

**Attendance Requirements for Students Under 18 Years of Age
With Respect to Truancy**

The Waterbury Board of Education requires all students to attend school on a consistent basis following the prescribed Waterbury school calendar and school hours. Each student shall be present to participate in class instruction and to learn through interaction with faculty and peers. (Note: Also see Policy entitled “Attendance Requirement for Course Credit or Promotion”)

1. Definitions

“Student” – a student enrolled in the Waterbury Public Schools, any grade and/or age five (5) through eighteen (18).

“Excused Absences” – a student’s absence* from school shall be considered excused if written documentation** of the reason for the absence has been submitted within ten (10) 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:

- A. For absences one through nine, a student’s absences from school are considered excused when the student’s parent/legal guardian approves such absence and submits appropriate documentation**; and
- B. For the tenth absence and all absences thereafter, a student’s absences from school are considered excused for the following reasons:
 1. 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);
 2. student’s observance of a religious holiday;
 3. 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.

“Unexcused Absences” – a student’s absence from school shall be considered unexcused unless they meet one of the following criteria:

- A. the absence meets the definition of an excused absence (including documentation requirements); or
- B. 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.

Footnotes

- * 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.

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** Such documentation should include a signed note from the student's parent/legal guardian, a signed note from a school official that spoke in person with the parent/legal 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.

The classroom or homeroom teacher determines the legitimacy of an excused absence, and final determination will be made by building principal.

"Truant" – any student, age five (5) to eighteen (18) who has four (4) unexcused absences from school in any one month or ten (10) unexcused absences from school in any school year.

2. The Waterbury Board of Education and the school administration will make a concerted effort to prevent and remedy truancy in its early stages for students who are found to be truant. This will include:

- A. A meeting to review and evaluate reasons with the appropriate school staff community agencies and parent or other person having control of child, will be held no later than ten days after the child's fourth unexcused absence in a month or tenth in a year. (Principal or designee).
- B. The designated staff shall coordinate referrals, and services of children with community agencies providing child and family services. (Principal or designee).

If a parent or other person having control of a child who is truant fails to attend the meeting held pursuant to this section or if such parent or other person otherwise fails to cooperate with the school in attempting to solve the truancy problem, the superintendent of schools will file for each such truant enrolled in the schools under his 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.

- C. A truancy referral is appropriate only at such time as the school has exhausted all administrative and social service remedies and has reason to believe that absenteeism constitutes truancy. Then the following steps are to be taken by the school, prior to referral, so as to expedite processing and reduce delay.
 1. Provide documentation of at least four (4) days in any one-month or a cumulative total of ten (10) days in any school year of unexcused absences. Indicate the lack of ongoing parent/legal guardian acknowledgement or collaborative effort maintained with school personnel to remediate attendance problem. When parent/legal guardian cooperation to resolve the number of unexcused absences is present, the administrator may defer making a truancy referral to the court. (Appendix 4-C; also on Referral to Juvenile Matters Form, Appendix 4-F).

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2. Make the referral as early as possible in the school year in order for the court to provide the most effective intervention.
3. Have completed a review of educational records (Appendix 4-E) that identifies the child's special needs, *if any*, and documents the appropriateness of the child's present academic program within his/her school.
4. Document what referrals have been made on the child's behalf to relevant mental health, social service, or related agencies.
5. Provide documentation of the school's attempt to return the child to acceptable attendance standards (Principal or designee). Dates of parental contacts (and/or attempts), home visits, and other efforts should be included in court referral. (Appendix 4-D, 4-F) (Note 2.1 - failure to participate.)
6. The Superintendent shall file a written complaint with the Superior Court for each truant. (Appendix 4-F)
7. The designated school staff annually notifies the parent or other person having control of each child enrolled in a grade from kindergarten to twelfth, in writing, of obligations of the parent pursuant to 10-184 of the Connecticut General Statutes. (Appendix 4-A)
8. Annually, at the beginning of each school year and upon enrollment during the school year, obtain from the parent a telephone number (Appendix 4-B) or other means of contacting such parent during the day.
9. Whenever a child under age 18 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 concerted effort shall be made by school personnel or volunteers under the direction of school personnel to contact the parent or such other person. Persons who, in good faith, give or fail to give notice shall be immune from any 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.
10. Intervention process for truants.
 - A. **One to four unexcused absences**
 1. Classroom/homeroom teacher/school staff will contact parents to schedule a meeting to discuss reasons for truancy, and suggest ways to improve attendance. (Meeting must be held no later than ten school days after the child's fourth unexcused absence.)
 2. School notifies parent or responsible other.
 3. Teacher/school staff continues to monitor attendance.
 - B. **Five to ten unexcused absences**
 1. School notifies parent or responsible other.
 2. Referral to Attendance Counselor or Truancy Specialist. (Appendix 4-D).
 3. Have completed a review of educational records (Appendix 4-E) that identifies the child's special needs, *if any*, and documents the appropriateness of the child's present academic program within his/her school.
 4. Attendance Counselors or Truancy Specialists Report.
 5. Continued school based monitoring.

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6. Student evaluation as required by PPT prior to written complaint to Superior Court (Appendix 4-E) only if child was previous labeled or referred for special education services.
7. Short term counseling with school personnel (i.e., social workers, psychologists, SAT, guidance counselors, school nurse, administration, truancy officer, attendance counselor, truancy specialists, etc.).
8. Coordinate referrals and services with community agencies (Principal or designee).

C. Eleventh day and continuance of unexcused absences

1. School notifies parent or responsible other.
2. Principal will complete Referral to Juvenile Matters (Appendix D-6).
3. Superintendent will file written complaint to Superior Court.

D. To file referral to Juvenile Matters

1. Complete all above sections.
2. Complete Referral to Juvenile Matters form accurately.
3. Send Referral to Juvenile Matters to Supervisor of Special Education for review.
4. Supervisor will approve and forward to Director of Special Education.
5. Superintendent will receive Referral to Juvenile Matters form for signature and mailing to superior court.