance' if present at his/her assigned school, 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.*" A student not meeting the definition of 'in attendance' is considered absent.

² Such documentation should include a signed note from the student's parent/guardian, a signed note from a school official that spoke in person with the parent/guardian regarding the absence, or a note confirming the absence by the school nurse or by a licensed medical professional, as appropriate. Documentation should explain the nature of and the reason for the absence as well as the length of the absence. Separate documentation must be submitted for each incidence of absenteeism. For example, if a student is out sick two consecutive days, that student must submit the appropriate documentation covering both sick days. If a student is out sick two nonconsecutive days, that student must submit the appropriate documentation following each absence. Schools should take steps to allow non-English speaking parents/guardians to submit documentation in their native language.

Consistent with Connecticut General Statutes Section 10-198a, C.E.S. recognizes the importance of early intervention for students exhibiting truancy behavior. Therefore, it is the policy of C.E.S. to monitor school attendance [in collaboration with the student's responsible school district so as to identify students who are truant; to enlist the cooperation of parents in reporting school absences; and, when necessary, enlist the cooperation of the responsible school district in order to change a truancy pattern that has developed.] so as to identify students who are truant. For the special education program and the Regional Center for the Arts, this monitoring will be done in collaboration with the student's responsible school district, and when necessary, enlist their cooperation in order to change a truancy pattern that has developed. All C.E.S. programs will enlist the cooperation of parents to reduce excessive absences and to ensure that the student regularly attends school. The Executive Director is authorized to establish administrative procedures to monitor student attendance to insure the recognition of

students who are in the early stages of truancy and to report those students who are truant or habitually truant to their responsible school districts.

Reference: Connecticut General Statute Section 10-184

Connecticut General Statute Section 10-198a

Connecticut General Statute Section 10-200

Connecticut General Statute Section 10-210

ADOPTED: January 21, 1993

REVISED: June 1, 2000

REVISED: September 5, 2002

REVISED: October 4, 2012

REVISED: November 3, 2022