2025-2026

LEARNFARE PROGRAM

Attendance Manual

School Social Services
School District of Volusia County
P.O. Box 2118
DeLand, Florida 32721-2118

August 2025

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Learnfare Program 1
School Attendance 1
Parent/School Conference Requirements 1
School District's Responsibility 2
Data Reporting Procedures 2
Department of Children and Families (DCF) Responsibilities 2
Confidentiality 3
Contacts 3
Frequently Asked Questions and Answers 4
Suggested Best Practices: Tips for Effective School Conferencing 8
Student Compliance with Attendance Requirements – Sample Form 9
Appendix A 10

Learnfare Program

The current Learnfare Program requirements reflect a change in criteria regarding student attendance and parental participation in school conferences for families who are eligible to receive Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA) administered by the Department of Children and Families (DCF). A family receiving TCA could jeopardize its eligibility if a minor child in the home is determined by the school to be either a habitual truant or a dropout. Additionally, eligible TCA parents must participate in school conferences once each semester for each dependent child of compulsory school attendance age.

School Attendance

Pursuant to Section 1003.26, Florida Statute, regular school attendance is required for children between the ages of 6 and 18, which includes teenage parents under the age of 18 receiving cash assistance for their children. A student who attains the age of 16 during the school year is no longer subject to compulsory school attendance beyond the date which he or she attains that age if the student files a formal declaration of intent to terminate school enrollment with the district school board. The student's parent or legal guardian must also sign the declaration of intent to terminate school enrollment. A 16- or 17-year-old student who drops out of school is not excluded from being reported to DCF because the Learnfare Statute identifies eligible students as those who have been determined by the school to be either a habitual truant or a dropout.

Section 414.1251(1), Florida Statutes, requires DCF to reduce the Temporary Cash Assistance for an eligible parent's dependent child or for an eligible teenage participant who is not exempt from school attendance requirements and who has been identified as a habitual truant or as a dropout.

Pursuant to Florida Statute, Section 1003.01(8), a habitual truant is defined as a student who has accumulated 15 unexcused absences within 90 calendar days with or without the knowledge or consent of the student's parent or legal guardian. A dropout is defined in Florida Statute, Section 1003.01(9), and includes all students who are assigned a withdrawal code that is reported as a dropout code (DNE, W05, W13, W15, W18, W21, W22, and W23).

Parent/School Conference Requirements

According to Florida Statute, Section 414.1251(2), each TCA participant with a school-age child is required to have a conference with an appropriate school official during each semester to assure that the participant is involved in the child's educational progress and is aware of any existing attendance or academic problems. While the law is silent on an acceptable method for the required school conference, generally, a school conference may be a face-to-face meeting or a telephone conversation. The conference must address acceptable student attendance, grades, and behavior and must be documented by the school and reported to DCF. The school official conducting a conference with a student's parent or caretaker relative can utilize the Suggested Best Practices: Tips for Effective School Conferencing (*see page 8*). Verification of the school conference requirements is satisfied by the parent's statement of completion of the conference and reported at their scheduled review conference with DCF. A participant who without good cause fails to attend a school conference as required is subject to sanction. The temporary cash assistance shall be reinstated after the participant attends the conference with the appropriate school official and that conference is documented by the school and reported to DCF.

School District's Responsibility

School districts are required to notify the Department of Children and Families by electronic means when an eligible child is either a habitual truant or a dropout. Upon notification of the pending sanction, the school social worker will collaborate with the child's school to ensure that all necessary interventions have been attempted prior to any referral by the school social worker to DCF. Before a student's name is submitted back to DCF, the district wants to ensure that all the necessary steps have been taken to provide services to the student and the family.

Verification of compliance with attendance requirements is documented by an authorized school official using the Student Compliance with Attendance Requirements: Verification to the Department of Children and Families for the Learnfare Program form *(see sample form, page 9)*.

Data Reporting Procedures

The DCF will create and transmit the Learnfare List to the Northwest Regional Data Center by the 25th of each month. The list will be county specific and will identify all school age children (children ages 6 through 18) of Temporary Cash Assistance clients. Each local school district will download its file and annotate the file by inserting the following codes as applicable:

Code	Definition
01	The child is truant
02	The child is a dropout

The status should be left blank if neither applies. For students who are coded as 01 or 02 in the Sanction Reason Code, the student's school name and address are entered on each student record. For students who are coded 02 in the Sanction Reason Code, identify the date on which the student was identified as a dropout.

Department of Children and Families (DCF) Responsibilities

The Learnfare List must be retransmitted back to DCF by the 10th of each month to have a data exchange response posted to the DCF specialist on the night of the 10th. Upon electronic notification, DCF staff will review the case record to determine if good cause exists for failure to participate in regular school attendance. If good cause does not exist, the parent of a student who is a habitual truant or a dropout receives notice of possible reduction of the benefit amount. If a good cause requirement is not met, The DCF specialist will notify the Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA) and action will be taken to remove the child from the TCA assistance group effective the first month following the required adverse action period. Because of this activity, the child will no longer be cash eligible, and his/her name will not reappear once removed from the case file.

DCF procedures include a fair hearing process. If a sanction is imposed to the benefit amount, the student may be reinstated when:

1. The truant student's substantially improved attendance during a subsequent grading period is confirmed or

2. After a student who has dropped out of school reenrolls in school, receives a high school diploma or its equivalent, enrolls in preparation for the high school equivalency assessment or enrolls in another educational activity approved by the district school board.

Improved attendance is defined as "being present in school for at least 30 consecutive school days with no unexcused absences." The count starts over following an unexcused absence during the 30-day period. Excused absences are allowed during the 30-day period; however, it extends the length of time to satisfy the 30-day criteria by one day for each day's absence.

The child will be added back to TCA benefits during a subsequent grading period following verification of compliance with school attendance requirements by an authorized school official. Verification of compliance is documented on the Student Compliance with Attendance Requirements – Verification form *(see sample form, page 9)*.

Confidentiality

Any list of truant children or dropouts provided to DCF by Florida school districts shall remain confidential as provided by law. Any list of TCA recipients provided to the school district by DCF shall also remain confidential as provided by law. Each agency will protect the rights of students and recipients with respect to records created, maintained, and used by public institutions within the state.

Contacts

Learnfare Program	**Melissa Fordham, MSW** School Social Worker/Attendance Lead Volusia County Schools Olson Facilities 3750 Olson Drive Daytona Beach, FL 32124 (386) 255-6475 ext. 50720 E-mail: mhfordha@volusia.k12.fl.us
Technical Assistance	Information Technology Services (ext. 20000)

1. **Are there penalties for Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA) clients who have school-age children not attending school on a regular basis?**

   Yes. The Learnfare Program requires school-age children of those receiving TCA to attend school on a regular basis. However, if those students become truant or drop out of school, as defined by Sections 1003.01(8) and (9), Florida Statutes, they will be reported to the local Department of Children and Families (DCF) district office. The law requires that the student who has been reported as either a truant or a dropout be removed from the cash assistance grant; however, the determination of whether penalties are imposed will be made by the DCF Public Assistance Specialist (PAS).

2. **How often must the school district report to DCF?**

   DCF will create and transmit the Learnfare List to the Northwest Regional Data Center (NRDC) by the 25th of each month. The list will be county specific and will contain all Learnfare eligible children ages 6 through 18. School districts will "draw down" their list, match the file with attendance records, and annotate the file by indicating "01" if the child is truant, "02" if the child is a dropout, or by leaving the child's status blank if neither applies. DCF requests that the school's name and address are entered for each matched student record or in the case of a dropout student that the dropout date is posted if one is available. The list must be sent back to DCF via NRDC by the 10th of the following month.

3. **What happens if inaccuracy of the data yields an incorrect match and subsequent report to DCF?**

   The school district is responsible for completing and returning the data file to DCF. The statute places no additional responsibility on school districts to resolve errors associated with the process. However, if a student is identified to DCF as either a truant or dropout and is subsequently discovered not to be either a truant or a dropout, this error should be recorded on the Student Compliance with Attendance Requirements – verification form *(see sample form, page 9)* by placing a check in the box marked "student was reported in error."

4. **How is verification of attendance obtained for a student who was reported to DCF?**

   At the parent's or official caretaker's request, verification of compliance with attendance requirements is documented by an authorized school official using the Student Compliance with Attendance Requirements – verification form *(see sample form, page 9)*.

5. **Who supplies the Student Compliance with Attendance Requirements – verification form used to confirm that a reported student has become compliant?**

   The Student Compliance with Attendance Requirements – verification form is provided as an attachment to this report *(see sample form, page 9)*. School superintendents are responsible for dissemination of the form to all relevant educational settings within the school district involved in Learnfare Program activities. Designated school representatives are encouraged to share this verification form with the DCF Public Assistance Specialists. By sharing this form, required by

DCF to verify compliance with school attendance, school districts will assist in providing adequate resources and information to TCA participants.

6. Are registration forms of school enrollment sufficient for verification of attendance?

No. Satisfaction of relevant attendance requirements determines verification status. School enrollment registration is not verification of attendance and is not processed by DCF.

7. Does attendance in summer school satisfy compliance with attendance requirements?

Yes. Participation in summer school satisfies requirements for verification of attendance if the district provides summer school, the student is eligible to participate, and the student meets relevant attendance requirements, which include 30 consecutive days of attendance with no unexcused absences during a subsequent grading period.

8. Can a student be emancipated and exempt from attendance requirements by virtue of becoming a parent?

No. A minor student is not emancipated by virtue of becoming a parent. The student must comply with compulsory school attendance requirements since school attendance is related to age and educational status.

9. Are expelled students affected?

Yes. The legislation intended that the school district's non-reporting of an individual minor identified as Learnfare eligible to DCF represents the minor's compliance with attendance requirements. Therefore, *the expelled students must be reported as soon as they are officially withdrawn from school.* Good cause exemptions from the rule of unexcused absences includes the student who is expelled from school and alternative schooling is not available.

10. Who is responsible for determining if the student identified as truant has demonstrated substantial improvement in attendance?

Upon request by a parent, a school official acquainted with reports of the student attendance records will determine if the student has demonstrated regular attendance, during a subsequent grading period. The student will need to be present in school for at least 30 consecutive school days with no unexcused absences. If an unexcused absence occurs during the 30-day accumulation period, the count starts over. Excused absences are allowed during the accumulation period; however, this extends the length of time of satisfying the 30-day criteria by one day for each excused absence during the 30-day accumulation period.

11. If Temporary Cash Assistance is sanctioned by DCF due to a student's non-attendance, can consecutive days of attendance with no unexcused absences be carried over to the next school year to satisfy compliance with attendance requirements?

Yes. The student must attend 30 consecutive school days with no unexcused absences for the school district to verify compliance with attendance requirements. This may include consecutive days of attendance from the previous school year and the current school year.

12. How does a student who was reported to DCF as a dropout become compliant with attendance requirements?

After a student who has dropped out of school receives a high school diploma or its equivalent, reenrolls in school, enrolls in preparation for the high school equivalency assessment or enrolls in another educational activity approved by the district school board and demonstrates 30 consecutive days of attendance with no unexcused absence.

13. Is there an attendance requirement for the student reported as a dropout once the student enrolls in a GED or other approved educational program?

Yes. The legislation intended for students reported as dropouts not only to enroll in an approved educational program but also to meet relevant attendance requirements. In order to align the attendance requirements for these alternative education settings (which may include adult educational programs and community colleges) with the attendance requirements for students in K-12 programs, it is recommended that these students enroll and be in attendance for a six week period without an unexcused absence.

14. Who in the school district is responsible for facilitating the verification of the attendance process for students enrolled in adult education or vocational programs?

It is recommended that the director of adult education be responsible for collaborating with the school administrators to facilitate this process.

15. What documents are required to verify attendance when a student transfers to a home education program?

Pursuant to Section 1002.41, Florida Statutes, regular attendance may be achieved by attendance in a home education program. The parent/guardian must notify the school district's home education department of their intent to enroll the student in home education. When the parent submits the Student Compliance with Attendance Requirements – verification form, they must also include documentation from the school district that the student is officially enrolled in a home education program. This documentation may be a letter on official school district letterhead, signed by the district home education department verifying that the parent has officially enrolled the student in home education. This will also ensure that the appropriate withdrawal code is used, and the student is no longer reported as a dropout. Pursuant to Section 1003.26(1) (f), Florida Statutes, the student and parent may also be required to present a portfolio of the student's work, to include a plan of study, work completed by the student, and a reading list for the student, to the portfolio review committee, to be reviewed by the committee until it is judged that the student is in compliance with the home education requirements.

16. When a student is enrolled in a school district's hospital/homebound program, who is responsible for completion of the Student Compliance with Attendance Requirements verification form?

The hospital/homebound teacher can verify enrollment and attendance; therefore, he or she has the appropriate information to complete the verification form.

17. Are TCA payments associated with Learnfare also contingent on a school conference requirement?

Yes. The Learnfare Statute requires that parents or caretaker-relatives of school-age children receiving TCA participate in a school conference at least once a semester for each eligible school-age child. The school conference is to be held with an appropriate school official of the child's school. The intent of the conference is to assure that the TCA participant engages in the student's educational progress and is aware of any existing attendance or academic problems.

Florida law requires that parents or caretaker-relatives be removed from the cash assistance grant if they do not meet the school conference requirement; however, whether penalties are imposed will be determined by the DCF Public Assistance Specialist.

18. What is the definition of a semester?

For the purposes of Learnfare, a semester is defined as one-half of an academic school year. There are two semesters in a regular school year.

19. Who is considered a school official?

Section 414.1251(2), Florida Statutes, refers to "an appropriate school official." While the statute does not provide additional personnel specifications, the purpose of the conference is to address acceptable student attendance, grades, and behavior. Therefore, the school official must be someone who has this information, such as a principal, assistant principal, teacher, school counselor, or the principal's designee. If the student has more than one teacher, the parent is not required to meet with each of the student's teachers. Instead, Florida law requires the parent meet with a school official who is familiar with the student's work in each class.

20. What is considered a school conference?

The statute is silent on an acceptable method for the required school conference as part of Learnfare. Generally, a school conference may be a face-to-face meeting, a virtual meeting, or a telephone conversation with a school official. However, when a student has been identified as a truant or a dropout, a face-to-face conference with a school official may prove to be more beneficial than a virtual or telephone conference. School officials are encouraged to develop procedures, including timelines, for required school conferences related to Learnfare. The school official conducting a school conference with a student's parent or caretaker relative can utilize the Suggested Best Practices: Tips for Effective School Conferencing (*see page 8*).

21. How will the conference be set up and parent participation verified?

The responsibility to arrange for a conference each semester is placed on the parent or caretaker TCA participant. DCF must notify schools of Learnfare eligible students so that the required conferences are held. Schools are required to document that the conferences have taken place and may elect to initiate a system for meeting the parent conference requirement. The DCF Public Assistance Specialist (PAS) may contact the school to confirm completion of a school conference; however, the TCA participant is responsible for providing verification to DCF that the conference requirement has been satisfied. The parent's or caretaker's statement of completion of the conference which is reported at their scheduled review conference with DCF satisfies this requirement.

Suggested Best Practices: Tips for Effective School Conferencing

A school official conducting a school conference with a student's parent or caretaker relative is encouraged to consider the following discussion points for effective conferencing:

- welcome the parent or legal guardian
- state goals of the conference, including expectations for acceptable student attendance, grades, and behavior
- discuss student's attendance record, academic progress, and behavior in each class
- help to identify support needed to ensure successful academic and behavioral experiences and acceptable attendance (i.e., counseling, homework strategies, study skills, communication with teacher(s), organizational skills—daily planner, health information)
- ask parent/legal guardian to describe their child's interests in and out of school
- suggest available school activities and extracurricular programs
- suggest a meeting with another student who is a member of a group of interest to talk with their child at school (if interest is acknowledged)
- ask the parent/legal guardian to discuss their post-secondary education goals for their child
- discuss opportunities and resources available to identify student interests and career goals (refer to the school counselor or career specialist)
- ask the parent/legal guardian for follow-up if they would like assistance in identifying community resources/agencies (as needed, refer to appropriate school personnel)
- ask if the parent or legal guardian would like any explanation of items discussed at the conference
- offer contact information and the opportunity for a follow-up conference, encourage continued communication, and ensure them that their involvement in their child's education and school is highly valued
- thank the parent or legal guardian for attending the conference
- document the conference and on parent/guardian request, provide written verification

Student Compliance with Attendance Requirements: Verification to the Department of Children and Families for the Learnfare Program

This is to provide verification to the Department of Children and Families that the following student who has received DCF notification of removal from the TCA assistance group due to habitual truancy or dropping out of school is in compliance with attendance requirements as stated in section 414.1251, Florida Statutes.

Student's Name:_____
(First) (Middle) (Last)

Mailing Address: _____

Social Security Number:_____ Date of Birth: _____

District Name:_____ District Number: _____

School Name:_____ School Number: _____

☐ Student was reported for habitual truancy (accumulating 15 unexcused absences within 90 calendar days) and has satisfied thirty (30) consecutive days of attendance with no unexcused absences.

☐ Student was reported for being a dropout and has enrolled in a public school, has received a high school diploma, has enrolled in preparation for the General Educational Development Tests or other school board approved educational activities and meets relevant attendance requirements.

☐ Student is officially enrolled in a school district home education program (attach home education enrollment documentation).

☐ Student was reported in error.

Authorized School Official: _____ Date: _____
(signature must be notarized or school seal affixed below)

Title of Authorized School Official: _____

Typed or Printed Name of Person Signing Form: _____

Telephone (_____)_____

_____
Notary Public
State of Florida at Large
My commission expires:_____/_____/_____

_____
(School Seal)

Appendix A

414.1251 Learnfare program.—
1) The department shall reduce the temporary cash assistance for a participant's eligible dependent child or for an eligible teenage participant who has not been exempted from education participation requirements, if the eligible dependent child or eligible teenage participant has been identified either as a habitual truant, pursuant to s. 1003.01(8), or as a dropout, pursuant to s. 1003.01(9). For a student who has been identified as a habitual truant, the temporary cash assistance must be reinstated after a subsequent grading period in which the child's attendance has substantially improved. For a student who has been identified as a dropout, the temporary cash assistance must be reinstated after the student enrolls in a public school, receives a high school diploma or its equivalency, enrolls in preparation for the high school equivalency examination, or enrolls in other educational activities approved by the district school board. Good cause exemptions from the rule of unexcused absences include the following:
(a) The student is expelled from school and alternative schooling is not available.
(b) No licensed day care is available for a child of teen parents subject to Learnfare.
(c) Prohibitive transportation problems exist (e.g., to and from day care).
Within 10 days after sanction notification, the participant parent of a dependent child or the teenage participant may file an internal fair hearings process review procedure appeal, and no sanction shall be imposed until the appeal is resolved.
(2) Each participant with a school-age child is required to have a conference with an appropriate school official of the child's school during each semester to assure that the participant is involved in the child's educational progress and is aware of any existing attendance or academic problems. The conference must address acceptable student attendance, grades, and behavior and must be documented by the school and reported to the department. The department shall notify a school of any student in attendance at that school who is a participant in the Learnfare program in order that the required conferences are held. A participant who without good cause fails to attend a conference with a school official is subject to the sanction provided in subsection (1). The temporary cash assistance shall be reinstated after the participant attends the conference with the appropriate school official and that conference is documented by the school and reported to the department.
(3) The department shall develop an electronic data transfer system to enable the department to collect, report, and share data accurately and efficiently. In order to ensure accountability and assess the effectiveness of the Learnfare program, the department shall compile information including, but not limited to, the number of students and families reported by school districts as out of compliance, the number of students and families sanctioned as a result, and the number of students and families reinstated after becoming compliant. The information compiled shall be submitted in the form of an annual report to the presiding officers of the Legislature by March 1.
History.—s. 1, ch. 2001-149; s. 1001, ch. 2002-387; s. 3, ch. 2014-20.