



Office of the



State Superintendent of Education

DESKTOP REFERENCE

Student Attendance and Reporting Requirements

Including Requirements of the 2012 South Capitol Memorial Amendments Act

Introduction

Chronic absenteeism and truancy adversely impact student achievement beginning as early as kindergarten. This document summarizes the District's attendance, reporting and intervention requirements, including requirements of the 2012 South Capitol Memorial Amendment Act, on the following subjects:

1. **Compulsory Attendance Requirements**
2. **Absences [revised per South Capitol Act]**
3. **Absenteeism Protocol [revised per South Capitol Act]**
4. **Attendance Monitor [new with South Capitol Act]**
5. **School Based Student Support Teams [new with South Capitol Act]**
6. **Record and Reporting Requirements [revised per South Capitol Act]**
7. **Definitions [revised per South Capitol Act]**
8. **OSSE Technical Assistance and Additional Information**

1. **Compulsory Attendance Requirements**

Student Age. Each school-age child who is a resident of the District of Columbia must attend a public, independent, private, or parochial school or shall receive private instruction from five (5) years of age (by September 30 of the current school year) through seventeen (17) years of age.¹ A school-age child and his or her parents or guardians shall be deemed to have met the District of Columbia's compulsory education requirements when the child is enrolled in a nonpublic school whose elementary and secondary program has been approved by OSSE.

Exemption. A school-age child and his or her parents or guardians shall be exempt from compulsory school attendance requirements if the child:

- Has earned a high school diploma or its equivalent; or
- Participates in a home schooling program that complies with all District of Columbia laws and regulations.

School Year and Instruction Time. A school year includes a minimum of one hundred eighty (180) regular instructional days; including an instructional day of six (6) hours, unless otherwise approved by OSSE pursuant to its approval of nonpublic educational institutions. An instructional day shall be at least six (6) hours in length for students, including time allotted for lunch periods, recess, and class breaks.

¹ District of Columbia Official Code, Title 38; and District of Columbia Municipal Regulations (DCMR) Title 5, subchapter A, chapter 21. Homeschooling is addressed in DCMR Title 5, subtitle E, chapter 52.



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However, the six (6) hour instructional day is not applicable to evening school, prekindergarten, or kindergarten programs.

2. Absences [revised per South Capitol Act Requirements]

An educational institution must publish and make available to parents and students the list of valid excused absences.

Excused Absences include the following occurrences:

- Illness or other bona fide medical cause experienced by the student;
- Exclusion, by direction of the authorities of the District of Columbia, due to quarantine, contagious disease, infection, infestation, or other condition requiring separation from other students for medical or health reasons;
- Death in the student's family;
- Necessity for a student to attend judiciary or administrative proceedings as a party to the action or under subpoena;
- Observance of a religious holiday;
- Lawful suspension or exclusion from school by school authorities;
- Temporary closing of facilities or suspension of classes due to severe weather, official activities, holidays, malfunctioning equipment, unsafe or unsanitary conditions, or other condition(s) or emergency requiring a school closing or suspension of classes;
- Employment or other volunteer work approved by the school, provided that the student is seventeen (17) years of age, and provided further that any excused absences under this paragraph shall not adversely impact the student's academic performance or timely graduation;
- Failure of the District of Columbia to provide transportation in cases where the District of Columbia has a legal responsibility for the transportation of the student;
- Medical or dental appointments for the student;
- Absences to allow students of military to visit with their parent or legal guardian immediately before, during, and after deployment, as appropriate;
- An emergency; or
- Other set of circumstances approved by an educational institution.

Suspension and Expulsion. All attendance protocols and absentee reporting requirements apply to "in school" suspensions, which will be coded as suspension-related absences. In the event a student is subject to expulsion during the school year, the educational institution must report as part of the periodic reporting to OSSE, the student's daily attendance during the time enrolled during the school year and provide information with regard to the placement of the student at another educational institution. All local education agencies should engage with the student and parents to provide assistance in identifying and enrolling the student in another appropriate placement; and report the expelled student as such, until such time as the student is officially enrolled in another educational institution.

Withdrawal. If an enrolled student fails to appear for the first day of school, the educational institution is responsible for tracking the student's attendance (or lack thereof) and should proceed to locate the student or make a referral as appropriate. An educational institution is responsible for transferring student records to the new school, and must make every effort to confirm that the student enrolls in the school identified



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at time of withdrawal. Until the student is confirmed enrolled in another educational institution, the student should be coded as absent, not withdrawn.

3. Absenteeism Protocol [revised per South Capitol Act Requirements]

Each Local Education Agency (LEA) shall incorporate evidence-based practice into an absenteeism protocol and make the protocol available to parents and students. The absenteeism protocol should include, without limitation, the following:

- Description of valid excused absences consistent with applicable rules;
- Process for informing, training, and educating school staff, students, parents, guardians, and the community with regard to enhancing school attendance, addressing chronic absenteeism, implementing truancy reduction methods, and related collaborative services; procedures for monitoring, reporting, addressing, and evaluating attendance and absences;
- Procedures to make personal contact with the parent or guardian of a student, each time a student has the equivalent of one (1) day of unexcused absence and 10 or more excused absences; with daily follow-ups as necessary;
- Continuum of school practices and services including meaningful supports, incentives, intervention strategies, and consequences for dealing with absenteeism and consultation with parents or guardians, both at the onset of absenteeism and in those circumstances where chronic absenteeism persists, which continuum shall not include off-site suspension and/or expulsion as intervention strategies;
- Process including specific due process procedures, for a parent, guardian, or student to appeal any attendance violation decisions made by the educational institution; and
- Process to ensure that the LEA maintains complete, accurate, and contemporaneous records of the work of the school-based student support team to reduce unexcused absences.

4. Attendance Monitor [new South Capitol Act Requirement]

All educational institutions are now required by law to appoint an Attendance Monitor. OSSE has proposed rules outlining a monitor's responsibilities and has issued guidance for LEAs on data management.² OSSE recommends the following procedures:

- Ensure that the school Attendance Monitor is familiar with the District of Columbia attendance laws, regulations, and policies applicable to his/her respective school;
- Establish a reliable procedure for recording a student's attendance, including partial day absences and late arrival for each class throughout the school day;
- Collect daily attendance records for each student, to be recorded and submitted by each classroom teacher/homeroom teacher etc.;
- Submit to OSSE, the attendance described in paragraphs DCMR Title 5A, Section 2101.3 (a)-(g);
- Correct within five (5) business days of submission, the accuracy of attendance data submitted to OSSE via an automated, electronic feed; and
- Report the name and contact information of the designated Attendance Monitor(s) to OSSE.

² OSSE Attendance and Reporting Guidance (2013) is available on OSSE's website for more detailed guidance.



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5. School Based Student Support Teams [revised per South Capitol Act Requirement]

An educational institution is required by law to implement an absenteeism protocol, as described in #3, focusing on the prevention of unexcused absences, including academic and behavioral interventions, to address respective student needs.

School Based Student Support Team (SST). The law requires an educational institution to have a school based SST to support the individual student by developing and implementing action plans and strategies that are school based or community based, to enhance the student's success with services, incentives, intervention strategies, and consequences for dealing with absenteeism. OSSE recommends :

- Training team members and the attendance monitor using evidence based absenteeism and truancy intervention strategies and best practices; providing access to arrange for services to ameliorate the causes of absenteeism and truancy
- Core school-based student support team membership should typically include the following:
 - General education teacher; School nurse; psychologist, counselor, and/or social worker, if applicable; and a school administrator with decision making authority
- Selection of additional members of a team should be guided by the needs of the particular student, such as:
 - IDEA/Section 504 coordinator and/or special education personnel;
 - Early learning/Head Start teacher;
 - Bilingual or English as a second language teacher;
 - Representatives of CFSA and/or Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services (DYRS);
 - McKinney-Vento homeless liaison; and/or
 - Guardian *ad litem*.

6. Record and Reporting Requirements [revised per South Capitol Act Requirements]

Each educational institution is required to maintain an accurate, contemporaneous, and daily attendance record for each student enrolled in the educational institution in accordance with OSSE's OSSE Data Collection Handbook. An educational institution must maintain the following information in student attendance files:

- Date(s) of enrollment;
- Daily legible or machine-readable record of daily attendance, noting the student as present or absent for a full or partial school day;
- Determination of the nature of each absence as excused, unexcused, suspension-related, or expulsion-related;
- Date of withdrawal from the educational institution or confirmed transfer to another educational institution, including the name and location of the educational institution to which the student transferred and follow up notation(s) to confirm the child's new placement;
- Dates and numbers of referral to the school-based student support team, the Child and Family Services Agency ("CFSA"), the Court Social Services Division of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia ("Court Social Services"); or the Office of the Attorney General Juvenile Section ("OAG-Juvenile Section") related to absenteeism or truancy (See "Reporting" Section for guidance on the timing and submission requirements for these referrals);



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- Dates of marking periods;
- Daily late arrival time with an explanation from parents or guardians, if provided;
- Dates and times of early dismissals from the school day;
- Date and brief description of communications with student, parent(s) or guardian(s) with regard to school attendance and absences
- Underlying causes for student's absenteeism or truancy as determined by the school-based student support team;
- Action plans and strategies implemented by the school-based student support team to eliminate unexcused absences; and
- Services utilized by the student to reduce unexcused absences; and

Annual Report. Within sixty (60) calendar days after the end of each school year, educational institutions must submit aggregated student information to OSSE as described in D.C. Official Code § 38-203(i).

Student Absences. All educational institutions are required to report to OSSE each student absence of 2 full days or 4 half days in a school month, along with a statement of reasons for the absence.

Educational Neglect Referral. All educational institutions are required to report any cases of suspected educational neglect.

LEA Truancy Referral. LEAs must refer students ages five (5) through thirteen (13) CFSA no later than two (2) school days after an accrual of ten (10) unexcused absences within one school year and/or completion of truancy protocols specified in OSSE Rule Section 2103.3 (DCMR Title 5, subtitle A; chapter 21). Until the 2014-15 school year, LEAs are to refer students age fourteen (14) and over to the Court Social Services and to the Office of Attorney General-Juvenile Section no later than two (2) school days after the accrual of twenty-five (25) unexcused absences at any time within one (1) school year. Beginning with the 2014-15 school year, such referral shall be made after the accrual of twenty (20) or more unexcused absences.

Referral Documentation. Appropriate documentation for referrals to an appropriate agency, including the Child Family Services Agency, Court Social Services Division, or Office of Attorney General, includes:

- If applicable, documentation of suspected educational neglect;
- Student's attendance and absence record;
- Any prevention and intervention plans in place;
- Documentation related to referrals and the outcome of such referrals;
- Documentation representing evidence of communications, services, and attendance-related interventions employed by the school;
- Documentation of personal contacts with, and written notification to, parents or guardians, with regard to the unexcused absences; and
- If applicable, the student's Individualized Education Program with any supporting evaluations or assessments.

Parent Notice. An educational institution shall publish and make available to parents and students the attendance policies and procedures, including without limitation, a list of valid excused absences.



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7. Definitions [revised per South Capitol Act Requirements]

“*Chronic Absenteeism*” --The accumulation within one school year of ten (10) or more school days on which a student is marked absent, including excused and unexcused absences.

“*Chronically Truant*”- A school aged child is chronically truant when absent from school without legitimate excuse for ten or more days within a single school year.

“*Educational neglect*” --The failure of a parent or guardian to ensure that a child attends school consistent with the requirements of the law including, without limitation, the failure to enroll a school-age child in an educational institution or provide appropriate private instruction; permitting chronic absenteeism from school; inattention to special education needs; refusal to allow or failure to obtain recommended remedial education services; or the failure to obtain treatment or other special education services without reasonable cause.

“*Truant*” --A school aged child who is absent from school without legitimate excuse.

“*Truancy rate*” --The number of students who are absent without valid excuse as defined by 5 DCMR A2102 on ten (10) or more occasions within a single school year divided by the total number of students enrolled for a single school year as determined by the final enrollment audit conducted by OSSE pursuant to D.C. Official Code § 38-203. Truancy rate may be calculated and reported at the school, LEA, and state levels.

“*Unexcused Absence*” --An absence that does not meet the criteria for an excused absence is considered unexcused for attendance accounting purposes.

8. OSSE Technical Assistance and Additional Information

- *General Information: Guidance and Technical Assistance*
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- *Data Submission to OSSE: Technical Assistance; Content; Format*
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- *Additional information, including OSSE oversight responsibilities is also available at:*
www.osse.dc.gov.