

6.004. Policy Concerning School Attendance and Truancy

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Cooperative Educational Services (C.E.S.) believes that regular school attendance is essential for an effective and productive learning experience for students enrolled in its school-based programs. Regular school attendance is both encouraged and mandated (Connecticut General Statute Section 10-184). Excessive absences inhibit both successful learning and the continuity of instruction required by students. C.E.S. recognizes that students may occasionally miss school for entirely legitimate reasons. These reasons, when documented by a parent or guardian will typically be considered "excused absences". However, absences which occur for no legitimate reason will be considered "unexcused" and will warrant appropriate follow-up action by the school program.

Required by Public Act 11-136, the State Board of Education has adopted definitions for "excused" and "unexcused" absences to determine which students qualify as a truant for state reporting purposes. The definitions are:

Excused Absences

A student's absence¹ from school shall be considered excused if written documentation² 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 and meets the following criteria:

1. 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
2. For the tenth absence and all absences thereafter, a student's absences from school are considered excused for the following reasons:
 - student illness (Note: all student illness absences must be verified by an appropriately licensed medical professional to be deemed excused, regardless of the length of absence);
 - student's observance of a religious holiday;
 - death in the student's family or other emergency beyond the control of the student's family;
 - mandated court appearances (additional documentation required);
 - 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

- extraordinary educational opportunities pre-approved by district administrators and in accordance with Connecticut State Department of Education guidance.

Unexcused Absences

A student's absence from school shall be considered unexcused unless they meet one of the following criteria:

1. the absence meets the definition of an excused absence (including documentation requirements); or
2. the absence meets the definition of a disciplinary absence.

Disciplinary Absences

Absences that are the result of school or district disciplinary action are excluded from these definitions.

¹ The Connecticut State Board of Education policy states that *"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. A student who is serving an out-of-school suspension or expulsion should always be considered absent."* A student not meeting the definition of 'in attendance' is considered absent.

² Such documentation should include 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. Documentation should explain the nature of and the reason for the absence as well as the length of the absence. Separate documentation must be submitted for each incidence of absenteeism. For example, if a student is out sick two consecutive days, that student must submit the appropriate documentation covering both sick days. If a student is out sick two nonconsecutive days, that student must submit the appropriate documentation following each absence. Schools should take steps to allow non-English speaking parents/guardians to submit documentation in their native language.

Consistent with Connecticut General Statutes Section 10-198a, C.E.S. recognizes the importance of early intervention for students exhibiting truancy behavior. Therefore, it is the policy of C.E.S. to monitor school attendance [in collaboration with the student's responsible school district so as to identify students who are truant; to enlist the cooperation of parents in reporting school absences; and, when necessary, enlist the cooperation of the responsible school district in order to change a truancy pattern that has developed.] so as to identify students who are truant. For the special education program and the Regional Center for the Arts, this monitoring will be done in collaboration with the student's responsible school district, and when necessary, enlist their cooperation in order to change a truancy pattern that has developed. All C.E.S. programs will enlist the cooperation of parents to reduce excessive absences and to

ensure that the student regularly attends school. The Executive Director is authorized to establish administrative procedures to monitor student attendance to insure the recognition of students who are in the early stages of truancy and to report those students who are truant or habitually truant to their responsible school districts.

Reference: Connecticut General Statute Section 10-184

Connecticut General Statute Section 10-198a

Connecticut General Statute Section 10-200

Connecticut General Statute Section 10-210

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6.004A. Administrative Regulations Concerning School Attendance and Truancy

I. Definitions

The following definitions are provided for the purpose of clarifying terms within the content of these regulations.

A. In Attendance refers to a student who is 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.

B. Absence refers to any scheduled school day in accordance with the approved academic year calendar that an enrolled student does not attend school for at least half the school day.

C. Parent includes either natural parent, a guardian or any legal individual acting as a parent of a student in the absence of a parent or guardian.

D. Student means an individual who is enrolled at a C.E.S. school-based education program.

E. Truant means a child age five (5) to eighteen (18), inclusive, who is enrolled in a public or private school and who has four unexcused absences from school in any one month or ten unexcused absences from school in any school year.

F. Habitual Truant means a child age five (5) to eighteen (18), inclusive, who is enrolled in a public or private school and who has twenty (20) unexcused absences within a school year.

G. Responsible School District refers to the local education agency (LEA) in which the student is officially enrolled and who is responsible for the C.E.S. program placement. In the case of the Six-to-Six Interdistrict Magnet School, this refers to Cooperative Educational Services.

H. Excused means a student's absence¹ from school includes written documentation² of the reason for the absence that 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 and meets the following criteria:

1. 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

2. For the tenth absence and all absences thereafter, a student's absences from school are considered excused for the following reasons:

- student illness (Note: all student illness absences must be verified by an appropriately licensed medical professional to be deemed excused, regardless of the length of absence);
- student's observance of a religious holiday;
- death in the student's family or other emergency beyond the control of the student's family;
- mandated court appearances (additional documentation required);
- 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
- extraordinary educational opportunities pre-approved by district administrators and in accordance with Connecticut State Department of Education guidance.

I. Unexcused Absence means a student's absence from school shall be considered unexcused unless they meet one of the following criteria:

1. the absence meets the definition of an excused absence (including documentation requirements); or
2. the absence meets the definition of a disciplinary absence.

Disciplinary Absence means absences that are the result of school or district disciplinary action.

II. Notification Process

A. Annually at the beginning of the school year and upon any enrollment during the school year, the parent of each student ages 5 to 18, inclusive, will be notified in writing of their obligations to cause their child/children to attend school.

B. At this time of notification parents will be asked to provide the program administrator of their child's C.E.S. program with a telephone number or some other means of contacting them during the school day.

C. Program Parent Guides and the annual notification will provide parents necessary information/instructions to contact school personnel when it is necessary for their child to be absent from school.

III. Monitoring Procedures

A. Each school-based program will record and maintain student attendance in the designated student information system. Attendance/absences will be recorded daily for all students. Absences will be recorded as excused or unexcused.

B. If a student is absent and no written documentation has been received from the parent, the program administrator or his/her designee will make a responsible effort to contact the parent by telephone to determine if the absence is excused or unexcused.

C. If efforts to contact the parent are unsuccessful and a written explanation of absence is not received within ten (10) school days of the students return to school the absence(s) will be recorded as unexcused.

D. Each school-based program will keep close contact with parents of students having difficulty with attendance and shall make parents aware of the importance of regular school attendance. Both the program and parents should work cooperatively to achieve this end.

E. When absence is due to prolonged illness, the school nurse will contact the parent to discuss the situation. If the illness will result in an absence of three (3) or more weeks, the program administrator will contact the responsible school district in accordance with agency hospitalized/homebound instruction procedures.

- F. When deemed necessary, the program administrator will consult with the responsible school district to discuss students having difficulty with attendance.
- G. In the case of students with identified special education needs, the program administrator may request that the responsible school district convene a Planning and Placement Team meeting to discuss potential remedies to recurring school absences.
- H. Students with recurring unexcused absences may be subject to:
 - Retention in the same grade;
 - Loss of course credit, where applicable;
 - Reduction of grade; and/or
 - Loss of school privileges.

IV. Truancy Procedures

- A. C.E.S. will work collaboratively with the responsible school district by reporting in a timely fashion students who are identified as truant.
- B. Consistent with state requirements and the responsible school district's truancy procedures, when a student age 5 to 18 is identified as truant, the program administrator will contact the responsible school district to request that a meeting with the parent be arranged. This contact will be made within ten (10) school days after the child's fourth unexcused absence in one month or tenth unexcused absence in one school year. In the case of Six to Six Magnet School, C.E.S. is the school district.
- C. The program administrator or his/her designee will offer to attend the meeting and to assist, when it is deemed appropriate, in helping to determine the reason for the child being truant and the parent's need for support services.
- D. The program administrator or his/her designee will consult with the responsible school district in coordinating services and referrals of the student to community agencies providing child and family services when this is deemed appropriate.
- E. If unexcused absences continue, the program administrator will request that the responsible school district convene a Planning and Placement Team meeting to discuss recurring absences and potential remedies.
- F. If the parent or other person having control of a child who is truant fails to

attend the meeting stated above (IV.B) or fails to cooperate with the school program (C.E.S.) or responsible school district attempting to solve the truancy problem, C.E.S. in collaboration with the responsible school district, will implement a truancy intervention model identified by the State Department of Education.

G. Students identified as truant may be subject to:

- Retention in same grade;
- Loss of course credit, where applicable;
- Reduction in grade; and/or
- Loss of school privileges.