

Attendance, Absences, Tardiness/Dismissals and Truancy

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.

In order for students to develop to their full potential, the Board of Education deems it essential that students attend school on a regular basis. The learning experiences that occur in the classroom are considered to be meaningful and essential components of the learning process. Time lost from class tends to be irretrievable in terms of opportunity for instructional interaction.

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. An absence due to an out-of-school suspension or expulsion should always be considered an excused absence.

I. EXCUSED ABSENCE

The Board believes a student should not be absent from school without the parents’ knowledge and consent, therefore verification of an absence should be in writing by a parent or guardian. For absences one through nine, an absence shall be considered “excused” when a child does not attend school and appropriate documentation has been submitted within ten school days of the student’s return to school by the student’s parent or guardian approving the absence, due to:

1. Illness or injury,
2. Death in the family or other emergency beyond the control of the student’s family,
3. Observance of a religious holiday,
4. Mandated Court appearances,
5. School sponsored activity,
6. Lack of transportation that is normally provided by a district other than the one the student attends, (This reason does not require documentation.)
7. Extraordinary educational opportunities pre-approved by a district administrator and in accordance with State Department of Education guidelines. Written excuse for such absences should be submitted to school officials by the child’s parent or guardian. All other absences with or without written explanation shall be considered unexcused.
8. Suspension, (This reason does not require documentation.)

For the tenth absence and all others thereafter, the same reasons cited above shall still constitute “excused” absences; however documentation by a medical professional is now required for illness, regardless of the length of the absence. All absences will be recorded as “unexcused” unless documentation is submitted within ten days of the date of the absence and satisfies the definition of “excused” absence.

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II. UNEXCUSED ABSENCE

Board of Education policy with respect to unexcused absences stresses prevention by requiring schools to make all reasonable efforts to keep parents and students informed as to attendance problems and to make all reasonable efforts to help students improve their attendance when such improvement is warranted. Only when all local resources are exhausted is referral to legal authorities recommended.

A student's absence from school shall be considered "unexcused" unless the absence meets the definitions, listed for an "excused" absence, including the documentation requirements; or if the absence is the result of school or district disciplinary action.

III. TARDINESS

Students who arrive later than the scheduled beginning of school or class period will be considered tardy. Tardiness may be explained by a parent or guardian but any absence from class will be considered as an accumulated absence and the student may lose credit on the high school level. Students tardy to school are responsible for work done in classes missed as well as assignments due.

IV. DISMISSALS

The Board of Education recognizes the need for students to be in school for the full instructional day. It is encouraged that early dismissal should be requested only in emergency or unusual situations. Request for a release of a student during the school day originating outside the schools must be handled by the administration to ensure maximum provisions for the safety and welfare of the student.

When students need to be dismissed early from school, they are to bring a written note signed by a parent or guardian to the main office prior to the start of school. The office staff will verify the authenticity of the note by contacting the parent or guardian by phone and will issue the student a dismissal pass.

Students who are dismissed from school before the end of the school day at the request of their parent or guardian will not be permitted to return to school on that same day unless the dismissal is for a medical or dental appointment or a court appearance and such appointment is validated in writing by the doctor/dentist or a court official. Students who become ill during the school day may be excused by the school nurse and are not permitted to return to school until the following day.

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V. TRUANCY

Connecticut General Statutes define a truant as a child who fails to attend school from age five (5) to eighteen (18) inclusive. The school administration will make a concerted effort to prevent and remedy truancy in its early stages for students who are found to be truant. These efforts will include holding a meeting with appropriate school staff and parent or guardian after the student's fourth (4th) unexcused absence (truancy) within a month or tenth (10th) unexcused absence (truancy) in a school year. The Superintendent is required to bring a truant student's case to the Superior Court under the Family with Service Needs Law (FWSN) if the parent(s) or guardian(s) fail to attend the required meeting with school personnel or fail to cooperate with the school administration in trying to solve the child's truancy problem. After June 2017, districts cannot file a FWSN for attendance.

Prior to a written complaint to Superior Court, a referral will be made to the school's student assistance team to determine whether or not an educational evaluation is appropriate. To assist the parent or guardian and others in meeting this responsibility, the Board of Education has developed the following procedures regarding students ages five (5) to eighteen (18) inclusive.

1. Annually notify the parent or guardian of each child enrolled, ages five (5) to eighteen (18), inclusive in writing of the obligations of the parent or guardian pursuant to student attendance (C.G.S. 10-184).
2. Obtain from each parent or guardian of an enrolled child a telephone number or other means of contacting such parent or guardian during the school day.
3. Establish a system for monitoring a student's individual absences/tardies.
4. Notify, by telephone, email or other written message the parent or guardian whenever a child fails to report to school on a regularly scheduled school day and no indication has been received by school personnel that the child's parent or guardian is aware of the student's absence. The required notice shall always 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 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 has four (4) unexcused absences in any one month or ten (10) unexcused absences in any school year.
6. Hold a meeting with appropriate staff and the parent or guardian of the child identified as a "truant" within ten (10) days of such designation to review the reasons for the truant behavior and to evaluate the situation.
7. Referral will be made to the Planning and Placement Team (PPT) to determine whether or not an educational evaluation is appropriate, prior to filing a written complaint with the Superior Court.

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IV. TRUANCY (continued)

8. File a written complaint, by the Superintendent with the Superior Court alleging that the acts or omissions of any child identified as a “truant” are such that the student’s family is a “family with service needs” if the parent(s) or guardian(s) of the child identified as “truant” fails:
 - a. to attend the required meeting to evaluate why the child’s truant or
 - b. to cooperate with the school in trying to solve the truancy problem.
 - c. Such filing shall occur not later than fifteen (15) calendar days after such failure to attend the required meeting or such failure to cooperate with the school in trying to solve the truancy problem.
 - d. After June 2017, districts cannot file a FWSN for attendance.

9. Provide for the coordination of services and refer enrolled students who are truants or to community agencies providing child and family services. A student who is identified as a “truant” may be subject to the following consequences:
 - a. Promotion to the next grade may be contingent upon the student successfully completing a summer school program.
 - b. The student may be retained in the same grade in order to acquire the skills necessary for promotion to the next grade level.

Persons who in good faith give or fail to give notice pursuant to subdivision (4) above, 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.

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 PA 00-157 and PA 11-136)
- 10-199 through 10-202 Attendance, truancy in general. (Revised 1195-PA 95-304)

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