

## Students

### Attendance

Regular and punctual student attendance in school is essential to the educational process. Classroom learning experiences are the basis for public school education. Time lost from class is lost instructional opportunity.

The Board of Education requires that accurate records be kept of the attendance of each child. Students should not be absent from school without parental knowledge and consent. Connecticut state law places responsibility for assuring that students attend school with the parent or other person having control over the child. To assist parents and other persons in meeting this responsibility, the Board of Education, through its Superintendent will adopt and maintain regulations to implement this policy.

The Board of Education shall follow the guidance adopted by the State Board of Education regarding “excused” and “unexcused” absences. The Superintendent shall report to the Board of Education a summary regarding attendance, each year in October, January, and June. A truancy summary report shall be provided to the Board annually.

The Board of Education takes seriously the issue of chronic absenteeism. To address this issue, the Board of Education, through its Superintendent, will adopt and maintain procedures regarding chronic absenteeism in accordance with state law.

#### Legal References:

Connecticut General Statutes §10-220  
 Connecticut General Statutes §10-184  
 Connecticut General Statutes §10-186  
 Connecticut General Statutes §10-198a  
 Public Act 15-225, “An Act Concerning Chronic Absenteeism”  
 Guidelines for Reporting Student Attendance in the Public School Information System (Connecticut State Department of Education, January 2008)  
 Connecticut State Department of Education Circular Letter C-2, *Utilizing Local Support Resources Prior to Referral of Students for Family with Service Needs* (August 4, 2009)  
 Connecticut State Board of Education  
 Memorandum, *Definitions of Excused and Unexcused Absences* (June 27, 2012)  
 Connecticut State Department of Education, *Guidelines for Implementation of the Definitions of Excused and Unexcused Absences and Best Practices for Absence Prevention and Intervention* (April 2013)

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HARTFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
 Hartford, Connecticut

## Students

### Administrative Regulations Regarding Attendance and Chronic Absenteeism

#### I. Attendance and Truancy

##### A. Definitions for Section I

1. "Absence" - any day during which a student is not considered "in attendance" at his/her assigned school, or on a school sponsored activity (e.g. field trip), for at least one half of the school day.
2. "Disciplinary Absences" - Absences that are the result of school or district disciplinary action. Any student serving an out-of-school suspension or expulsion should be considered absent. Such absence is not considered excused or unexcused for attendance and truancy purposes.
3. "Educational evaluation" - for purposes of this policy, an educational evaluation is an assessment of a student's educational development, which, based upon the student's presenting characteristics, would assess (as appropriate) the following areas: health, vision, hearing, social and emotional status, general intelligence, academic performance, communicative status and motor abilities.
4. "Excused-Absence" - A student's absence\* 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 if the child has been excluded from school in accordance with Section 10-210 of the Connecticut General Statutes (regarding communicable diseases), 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 written documentation in accordance with this regulation.
  - b. For the tenth absence and all absences thereafter, a student's absences from school are, with appropriate documentation in accordance with this regulation, considered excused for the following reasons:
    - 1) student illness verified by an appropriately licensed medical professional;
    - 2) student's observance of a religious holiday;
    - 3) funeral or 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 and this regulation.
- c. A student, age five to eighteen, whose parent or legal guardian is an active duty member of the armed forces who has been called for duty, is on leave from or has immediately returned from deployment to a combat zone or combat support posting, shall be granted ten (10) days of excused absences in any school year, and, in the discretion of the administration, additional excused absences to visit such student's parent or legal guardian with respect to the parent's leave or deployment. In the case of such excused absences, the student and parent or legal guardian are 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 the student prior to his or her return to school.
5. "In Attendance" - any day during which a student is not considered to be absent from his/her assigned school, or from an activity sponsored by the school (e.g. field trip), for at least one half of the school day.
  6. "Student" - a student enrolled in the Hartford Public Schools.
  7. "Truant" - is defined as a student age five to eighteen, inclusive, who has four (4) unexcused absences from school in one month or ten (10) unexcused absences in a school year.
  8. "Unexcused Absences"- any absence from a regularly scheduled school day for at least one half of the school day, unless they-one of the following criteria is met:
    - A. the absence meets the definition for an excused absence (including documentation requirements); or
    - B. the absence meets the definition of a disciplinary absence.

The determination of whether an absence is excused will be made by the building principal or his/her designee. Parents or other persons having control of the child may appeal that decision to the Superintendent or his/her designee, whose decision shall be final.

## **B. Written Documentation Requirements for Absences**

1. Written documentation must be submitted for each incidence of absence within ten (10) school days of the student's return to school. An incidence of absence is considered consecutive days of absence.

2. The first nine (9) days of absence will be excused upon receipt of 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.
3. For the student's 10th absence, and all absences thereafter, documentation of the absence must be submitted in accordance with paragraphs 1 and 2 above, and must also include the reason for the absence and the following additional information:
  - a. student illness:
    - (1) signed note from a medical professional, who may be the school nurse, who has evaluated the student confirming the absence and giving an expected return date; or
    - (2) signed note from school nurse who has spoken with the student's medical professional and confirmed the absence, including the date and location of the consultation.
  - b. religious holidays: none.
  - c. mandated court appearances:
    - (1) a police summons;
    - (2) a subpoena;
    - (3) a notice to appear;
    - (4) a signed note from a court official; or
    - (5) other official, written documentation of the legal requirement to appear in court.
  - d. funeral or death in the family, or other emergency beyond the control of the student's family: written document must explain the nature of the emergency.
  - e. extraordinary educational opportunity pre-approved by the district administrators and in accordance with Connecticut State Department of Education guidance and this policy: written pre-approval from the administration, in accordance with this regulation.
  - f. lack of transportation that is normally provided by a district other than the one the student attends: none.
4. Neither e-mail nor text message shall serve to satisfy the requirement of written documentation. In rare and extraordinary circumstances, a building

administrator may, in his/her own discretion, accept the delivery of written documentation through a scanned copy sent by e-mail.

5. The Hartford Public Schools reserves the right to randomly audit written documentation received, through telephone and other methods of communication, to determine its authenticity.
6. Any absence that is not documented in accordance with this regulation within ten (10) school days after the incidence of absence will be recorded as unexcused. If documentation is provided within ten (10) school days, but is incomplete, the building principal may, at his/her own discretion, grant up to a five (5) school day extension for provision of the completed documentation.
7. Schools should take steps to allow non-English speaking parents/guardians to submit documentation in their native language

### **C. Extraordinary Educational Opportunities**

1. To qualify as an extraordinary educational opportunity, the opportunity must:
  - a. be educational in nature and must have a learning objective related to the student's course work or plan of study;
  - b. be an opportunity not ordinarily available for this exemption;
  - c. be grade and developmentally appropriate; and
  - d. include content that is highly relevant to the student; while some opportunities will be relevant to all students, others will contain very specific content that would limit their relevance to a smaller group of students.
2. Family vacations do not qualify as extraordinary educational opportunities.
3. All requests for approval of extraordinary educational opportunities must:
  - a. be submitted to the building principal in writing prior to the opportunity, but no later than ten (10) school days prior to the opportunity except in exceptional circumstances at the discretion of the building administrator;
  - b. contain the signatures of both the parent/guardian and the student;
  - c. include an outline of the learning objective of the opportunity and include detail as to how the objective is linked to the student's coursework or plan of study; and
  - d. include additional documentation, where available, about the opportunity.
4. The building principal shall provide a response in writing and include the following:
  - a. either approval or denial of the request;

- b. brief reason for any denial;
  - c. any requirements placed upon the student as a condition of approval;
  - d. the specific days approved as excused absences for the opportunity;
  - e. the understanding that the building administrator may withdraw its approval if the opportunity is canceled or the student fails to meet the agreed-upon requirements of the approval.
5. All decisions of the building principal relating to extraordinary educational opportunities shall be final.
  6. Students who are granted excusal from school to participate in extraordinary educational opportunities are expected to share their experiences with other students and/or school staff when they return.
  7. Approval for an extraordinary educational opportunity is determined on a case-by-case basis and the analysis of individualized factors. An opportunity approved for one student may not be approved for another.

**D. Truancy Exceptions:**

1. A student five (5) or six (6) years of age shall not be considered truant if the parent or person having control over such student has appeared personally at the school district office and exercised the option of not sending the child to school at five (5) or six (6) years of age.
2. A student seventeen (17) years of age shall not be considered truant if the parent or person having control over such student consents to such student's withdrawal from school. Such parent or person shall personally appear at the school district office and sign a withdrawal form indicating such consent. Such withdrawal form must include an attestation from a guidance counselor or school administrator from the school that the district provided the parent (or person having control of the child) with information on the educational options available in the school system and community.
3. If a parent or guardian of an expelled student chooses not to enroll the student in an alternative program, the student shall not be considered to be "truant."

**E. Readmission to School Following Voluntary Withdrawal**

1. Except as noted in paragraph 2 below, if a student voluntarily withdraws from school (in accordance with Section D.2, above) and subsequently seeks readmission, the Board may deny school accommodations to the student for up to ninety (90) school days from the date of the student's withdrawal from school.
2. If a student who has voluntarily withdrawn from school (in accordance with Section D.2, above) seeks readmission within ten (10) school days of his/her withdrawal, the Board shall provide school accommodations to the student not later than three (3) school days after the student requests readmission.

**F. Determinations of Whether a Student is "In Attendance":**

1. A student serving an out of school suspension or expulsion shall be reported as absent unless he or she receives an alternative educational program for at least one half of the regular school day. In any event, the absence is considered a disciplinary absence, and will not be designated as excused or unexcused.
2. On early dismissal days and days shortened due to inclement weather, the regular school day for attendance purposes is considered to be the amount of instructional time offered to students on that day. For example, if school is open for four hours on a shortened day scheduled, a student must be present for a minimum of two hours in order to be considered "in attendance."
3. Students placed on homebound instruction due to illness or injury in accordance with applicable regulations and requirements are counted as being "in attendance" for every day that they receive instruction from an appropriately certified teacher for an amount of time deemed adequate by the administration so as to ensure that the student is able to successfully return to the regular classroom setting.

**G. Administrative Procedures:**

1. Annually at the beginning of the school year and upon any enrollment during the school year, the administration shall notify the parent or other person having control of each child enrolled in the Hartford Public Schools the obligations of the parent or such other person regarding attendance policy and regulations.
2. Annually at the beginning of the school year and upon any enrollment during the school year, the administration shall obtain from the parent or other person having control of each child in a Hartford Public School a telephone number or other means of contacting such parent or such other person during the school day.
3. Each school shall implement a system of monitoring individual unexcused absences of students, which shall provide that whenever a student enrolled 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 other person

having control of the child is aware of the pupil's absence, a reasonable effort to notify, by telephone, the parent or such other person shall be made by school personnel. All parent outreach efforts must be documented. 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. Any person who, in good faith, gives or fails to give such notice shall be immune from liability, civil or criminal, which might otherwise be incurred or imposed and shall have the same immunity with respect to any judicial proceeding which results from such notice or failure to give notice.

4. When a student is truant, the building principal or his/her designee shall schedule a meeting with the parent of each child who is a truant, or other person having control of such child, and appropriate school personnel to review and evaluate the reasons for the child being a truant, provided such meeting shall be held not later than ten school days after the child's fourth unexcused absence in a month or tenth unexcused absence in a school year. Notice and meetings must be in a language understandable to the parent.
5. If the parent or other person having control of a child who is a truant fails to attend the meeting or fails to cooperate with the school in attempting to solve the truancy problem, the superintendent of schools shall, within fifteen (15) calendar days of such failure, file for each such truant enrolled in the schools under his or her jurisdiction a written complaint with the Superior Court pursuant to section 46b-149 alleging the belief that the acts or omissions of the child are such that his family is a family with service needs.
6. When a student is truant, the superintendent or designee, shall coordinate services and/or referrals of children to community agencies that provide child and family services. The district shall document efforts to contact and include families and to provide early intervention in truancy matters.
7. In addition to the procedures specified, a regular education student who is experiencing attendance problems shall be referred to the building intervention Student Study Team (i.e. SST, SAT) or other appropriate body, for review and assistance. The team will review the student's need for referral for a Planning and Placement Team (PPT) meeting. A special education student who is experiencing attendance problems must be referred for a PPT meeting for program review.
8. If a family with service needs ("FWSN") petition is filed and the court orders an educational evaluation of the student, the district shall conduct an appropriate educational evaluation if no such evaluation has been performed within the preceding year.

- a. For a regular education student, the educational evaluation will be conducted or arranged for by appropriate school personnel and coordinated through the Child Study Team [or other appropriate school based team]. Upon completion of the evaluation of a regular education student, the Child Study Team [or other appropriate school based team] shall review the evaluations and make appropriate recommendations for alternative procedures, programs or interventions. Such recommendations may include a referral of the student for further evaluation and/or consideration for special education eligibility.
- b. In the case of a student who requires or may require special education and related services, the district shall convene a PPT to determine what evaluations may be appropriate to assess any specific areas of concern. The PPT shall reconvene to review the evaluations and make appropriate recommendations regarding the student's need for special education services and the need, if any, to write and/or revise the student's individualized education program ("IEP").

#### **H. Attendance Records**

All attendance records developed by the Board shall include the individual student's state-assigned student identifier (SASID).

## **II. Chronic Absenteeism**

### **A. Definitions for Section II**

1. "Chronically absent child" - a child who is enrolled in a school under the jurisdiction of the Hartford Board of Education and whose total number of absences at any time during a school year is equal to or greater than ten percent (10%) of the total number of days that such student has been enrolled at such school during such school year;
2. "Absence" - (a) an excused absence, unexcused absence or disciplinary absence, as those terms are defined by the State Board of Education pursuant to section 10-198b of the general statutes and these administrative regulations, or (b) an in-school suspension, as defined in section 10-233a of the general statutes, that is greater than or equal to one-half of a school day;
3. "District chronic absenteeism rate" - the total number of chronically absent children under the jurisdiction of the Hartford Board of Education in the previous school year divided by the total number of children under the jurisdiction of the Board of Education for such school year; and
4. "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.

## **B. Establishment of Attendance Review Teams**

If the Hartford Board of Education has a district chronic absenteeism rate of ten percent (10%) or higher, it shall establish an attendance review team for the school district.

If a school under the jurisdiction of the Hartford Board of Education has a school chronic absenteeism rate of fifteen percent (15%) or higher, it shall establish an attendance review team for that school.

If the Hartford Board of Education has more than one school with a school chronic absenteeism rate of fifteen percent (15%) or higher, it shall establish an attendance review team for the school district or at each such school.

If the Hartford Board of Education has a district chronic absenteeism rate of ten percent (10%) or higher and one or more schools with a school chronic absenteeism rate of fifteen percent (15%) or higher, it shall establish an attendance review team for the school district or at each such school.

## **C. Composition and Role of Attendance Review Teams**

Any attendance review team established under these regulations may include school administrators, guidance counselors, school social workers, teachers, representatives from community-based programs who address issues related to student attendance by providing programs and services to truants, and chronically absent children and their parents or guardians.

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 attendance review team shall meet at least monthly.

## **D. State Chronic Absenteeism Prevention and Intervention Plan**

The Hartford Board of Education and its attendance review teams, if any, will consider any chronic absenteeism prevention and intervention plan developed by the State Department of Education.

## **III. Reports to the State Regarding Truancy Data**

Annually, each local and regional board of education shall include information regarding the number of truants and chronically absent children in the strategic school profile report for each school under its jurisdiction and for the school district as a whole submitted to the Commissioner of Education. Measures of truancy include the type of

data that is required to be collected by the Department of Education regarding attendance and unexcused absences in order for the department to comply with federal reporting requirements and the actions taken by the board of education to reduce truancy in the school district.

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HARTFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
Hartford, Connecticut