EASTCONN
Where Learning Comes to Life

STUDENTS
Series 5000
Policy #5002.2.1

Attendance and Excuses

Attendance

Connecticut state law requires parents to cause their children, ages five through eighteen inclusive, to attend school regularly during the hours and terms the public school is in session. Parents or persons having control of a child five years of age have the option of not sending the child to school until ages six or seven. Mandatory attendance terminates upon graduation or withdrawal with written parent/guardian consent at age seventeen.

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" shall be considered absent.

Note: P.A. 15-225 requires the SBE to define "disciplinary absence" by January 1, 2016 to assist local boards of education calculate Agency and school chronic absenteeism rates.

Classroom learning experiences are the basis for public school education. Time lost from class is lost instructional opportunity. The Board of Directors requires that accurate records be kept of the attendance of each child, and students should not be absent from school without parental knowledge and consent.

Definitions (related to chronic absenteeism)

Chronically absent child: 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: An excused absence, unexcused absence or disciplinary absence, as those terms are defined by the State Board of Directors or an in-school suspension that is greater than or equal to one-half of a school day.

Agency chronic absenteeism rate: 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 Directors for such school year.

School chronic absenteeism rate: 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.

Excuses

Note: The use of the state approved definitions of "excused" and "unexcused" absences are for state purposes for the reporting of truancy. Agencys are not precluded from using separate definitions of such absences for their internal uses such as involving decisions on areas such as promotion and grading.

A student's absence from school shall be considered "excused" if written documentation of the reason for such absence has been submitted within ten (10) school days of the student's return to school and meets the following criteria:

A. 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 to school officials.

Such documentation includes 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.

B. For the tenth absence and all absences thereafter, a student's absences from school are considered excused for the following reasons:

1. Student illness (must be verified by a licensed medical professional to be deemed excused, regardless of the length of the absence);

2. Student's observance of a religious holiday;

3. Death in the student's family or other emergency beyond the control of the student's family;

4. Mandated court appearances (documentation required);

5. The lack of transportation that is normally provided by an Agency other than the one the student attends (no parental documentation required);

6. Extraordinary educational opportunities pre-approved by EASTCONN administration and to be in accordance with Connecticut State Department of Education guidance.

C. A student's absence from school shall be considered unexcused unless:

1. The absence meets the definition of an excused absence and meets the documentation requirements; or

2. The absence meets the definition of a disciplinary absence, which is the result of school or EASTCONN disciplinary action and are excluded from these State Board of Directors approved definitions.

When the school in which a child is enrolled receives no notification from a parent or other person having control of the child is aware of the child's absence, a reasonable effort shall be made by school personnel or volunteers under the direction of school personnel to notify by telephone and by mail such parent or other person having control of the child.

The required mailed notice shall include a warning that two unexcused absences from 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.

Responsibility for completion of missed classwork lies with the student, not the teacher. Unless a student has an extended illness, all make-up work will be complete within five days after the student returns to school.

Excused Absences for Children of Service Members

An enrolled student, age five to eighteen, inclusive, whose parent or legal guardian is an active duty member of the armed forces, as defined in section 27-103, and has been called to duty for, is on leave from, or has immediately returned from deployment to a combat zone or combat support posting, shall be granted ten days of excused absences in any school year and, at the discretion of he Board of Directors, additional excused absences to visit such child's parent or legal guardian with respect to such leave or deployment of the parent or legal guardian. In the case of such excused absences such child and parent or legal guardian shall be responsible for obtaining assignments from the student's teacher prior to any period of excused absence, and for ensuring that such assignments are completed by such child prior to his or her return to school from such period of excused absence.

Chronic Absenteeism

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

1. A team for EASTCONN must be established when EASTCONN's chronic absenteeism rate is 10 percent or higher.

2. A team for the school must be established when the school chronic absenteeism rate is 15 percent or higher.

3. A team for either EASTCONN or each school must be established when (a) more than one school in EASTCONN has a school chronic absenteeism rate of 15 percent or higher or

(b) EASTCONN has a chronic absenteeism rate of 10 percent or higher and one or more schools in EASTCONN have a school chronic absenteeism rate of 15 percent or higher.

The membership of attendance review teams may consist of school administrators, guidance 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 established attendance review team shall meet at least monthly.

EASTCONN 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.)

EASTCONN shall annually include in information for the school profile report for each school and EASTCONN that is 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 Agency 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.)

Dismissal

No school, grade, or class may be dismissed before the regularly scheduled dismissal time without the approval of the Executive Director of EASTCONN or his/her designee.

No teacher may permit any individual student to leave school prior to the regular hour of dismissal without the permission of the Principal.

No student may be permitted to leave school at any time other than at regular dismissal without the approval of the student's parent/guardian. If a court official with legal permission to take custody of a child, or if a police officer arrests a student, the parent/guardian should be notified of these situations by the administration.

(cf. 5003.4.1 - Student Safety)

(cf. 5002.1.1 - Truancy)

(cf. 6113 - Released Time)

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes

10-184 Duties of parents (as amended by PA 98-243 and PA 00-157)

10-185 Penalty

10-198a Policies and procedures concerning truants (as amended by P.A.11- 136, An Act Concerning Minor Revisions to the Education Statutes and PA 14- 198, An Act Concerning Excused Absences from School for Children of Service Members.)

45a-8c Truancy clinic. Administration. Policies and procedures. Report. (as amended by PA 15-25)

PA 15-225 An Act Concerning Chronic

Absenteeism 10-199 through 10-202

Attendance, truancy - in general

Action taken by State Board of Directors on January 2, 2008, to define "attendance."

Action taken by State Board of Directors on June 27, 2012, to define "excused" and "unexcused" absences.

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