

**ADMINISTRATIVE REGULATIONS REGARDING  
ATTENDANCE, TRUANCY 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 the student’s 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 student has been excluded from school in accordance with Conn. Gen. Stat. § 10-210 (regarding communicable diseases), and the following criteria are met:
  - a. Any absence before the student’s tenth (10<sup>th</sup>) 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 (10<sup>th</sup>) 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 appearances (documentation 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; or
  - vi. lack of transportation that is normally provided by a District other than the one the student attends.
- c. A student, age five (5) to eighteen (18), inclusive, 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 the student's 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. "Mental health wellness day" - a school day during which a student attends to such student's emotional and psychological well-being in lieu of attending school.
7. "Student" - a student enrolled in LEARN schools or programs.

8. "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.
9. "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.

The determination of whether an absence is excused will be made by the building principal or designee. Parents or other persons having control of the child may appeal that decision to the Superintendent or 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. Mental health wellness days shall be excused when permission by the student's parent/guardian is documented by the students' school, regardless of the number of absences a student has accrued in the school year. Mental health wellness days will not be included in reporting or referrals related to truancy. Mental health wellness days will count as an "absence" for determining chronic absenteeism as defined by Section II of this policy.

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. Consecutive days of absence are considered one incidence 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 tenth (10<sup>th</sup>) 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 LEARN 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 the administrator's own discretion, accept the delivery of written documentation through a scanned copy sent by e-mail.

5. LEARN 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 the principal's 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 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 to the student;
  - 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; and
    - 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. 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 the student 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.

F. Procedures for students in grades K-8\*

1. Notification

- a. Annually at the beginning of the school year and upon the enrollment of any child during the school year, the administration of the school that the student attends shall notify the parent or other person having control of the student enrolled in grades K - 8 in writing of the obligations pursuant to Conn. Gen. Stat. § 10-184 to ensure that such a student attends school regularly.
- b. Annually at the beginning of the school year and upon the enrollment of any child during the school year, the administration of the school that the student attends shall obtain from the parent or other person having control of the student in grades K-8 a telephone number or other means of contacting such parent or other person during the school day.

2. Monitoring

Each LEARN school or program shall implement a system of monitoring individual unexcused absences of students. Whenever such a student fails to report to school on a regularly scheduled school day, school personnel under the direction of the building principal [or designee] shall make a reasonable effort to notify the parent or other person having control of such student 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. [Reasonable efforts shall include phone attempts to reach the parent or other person at the telephone number provided by the parent or other person. Such attempts may occur through an automated School Messenger message or phone

call from the main office. Attempts shall be noted in PowerSchool.] 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.

G. Procedures applicable to students ages five (5) to eighteen (18)

1. Intervention

- a. When a student is truant, the building principal or designee shall schedule a meeting with the parent (or other person having control of such student) 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. LEARN 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, LEARN shall coordinate services with the sending district, including by making referrals of students to community agencies providing child and family services, as appropriate. LEARN shall document efforts to contact and include families and to provide early intervention in truancy matters.
- c. When a student is truant, LEARN shall provide notice to the student's parent or guardian of the information concerning the existence and availability of the 2-1-1 Infoline program, and other pediatric mental and behavioral health screening services and tools described in Conn. Gen. Stat 17a-22r.
- d. Beginning July 1, 2023, when a student is truant, an appropriate school mental health specialist (as determined by LEARN) shall conduct, or shall coordinate services with the sending district to provide for an evaluation of the student to determine if additional behavioral health interventions are necessary for the well-being of the child. "School mental health specialist" means any person employed by LEARN or the sending district to provide mental health services to students, including but not limited to a school social worker, school psychologist, trauma specialist, behavior technician, board



certified behavior analyst, school counselor, licensed professional counselor or licensed marriage and family therapist.

- e. If the Commissioner of Education determines that any school under the jurisdiction of LEARN has a disproportionately high rate of truancy, LEARN shall implement in that school a truancy intervention model identified by the Department of Education pursuant to Conn. Gen. Stat. § 10-198e.
- f. 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 Child Study Team, or other appropriate school based team (the “Team”) to consider the need for additional interventions and/or assistance. The Team will also consider whether the student should be referred to a planning and placement team (“PPT”) meeting to review the student’s need and eligibility for special education. A special education student who is experiencing attendance problems should be referred to a PPT meeting for program review.
- g. Where the documented implementation of the procedures specified in subsections (a) through (d) above does not result in improved outcomes despite collaboration with the parent/guardian, LEARN may, with written parental consent, refer a student who is truant to a Youth Service Bureau.

#### H. Attendance Records

All attendance records developed by LEARN 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 LEARN 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 Conn. Gen. Stat. § 10-198b and these administrative regulations.

3. “District chronic absenteeism rate” - the total number of chronically absent children under the jurisdiction of LEARN in the previous school year divided by the total number of students under the jurisdiction of LEARN for such school year.
4. “School chronic absenteeism rate” - the total number of chronically absent students for a school in the previous school year divided by the total number of students enrolled in such school for such school year.

B. Establishment of Attendance Review Teams

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

If a LEARN school has a school chronic absenteeism rate of fifteen percent (15%) or higher, it shall establish an attendance review team for that school.

If LEARN 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 LEARN as a whole or at each such school.

If LEARN has a 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 LEARN as a whole 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.8, and chronically absent students and their parents or guardians.

Each attendance review team shall be responsible for reviewing the cases of truants and chronically absent students, discussing school interventions and community referrals for such truants and chronically absent students 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

LEARN 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, LEARN 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 LEARN 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 LEARN to reduce truancy in LEARN schools and programs.

### **IV. Evolving State Department of Education and State Board of Education Guidance**

LEARN will comply with any and all guidance issued by the State Department of Education and/or State Board of Education regarding attendance requirements, including during periods of remote learning.

#### Legal References:

Public Act No. 22-47

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

Connecticut General Statutes § 10-198f

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

Connecticut State Department of Education Memorandum, *Mental Health and Wellness Days* (January 25, 2022)

LEARN

REVISED: August 24, 2022

## LEARN

### Extraordinary Educational Experience Request Form

Pursuant to guidelines from the Connecticut Department of Education, LEARN will consider certain extraordinary educational experiences to be excused absences. In order for an experience to qualify as an extraordinary educational experience, the opportunity must be educational in nature and must have a learning objective specifically related to the student's coursework or plan of study. It is important to note that not all memorable and/or life experiences are considered extraordinary educational experiences for the purpose of an excused absence. In order to qualify, the experience must be an opportunity not ordinarily available to the student. The experience must be grade and developmentally appropriate and the content of the experience must be highly relevant to the individual student. Whether an experience fits the requirements of an extraordinary educational experience for the purpose of an excused absence is a determination within the discretion of the building principal or designee.

To request consideration of an experience as an extraordinary educational experience, the following form must be filled out, signed by the parent and student, and returned at least five (5) school days in advance of the date of the opportunity. Please note that approval is not assured. Approvals are awarded on a case-by-case basis and are based on a number of factors. An experience approved for one student does not guarantee that it will be approved for others.

Name of Student: \_\_\_\_\_ Today's Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Title of Educational Opportunity:  
\_\_\_\_\_

Please describe the learning objective of the educational opportunity and how the objective is linked to the student's coursework or plan of study (you may attach additional sheets):

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Date(s) of educational opportunity:  
\_\_\_\_\_

Dates and total number of days of planned absence:

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Parent \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Student \_\_\_\_\_

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For Office Use Only. Received by \_\_\_\_\_ on \_\_\_\_\_. Approved? Yes/No By \_\_\_\_\_.

8/24/22

