

## STUDENTS

### TRUANCY

Connecticut state law requires children living in the school district to regularly attend public school or show that they are elsewhere receiving equivalent instruction in the studies taught in the public schools. The Board of Education believes that regular school attendance is essential to the academic success of its students. Therefore, it is the policy of the Board to monitor school attendance so as to identify students who are truant, and to enlist the cooperation of parents and, when necessary, the juvenile justice system, in order to address the problem of truancy when it arises.

#### **I. Definitions:**

“Absence” – any non-attendance of an enrolled student. 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.

“Disciplinary Absence”- an absence that is the result of school or district disciplinary action such as an out-of-school suspension or expulsion. Disciplinary absences are neither excused nor unexcused.

“Documentation of absence” – a written explanation of the nature of and the reason for the absence as well as the length of the absence. This 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. Separate documentation must be submitted for each incidence of absenteeism. Non-English speaking parents/guardians may submit documentation in their native language.

“Excused absence” – A student’s non-attendance from school shall be considered excused if written documentation 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 (when the school medical advisor provides notice to a parent or guardian that a student has symptoms of a communicable disease) 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; and
- 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 (all student illness absences must be verified by an appropriately licensed medical professional to be deemed excused, regardless of the length of 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 (additional documentation required);
5. 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
6. extraordinary educational opportunities pre-approved by district administrators and in accordance with Connecticut State Department of Education guidance.

“Habitual truant” – a child age five to eighteen who is enrolled in a public or private school and has twenty (20) unexcused absences within a school year. Habitual truants may be subject to penalties established by city or town ordinances.

“Parent” -a parent, guardian or other person having control of an enrolled student.

“Truant student” – any enrolled student five to eighteen years of age, inclusive, who has four (4) unexcused absences from school in any one month or ten (10) unexcused absences from school in any school year.

“Unexcused absence” - Any absence that does not meet the criteria for an excused absence (including proper documentation) or a disciplinary absence.

## **II. Notification:**

A. Annually, at the beginning of the school year, the parents of every student under the age of 18 will be notified in writing of their legal obligation to ensure that their child attends school. Parents of children enrolling during the school year will be similarly notified.

B. In the notification regarding compulsory attendance, parents will be requested to provide the school in which their child is enrolled with a telephone number or some other means of contacting them during the school day.

C. Parents will also be informed that it is their responsibility to contact the school office and provide proper documentation within 10 days of the absence if they want the absence to be excused.

D. Parents and guardians shall be notified when a student has reached 9 absences and reminded of the stricter rules that apply to further absences during the year.

## **III. Monitoring attendance:**

A. Whenever a student in grade K-8 is absent from school on a regularly scheduled school day, school personnel or volunteers under the direction of the building principal shall make a reasonable effort to notify the parent of the student's absence. Notification shall be by telephone and by mail. The mailed notice shall include a warning that two unexcused absences from school in a month or five unexcused absences in a year may result in a complaint filed with the Superior Court that the child's family is a family with service needs.

B. The Superintendent of Schools may develop and implement regulations regarding the academic consequences for repeated absences from school. Parents will be notified in writing

when a student's number of absences (excused and unexcused) becomes a serious academic problem that could impact grades or result in loss of credit or retention.

C. The Superintendent of Schools or designee shall periodically audit a small percentage of the documentation provided for student absences in order to ensure general compliance with this policy.

#### **IV. Meeting with parent of a truant student:**

A. When a student is identified as a truant, the Superintendent (or designee) will hold a meeting with the parent and appropriate school personnel to review and evaluate the reasons for the student's truancy.

B. This meeting will occur not later than ten (10) school days after the child's fourth (4th) unexcused absence in a month or tenth (10th) unexcused absence in a school year.

C. In reviewing and evaluating the reasons for the student's truancy, the participants of the meeting should consider the appropriateness of referring the student to the school's Student Assistance Team or planning and placement team.

D. At the meeting, school personnel shall be designated to coordinate services with and referrals of children to community agencies providing child and family services if appropriate.

#### **V. Superior Court complaint:**

If the parent of a child who is truant fails to attend the meeting or fails to otherwise cooperate with the school in attempting to solve the truancy problem, no later than 15 calendar days after such failure, the Superintendent will file a written complaint with the Superior Court pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes §46b-149, alleging that the acts or omissions of the child are such that his/her family is a family with service needs.

Legal References: Connecticut General Statutes

10-184 Duties of parents. School attendance age requirements

10-198a Policies and procedures concerning truants

10-198b State Board of Education to define "excused absence" and "unexcused absence" for purpose of reporting truancy

10-199 Attendance officers. Duties

10-200 Habitual truants

10-220 Duties of boards of Education

10-221 Boards of education to prescribe rules, policies and procedures

46b-149 Child from family with service needs.

Connecticut State Board of Education Definitions of Excused and Unexcused Absences Adopted June 27, 2012

Connecticut State Board of Education Statewide Definition of Attendance for Public School Districts in Connecticut, Adopted January 2, 2008

Connecticut State Department of Education's "Guidelines for Implementation of the Definitions of Excused and Unexcused Absences and Best Practices for Absence Prevention and Intervention," April 2013