



STUDENT ATTENDANCE, TRUANCY AND CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM POLICY

STATEMENT

Regular and punctual student attendance in school is essential to the educational process. Connecticut state law places responsibility for assuring that students attend school with the parent or guardian. To assist parents and guardians in meeting this responsibility, the Board of Education, through its Superintendent, will adopt and maintain procedures to implement this policy.

In addition, 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.

ADMINISTRATIVE REGULATIONS REGARDING ATTENDANCE, TRUANCY AND CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM

Connecticut state law requires parents to cause their children to attend school regularly during the hours and terms the public school is in session. The responsibility for regular attendance rests with the students' parent, guardians or with the student themselves when they become of legal age.

In order for students to develop to their full potential the Torrington Board of Education deems it essential that students attend school on a regular basis. Students who are absent from class for any reason are deprived of a variety of educational opportunities, meaningful student-teacher interactions, and learning experiences shared with their classmates.

I. Attendance and Truancy

A. Definitions for Section

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 absence” - Any absence as a 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 is considered excused from school if the school has received written documentation describing the reason for the absence within ten (10) 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 the following criteria are met:
 - a. Any absence before the student’s tenth (10th) absence is considered excused when the student’s parent/guardian approves such absence and submits appropriate written documentation in accordance with this regulation.
 - b. For the student’s tenth (10th) absence and all absences thereafter, a student’s absences from school are, with appropriate documentation in accordance with this regulation, considered excused only for the following reasons:
 - i. student illness (verified by an appropriately licensed medical professional);
 - ii. religious holidays;
 - iii. mandated court (documentation appearances required);
 - iv. funeral or death in the family, or other emergency beyond the control of the student’s family;
 - v. extraordinary educational opportunities pre-approved by the district administrators and in accordance with Connecticut State Department of Education guidance and this regulation;
 - vi. lack of transportation normally provided by a other than the one the student attends.

c. A student, age five (5) to eighteen (18), 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 present at the student's assigned school, or an activity sponsored by the school, for at least half of the regular school day.
6. "Student" - a student enrolled in the Torrington Public Schools.
7. "Truant" - any student **five (5) to eighteen (18)** 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. Excessive absences will result in loss of credit at the high school level. "Excessive" is defined by 5 or more unexcused absences in a semester course and 10 or more unexcused absences in a full year course.
8. "Unexcused absence" - any absence from a regularly scheduled school day for at least one half of the school day, which is not excused or considered a disciplinary absence.

Unexcused tardies that are greater than 50% of the class, will constitute an unexcused absence.

Five unexcused tardies (from the same class) will constitute an unexcused absence.

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

B. Mental Health Wellness Days

Any student enrolled in grades kindergarten to twelve, inclusive, shall be permitted to take two mental health wellness days during the school year, during which day such student shall not be required to attend school. No

student shall take mental health wellness days during consecutive school days.

C. 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.
2. The first nine (9) days excused upon receipt of absence will be a 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 tenth (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:
 - i. a 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
 - ii. a 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:
 - i. a police summons;
 - ii. a subpoena;
 - iii. a notice to appear;
 - iv. a signed note from a court official; or
 - v. any 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: a written document explaining 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 preapproval 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 email.
 - 5. The Torrington 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.

D. Extraordinary Educational Opportunities

- 1. To qualify as an opportunity, the extraordinary educational 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 to the student;
 - c. be grade and developmentally appropriate;
 - 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 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.

E. 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 guardian consents to such student's withdrawal from school. Such parent or guardian 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/guardian 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."

F. 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 after ten (10) school days, 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.

G. 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 in accordance with applicable law.

H. Procedures for students in grades K-12

1. Notification

- a. Annually at the beginning of the school year and upon the enrollment of any child during the school year, the administration shall notify the parent or guardian enrolled in grades K -12 in writing of the obligations pursuant to Conn. Gen. Stat. § 10-184 to ensure that such a student attends school regularly or to show that the child is elsewhere receiving equivalent instruction in the studies taught in the Torrington Public Schools.
- b. Annually at the beginning of the school year and upon the enrollment of any child during the school year, the administration shall obtain from the parent or guardian in grades K-12 a telephone number or other means of contacting such parent or other person during the school day.

2. Monitoring

Each school shall implement a system of monitoring individual unexcused absences of students in grades K-12. Whenever such a student fails to report to school on a regularly scheduled school day, the building principal or his/her designee shall make a reasonable effort to notify the parent or guardian by telephone and by mail of the student's absence, unless school personnel have received an indication that the parent or other person is aware of the student's absence. 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.

I. Procedures applicable to students ages five (5) to eighteen (18)-New

1. Intervention

- a. When a student is truant, the building principal or his/her designee shall schedule a meeting with the parent or guardian and appropriate school personnel to review and evaluate the reasons for the student's truancy. This meeting shall be held no later than **ten (10) days** after the student becomes truant. The district shall document the meeting,

and if parent or other person declines to attend the meeting, or is otherwise is non responsive, that fact shall also be documented and the meeting shall proceed with school personnel in attendance.

- b. When a student is truant, the Superintendent or his/her designee shall coordinate services with and referrals of students to community agencies providing child and family services, as appropriate. The district shall document efforts to contact and include families and to provide early intervention in truancy matters.
- c. On or before August 15, 2018, if the Commissioner of Education determines that any school under the jurisdiction of Torrington Board of Education has a disproportionately high rate of truancy, the district shall implement a truancy intervention model identified by the Department Education pursuant to Conn. Gen. Stat. § 10198e. (TPS does have an Attendance Review Team model, stated under Section II.B.)
- d. In addition to the procedures specified in subsections (a) through (c) above, a regular education student who is experiencing attendance problems should be referred to the building Attendance Review Team to consider the need for additional interventions and/or assistance. A special education student who is experiencing attendance problems should be referred to a PPT meeting for program review.

3. Attendance Records

All attendance records developed by the Board shall include the individual student's stateassigned 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 Torrington 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" - 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;

3. "District chronic absenteeism rate" - the total number of chronically absent children under the jurisdiction of the Torrington 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.
5. Excessive absences will result in loss of credit at the high school level. "Excessive" is defined by 5 or more unexcused absences in a semester course and 10 or more unexcused absences in a full year course.

B. Establishment of Attendance Review Teams

1. If the Torrington 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 Torrington 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.
2. If the Torrington 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.
3. If the Torrington 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, as defined under I.A.7, and chronically absent children and their parents or guardians.

Each school's 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 school's Attendance Review Team shall meet as needed.

D. State Chronic Absenteeism Prevention and Intervention Plan

The Torrington Board of Education and its Attendance Review Teams, if needed, 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.

Legal References:

Public Act 17-14, An Act Implementing the Recommendations of the Department of Education

Public Act 16-147, An Act Concerning the Recommendations of the Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee

Connecticut General Statutes § 10-220

Connecticut General Statutes § 10-184

Connecticut General Statutes § 10-186

Connecticut General Statutes § 10-198a

Connecticut General Statutes § 10-198b

Connecticut General Statutes § 10-198c

Connecticut General Statutes § 10-198d

Connecticut General Statutes § 10-198e

Guidelines for Reporting Student Attendance in the Public School Information System (Connecticut State Department of Education, January 2008)

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)

Connecticut State Department of Education, *Reducing Chronic Absence in Connecticut's Schools: A Prevention and Intervention Guide for Schools and Districts* (April 2017)

Connecticut State Department of Education Memorandum, *Youth Service Bureau Referral for Truancy and Defiance of School Rules* (February 22, 2018)

Connecticut State Department of Education, *Youth Service Bureau Referral Guide* (February 2018)

6006: Attendance Policy

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