



North Haven Public Schools

North Haven, Connecticut 06473

Dear Parent,

Recent changes in Connecticut law requires that public schools provide a notice to parents/guardians of their obligations under Connecticut General Statute 10-184. This law provides that each parent or other person having control of a child seven years of age and older and under 16 years of age "is obligated to cause the child to attend school regularly during the hours and terms school is in session, unless such parent or other person shows that the child is elsewhere receiving equivalent instruction."

Over the summer, Connecticut lawmakers passed laws that require school districts to look at student attendance data more intensely and seriously. The State Department of Education (SDE) collects student attendance data on all students, and issues an attendance rate by school as well as for the district as a whole.

Additional important pieces of the law that you should know are as follows:

Truant

A truant is someone who has four (4) *unexcused* absences from school in one month or 10 *unexcused* absences in one school year.

Chronically Absent

Students who miss 10% or more of their school days are considered "Chronically Absent" by the SDE.

Unexcused absences

A student's absence from school is considered unexcused unless it meets the criteria below. It is four (4) unexcused absences in a month, or 10 unexcused absences in a year that determine a student to be a truant.

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 10 school days of the student's return to school. The written documentation should be a signed note from the student's parent or guardian. It may also be a signed note from a school official who spoke with the parent or guardian regarding the absence, or a note from the school nurse or a licensed medical professional, as appropriate. This applies for up to nine days of absences.

For the 10th absence and all absences thereafter, a student's absence from school is considered excused for the following reasons only:

- Student illness (note: verified by appropriately licensed medical professional);
- Student's observance of religious holiday;
- Death in student's family or other emergency;
- Mandated court appearances (additional documentation required);

- Lack of transportation that is normally provided by a district other than the one the student attends;
- Extraordinary educational opportunities pre-approved by district administrators in accordance with State Department of Education (SDE) guidance.

Unless the reason for absences is for one of the reasons stated above, even with a note from a parent, the student's absence is considered "unexcused".

In-School Suspension

Students who are assigned to in-school suspension for more than half of the school day are considered absent for that day. These days count toward the total number of days the student is absent.

What will happen if a child is a truant?

The school is required to have a meeting with the parent/guardian, or another person who is taking care of the student, within 10 school days after a student becomes a truant. The reason for this meeting is to talk about why the student hasn't been coming to school and to help solve problems that keep the student from coming to school. The district may also be required to file a Family with Service Needs (FWSN) affidavit to the courts, or file a report with the Department of Children and Families (DCF).

In North Haven, we send letters home if your child's attendance becomes concerning. The implications of the state's new laws are that you may receive these letters and notices more frequently.

If you have any questions concerning the attendance guidelines, please contact your school principal.

Sincerely,

Robert D. Cronin, Ph.D.

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