



## Enforceable Attendance Policies & Correct Coding

FY17 Release

Effective truancy prevention and intervention starts with an enforceable school attendance policy. We define an enforceable attendance policy as one that requires documentation of valid cause for student absences once a student has been identified as having a pattern of concerning attendance. We often refer to this having the student on a “doctor’s note policy,” since most absences (and developments of chronic truancy) are due to parental reports of student illness (or related report).

There are two typical attendance policies considered enforceable:

- 1) Student is placed on a doctor’s note policy after missing 9 days of school in a school year (5% of total school year). “9 days” is given as a common example only.
- 2) Attendance secretary (or appropriate staff member / administrator) runs an attendance report once or twice per month. Students who have missed a given percentage (we recommend 10%-15%) of the school year thus far are placed on a doctor’s note policy.

\*Upon a student being placed on a doctor’s note policy, we advise that the school call the parent and also send a letter to the parent advising that, due to the student missing X% of the school year, medical documentation will need to be provided for future absences to be considered excused.

Why are these policies so important? They provide a framework for strategic early intervention. Rather than noticing a student has missed combined weeks of school during the second half of the school year, policies such as these guide schools and their staff to be able to identify a pattern of absenteeism while effective intervention can still be provided and before a student feels academically and/or emotionally unable to climb out of the hole that has been created. For parents of young children who are allowed to chronically miss school, early intervention works in a similar fashion: strive to stop the negative behavior before it becomes a deeper pattern for both the parent and child.

*A child that has accumulated thirty **excused** absences has missed as much educational opportunity, classroom time, and social-emotional growth as a child that has thirty **unexcused** absences.*

In order for effective identification and intervention to occur, student’s absences must be coded correctly. Anytime a student is absent without parent contact, the absence should be marked as unexcused. Anytime a parent calls a student on a doctor’s note policy in ill and then does not provide documentation of being seen by a doctor, the absence should be marked as unexcused. Correct coding is an incredibly imperative aspect of the truancy intervention process, as it allows everyone involved to understand and identify the days during which the student should have been in attendance but was not.