



Administrative Procedure: Student Attendance

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1.0 Background

- 1.1 Administrative Procedures of the Superior North Catholic District School Board sets expectations for student attendance. Regular attendance at school is a key element linked to student achievement and well-being. Early identification of, and intervention for, absenteeism is crucial to helping children, youth, and families change patterns of poor attendance and work toward achieving their full potential.
- 1.2 Under the *Education Act* (Section 21 (1)), compulsory attendance requirements exist for students six years of age to 18 years of age. Students and their parents and/or guardians are responsible for regular school attendance. Schools have a duty to monitor and review student absenteeism. As well, the Act and the Ministry guidelines require schools to report student absences to parents and, in cases of excessive or chronic absenteeism, to report these developments to external agencies for follow-up. Section 21 (2) of the Education Act contains the reasons that a student may legally be excused from school.
- 1.3 When a student is absent from school, there is a responsibility to investigate why a student is absent and to make every effort to have the student return to school. The first response is based on a "Safe Arrival" approach, coupled with the school's daily attendance procedures.

2.0 Procedure

2.1 The following outlines a series of steps that schools within the Superior North Catholic District School Board are to follow as students accumulate absences. This procedure draws a distinction between excused absences under the *Education Act*, unexcused absences and/or chronic student absenteeism outlined in the current Enrolment Register instructions.

2.1.1 Stage 1-School Level Intervention:

- a. Emphasis is on school-based action in response to student absenteeism patterns. The daily absenteeism patterns at the school are monitored by recording and monitoring student attendance by the classroom teacher and the school office.
- b. Early intervention, especially in cases when students have consecutive or non-consecutive absences from school, is a key element in this stage. Principals are expected to define the early intervention approach and the monitoring of student absenteeism for their teaching and support staff at the school. Included in this approach is the student absentee reporting protocol and parent and/or guardian contact by school staff encouraging their involvement to improve attendance. The intention is to support students to meet the expectation that students come to school prepared, on time and ready to learn.
- c. Contact with students is a critical aspect of any early intervention strategy. This interaction is guided by a disposition of care and concern, reflecting the “caring adult” approach that has been identified as an essential characteristic for engaging students and fostering relationships in educational settings.
- d. The Principal's review of student attendance patterns will determine whether or not additional actions are required.
- e. In the case of a student who is seriously ill, the student shall remain on the register, and appropriate documentation must be kept on file under subsection 23 (3) of Regulation 298. The documentation must include letters from parents, medical notes and information regarding work sent home. A referral to the Attendance Counsellor

is not required in this case. The documentation must be stored with the school register.

- f. For a pupil who has been absent for 11 to 15 consecutive days, a referral must be made by the Principal or Vice Principal to the Attendance Counsellor in order to keep the pupil on the register.

Through this referral, it will be determined whether or not the student's enrollment status is "active" or "inactive." The Attendance Counsellor will follow the Prolonged Absence instructions outlined in the current Enrollment Register.

If the pupil is not of compulsory school age, a referral to the Attendance Counsellor is not required. Retire the pupil from the enrolment register on the day immediately after the last day in attendance.

If the pupil is of compulsory school age and a referral to attendance has not been made between the 11th and 16th day of consecutive absence, retire the pupil from the register on the day immediately after the last day in attendance.

- g. The Attendance Counsellor must take action and will provide the school with documentation that action has been taken. Ongoing documentation is required indicating that the student file is still active if the student is to remain on the register for one or more subsequent 15-day periods. The referral to the Attendance Counsellor does not remove the student's obligation to attend, nor does it absolve the Board or the school of its responsibility to encourage the student and parent and/or guardian to have the student attend.
- h. Section f above does not apply to students who are excused from attendance under Section 21 (2) of the *Education Act*. This section lists a number of reasons for which a student may be excused from attendance.
- i. When it has been determined that the student's enrolment status is "active," an attendance support plan will be developed. This plan will identify strategies and supports available to improve attendance and is to be developed in consultation with the student,

parent and/or guardian, Teachers, Principal, Attendance Counsellor, and any other support person the family may identify. The design of the plan is short-term, and intervention based on specific goals or outcomes is defined.

- j. In the event that the student continues to accumulate absences beyond the 15th consecutive day of absence, the school's Principal and/or Attendance Counsellor may request a meeting with the student's parent and/or guardian to discuss the student's attendance history, to assess the impact the absences have/potentially have on achievement and to identify next steps as part of a revised attendance support plan.

Steps may include:

- Continuation of the strategies identified in the plan
 - Implementation of an equivalent learning program
 - Redirection to an alternative education program
 - Referral to a community agency for support
 - Case Conference for development of an Individualized Education Program (IEP)
- k. Staff will report to local Child Welfare Services when they believe that there are grounds that the student's pattern of absences relates to suspected child abuse/neglect.

2.1.2 **Stage 2- System Level Intervention:**

- a. The Attendance Counsellor and Superintendent meet regularly to discuss all individual attendance referrals, supports, barriers and steps moving forward.
- b. The Superintendent may request an attendance review meeting with the student and the parent and/or guardian.
- c. The attendance review meeting is a formal meeting. It can be called after stage 1 interventions have been implemented and proven unsuccessful in achieving a resolution relating to a student's refusal to participate in an alternative/equivalent learning program.

The Attendance Counsellor, student, parent and/or guardian, the school supports, and community supports shall be invited to this meeting.

The recommendations may be as follows:

- Referral to Child Welfare Services for follow-up with the student and parent and/or guardian
 - Identification of an equivalent learning plan
 - Referral to the provincial Attendance Counsellor
- d. The recommendations of the meeting would be confirmed in writing and directed to the attention of the student, parent and/or guardian and school principal. A copy of this recommendation is to be placed within the student's Ontario Student Record file.

2.1.3 **Stage 3-Attendance History Review:**

- a. In cases of habitual absence from school, the school Superintendent in consultation with the principal and Attendance Counsellor, may determine that intervention by the courts is necessary. Should this be the determination, the school Attendance Counsellor will be directed to provide written notice of this pending action to the parent and/or guardian of the student.