

Policy 5117: Excessive Absences

For notification purposes only, the district will no longer differentiate between excused or unexcused absences, nor will it base the notification on a quarterly limit, but will simply use the limit of 20 days absence per year.

School administrators will make contact with family of the truant student after 5, 10 and 20 truanancies and document the contact. After the third contact, the case can be referred to the county attorney. There will be three documented attempts to get the student to school prior to contacting the county attorney.

Regular attendance by the students at school is essential for students to obtain the maximum opportunities from the education program. Parents and students alike are encouraged to ensure an absence from school is a necessary absence. Students shall attend school unless excused by the principal of their attendance center. This policy, developed in collaboration with the county attorney for the district's principal office location, is an attempt to address the problem of excessive absenteeism.

Excessive absenteeism is the failure to attend school for the minimum number of days established in the school calendar by the board, with or without a reasonable cause.

The superintendent shall designate an attendance officer. The attendance officer will investigate the report of any child who may be in violation of the state's compulsory attendance statutes.

If any student has accumulated a total of five [whether unexcused; excused and unexcused] absences per quarter or the hourly equivalent of five absences, the school shall render all services in its power to compel the student's attendance. These services shall include the following:

1. A meeting or meetings between the school attendance officer, or school principal or a member of the school administrative staff, the student's parent/guardian and the student (if necessary) to solve the excessive absenteeism problem.
2. Educational counseling to explore curriculum changes such as alternative educational programs to solve the excessive absenteeism problem.
3. Educational evaluation to assist in determining the specific condition(s) contributing to the excessive absenteeism problem, supplemented by specific efforts by the school to help remedy any condition diagnosed.
4. Investigation of the problem by a school social worker (or principal or administrative staff member) to identify conditions contributing to the excessive absenteeism problem. If services for the student and student's family are determined to be needed, the investigator shall meet with the parent/guardian and child to discuss any referral to appropriate agencies to remedy the conditions.

If the student is absent more than twenty days per year, or the hourly equivalent, the attendance officer shall file a report with the county attorney of the county in which such person resides.

Students are subject to disciplinary action for excessive absenteeism including suspension and expulsion. It shall be within the discretion of the principal to determine, in light of the circumstances,

whether a student may make up work missed because of excessive absenteeism. Disciplinary action for students receiving special education services will be assigned in accordance with the goals and objectives of the student's Individualized Education Program.

The superintendent shall report on a monthly basis to the Commissioner of Education as directed by the commissioner regarding the number of and reason for any long-term suspension, expulsion, or excessive absenteeism of a student; referral of a student to the office of the county attorney for excessive absenteeism; or contacting of law enforcement officials other than school resource officers by the district relative to a student enrolled in the district. The superintendent shall report annually to the Commissioner the required data for the number of students who have dropped out of school.

When reporting excessive absenteeism, the attendance officer shall inform the county attorney whether the excessive absences are due to documented illnesses that make attendance impossible or impractical. This may be done by informing the County Attorney of either the number of absences due to such illnesses or that the attendance officer is of the opinion that prosecution is not warranted.

It shall be the responsibility of the superintendent to implement this policy. The implementation may include regulations indicating the disciplinary action to be taken for excessive absenteeism.

Legal Reference: Neb. Statute 79-208 and 209

 NDE Rule 10.012.01B

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