

## **Procedure - Excused and Unexcused Absences**

Students are expected to attend all assigned classes each day. School staff will keep a record of absence and tardiness, including a call log and/or a record of excuse statements submitted by a parent/guardian or, in certain cases, students, to document a student's excused absences.

### **Excused and Unexcused Absences**

At the beginning of each school year, or at the time of enrollment at a new school a parent/guardian must date and acknowledge review of the excused and unexcused absences information.

### **Excused Absences**

The following are valid excuses for absences and tardiness. Assignments and/or activities not completed because of an excused absence or tardiness may be made up in the manner provided by the teacher.

#### **Absence due to:**

1. Physical health or mental health symptoms, illness, health condition or medical appointment for the student or person for whom the student is legally responsible. Examples of symptoms, illness, health conditions, or medical appointments include, but are not limited to, medical, counseling, mental health wellness, dental, optometry, pregnancy, and behavioral health treatment (which can include in-patient or out-patient treatment for chemical dependency or mental health);
2. Family emergency including, but not limited to, a death or illness in the family;
3. Religious or cultural purpose including observance of a religious or cultural holiday or participation in religious or cultural instruction;
4. Court, judicial proceeding, court-ordered activity, or jury service;
5. Post-secondary, technical school or apprenticeship program visitation, or scholarship interview;
6. State-recognized search and rescue activities consistent with RCW 28A.225.055;
7. Absence directly related to the student's homeless or foster care/dependency status;
8. Absences related to deployment activities of a parent or legal guardian who is an active-duty member consistent with RCW 28A.705.010;
9. Absences due to suspensions, expulsions or emergency expulsions imposed pursuant to chapter 392-400 WAC if the student is not receiving educational services and is not enrolled in qualifying "course of study" activities as defined in WAC 392-121-107;
10. Absences due to student safety concerns, including absences related to threats, assaults, or bullying;
11. Absences due to a student's migrant status; and
12. An approved activity that is consistent with district policy and is mutually agreed upon by the principal or designee and a parent, guardian, or emancipated youth;
13. Absences due to the student's lack of necessary instructional tools, including internet access or connectivity.

In the event of emergency school facility closure due to COVID-19, other communicable disease outbreak, natural disaster, or other event when districts are required to provide synchronous and asynchronous instruction, absences due to the following reasons are excused:

1. Absences related to the student's illness, health condition, or medical appointments due to COVID-19 or other communicable disease;
2. Absences related to caring for a family member who has an illness, health condition, or medical appointment due to COVID-19, other communicable disease, or other emergency health condition related to school facility closures;
3. Absences related to the student's family obligations during regularly scheduled school hours that are temporarily necessary because of school facility closures, until other arrangements can be made; and
4. Absences due to the student's parent's work schedule or other obligations during regularly scheduled school hours, until other arrangements can be made.

A school principal or designee has the authority to determine if an absence meets the above criteria for an excused absence.

28A.705.010;392-400 392-121-107;

1. **Parental notification.** When possible, the parent/guardian is expected to notify the school office on the morning of the absence by phone, e-mail, or written note, and to provide the excuse for the absence. If no excuse is provided with the notification, or no notification is provided, the parent/guardian will submit an excuse via phone, e-mail or written note upon the student's return to school **within five school days. Doctors' notes are encouraged to excuse any appointment that occurs during school hours. This includes if a student arrives late or leaves early due to an appointment.** Adult students (those over eighteen) and emancipated students (those over sixteen who have been emancipated by court action) will notify the school office of their absences with a note of explanation. Students fourteen years old or older who are absent from school due to testing or treatment for a sexually transmitted disease will notify the school of their absence with a note of explanation, which will be kept confidential. Students thirteen years and older may do the same for mental health, drug, or alcohol treatment; and all students have that right for confidential family planning appointments.  
A parent/guardian may request that a student be excused from attending school in observance of a religious holiday. In addition, a student, upon the request of his/her parent, may be excused for a portion of a school day to participate in religious instruction provided such is not conducted on school property. A student will be allowed one makeup day for each day of absence.
2. **Absence for parental-approved activities.** This category of absence will be counted as excused for purposes agreed to by the principal and the parent/guardian. **If the pre-arranged educational plan work is not completed within 5 days of return date, the excused absence will be changed to unexcused.** An absence may not be approved if it causes a serious adverse effect on the student's educational progress. The student may not be able to achieve the objectives of the unit of instruction as a result of absence from class. In such a case, a parent or guardian-approved absence would have an adverse effect on the student's educational progress, including the grade for the course. A student, upon the request of his/her parent/guardian, may be excused for a portion of a school day to participate in religious instruction provided such is not conducted on school property or otherwise involves the school to any degree.
3. **Absence resulting from disciplinary actions — or short-term suspension.** As required by law, students who are removed from a class or classes as a disciplinary measure or students who have been placed on short-term or long-term suspension will have the right to make up assignments or exams missed during the time, they were denied entry to the classroom if the effect of the missed assignments will be a substantial lowering of the course grade.
4. **Extended illness or health condition.** If a student is confined to home or hospital for an extended period, the school will arrange for the accomplishment of assignments at the place of confinement whenever practical. If the student is unable to do his/her schoolwork, or if there are major requirements of a particular course which cannot be accomplished outside of class the student may be required to take an incomplete or withdraw from the class without penalty.
5. **Excused absence for chronic health condition.** Students with a chronic health condition that interrupts regular attendance may qualify for placement in a limited attendance and participation program. The student and his/her parent will apply to the principal or counselor, and a limited program will be written following the advice and recommendations of the student's medical advisor. The recommended limited program will be approved by the principal. Staff will be informed of the student's needs, though the confidentiality of medical information will be respected at the parent's request.

### **Excessive Excused Absences**

For many valid reasons, students are absent from school. However, even when there is communication from the parent, absences add up and can significantly impact a student's opportunity and progress towards learning. Student absences are one of several key signals to educators that a student might not be on track for educational success.

Sequim School District follows the elementary student excused absences legal requirements:

### **Required conference for elementary school students**

If an **elementary** school student has **five or more excused absences in a single month** during the current school year or ten or more excused absences in the current school year, the school will schedule a

conference with the student and their parent/guardian(s) at a reasonably convenient time. The conference which can be by phone, virtual meeting or in person is intended to identify barriers to the student's regular attendance and to identify supports and resources so the student may regularly attend school.

The conference must include at least one school district employee, preferably a nurse, counselor, social worker, teacher, or community human service provider, and may occur on the same day as the scheduled parent-teacher conference, provided it takes place within thirty days of the absences. If the student has an Individualized Education Program or a Section 504 Plan, the team that created that program must reconvene. **A conference is not required if prior notice of the excused absences was provided to the school or if a doctor's note has been provided and/or a plan is in place to ensure the student will not fall behind in their coursework.**

**For secondary students absent 10 or more excused days in a year, the following intervention steps will be followed:**

The school will schedule a conference with the student and their parent/guardian(s) at a reasonably convenient time. The conference which can be by phone, virtual meeting or in person is intended to identify barriers to the student's regular attendance and to identify supports and resources so the student may regularly attend school.

The conference must include at least one school district employee, preferably a nurse, counselor, social worker, teacher, or community human service provider, and may occur on the same day as the scheduled parent-teacher conference, provided it takes place within thirty days of the absences. If the student has an Individualized Education Program or a Section 504 Plan, the team that created that program must reconvene.

A conference is not required if a plan is in place to ensure the student will not fall behind in their coursework and absences are not impacting the student's opportunity and progress towards learning.

**For all students:**

- School administrators can require a meeting with the district nurse to discuss health concerns and ways to decrease health related absences.
- School administrators can require a doctor's note to excuse future absences due to illness/injury.
- Pre-arranged educational plans can be denied if absences will impact the student's opportunity and progress towards learning or the student will fall behind in their coursework.

**Tiered response system for student who are absent from remote learning**

Students who are marked absent from remote learning will receive interventions and services consistent with the tiered response system for student absences implemented by the district pursuant to WAC 392-401A-045. Under the tiered response system, the district will:

- Monitor daily attendance data for all students who are absent from remote learning, whether excused or unexcused;
- Make multiple attempts to contact the families regarding student absences using multiple modalities and in the parent's home language;
- Provide daily notification of absences to parents;
- Provide outreach from the student's school to determine student needs, such as basic needs, connectivity and hardware, connection with health and social services as necessary;
- Provide differentiated supports to students that address the barriers to attendance and participation, including universal supports for all students and tiered interventions for students at-risk of and experiencing chronic absence; and
- When feasible and appropriate, transition students to full-time in-person learning or other program to accommodate the student's needs.

**Unexcused Absences**

An "unexcused absence" means that a student has failed to attend the majority of hours or periods in an average school day, has failed to comply with a more restrictive school district policy on absences, or has failed to comply with alternative learning experience program attendance requirements.

Unexcused absences occur when:

1. The parent, guardian, or adult student submits an excuse that does not meet the definition of an excused absence as defined above; or

2. The parent, guardian, or adult student fails to submit any type of excuse statement, whether by phone, e-mail or in writing, for an absence.

**Each unexcused absence within any month of the current school year -**

Will be followed by an automatically generated phone call to the parent/guardian informing them of the absence. The school will make reasonable efforts to provide this information in a language in which that parent is fluent. A student's grade will not be affected if no graded activity is missed during such an absence. A student, or their parent/guardian(s) has the right to request and be provided missed work for unexcused absences. Education plans should be utilized whenever possible, especially for pre-arranged absences.

**After three unexcused absences within any month of the current school year -**

The school will hold a conference with the student, and parent/guardian to analyze the causes of the student's absenteeism. This conference can be by phone, email, virtual meeting or in person. If a regularly scheduled parent-teacher conference is scheduled to take place within thirty days of the third unexcused absence, the school may schedule the attendance conference on the same day. If the parent/guardian does not attend the scheduled conference, the school may hold the conference with the student. However, the school will notify the parent/guardian of the steps to eliminate or reduce the student's absences.

**At five unexcused absences within any month of the current school year -**

The school will send a Truancy Letter that shares students' attendance record, district attendance policies and consequences for future unexcused absences.

**At six unexcused absences in a month -**

The school will enter into a **T**ruancy **I**ntervention **A**greement (TIA) with the student and parents/guardians. For any student with an existing Individualized Education Program (IEP) or Section 504 Plan, the TIA will include convening the student's IEP team or Section 504 team, including a behavior specialist or mental health specialist where appropriate. The district McKinney-Vento and/or Foster Care Liaison will also be invited for students with the appropriate status. If the parents/guardians do not attend the scheduled TIA meeting, the school may hold the TIA meeting with the student. However, the school will notify the parents/guardians of the steps to eliminate or reduce the student's absences.

At the TIA meeting, the team **will**:

- a. establish school attendance requirements,
- b. discuss attendance barriers,
- c. help the student create goals to improve attendance,
- d. set a TIA check in date,
- e. have the WARNS consent form signed,
- f. if consent given, schedule WARNS assessment date (see below).

At the TIA meeting, the team **may**:

1. refer the student to a community engagement board; and/or
2. file a petition to juvenile court (see below).

**Washington Assessment of the Risks and Needs of Students (WARNS)**

The school will take data-informed steps to eliminate or reduce the student's absences. In middle school and high school, these steps will include application of the **W**ashington **A**ssessment of the **R**isks and **N**eeds of **S**tudents (WARNS) or other assessment by the district's designated employee.

For any student with an existing Individualized Education Program (IEP) or Section 504 Plan, these steps will include convening the student's IEP team or Section 504 team, including a behavior specialist or mental health specialist where appropriate, to consider the reasons for the student's absences. The district McKinney-Vento and/or Foster Care Liaison will also be invited for students with the appropriate status. If necessary, and if the student's parent gives consent, the district will conduct a functional behavior assessment and will complete a detailed behavior plan to explore the function of the absence behavior.

For any student who does not have an IEP or Section 504 Plan, but who is reasonably believed to have a mental or physical disability or impairment, these steps will include informing the student's parent/guardian of the right to obtain an appropriate evaluation at no cost to the parent to determine whether the student has a disability or impairment and needs accommodations, special education

services, or related services. This includes students with suspected emotional or behavioral disabilities. If the school obtains consent to conduct an evaluation, time should be allowed for the evaluation to be completed, and if the student is found to be eligible for accommodations, special education services, or related services, a plan will be developed to address the student's needs.

The district will designate a staff member to apply the Washington Assessment of the Risks and Needs of Students (WARNS) and, where appropriate, provide the student with best practice or research-based interventions consistent with WARNS. As appropriate, the district will also consider:

- adjusting the student's course assignments;
- providing the student more individualized instruction;
- providing appropriate vocational courses or work experience;
- requiring the student to attend an alternative school or program;
- assisting the parent or student to obtain supplementary services; or
- referring the student to a community engagement board.

### **Transfers**

In the case of a student who transfers from one district to another during the school year, the sending district will provide to the receiving district, together with a copy of the WARNS assessment and any interventions previously provided to the student, the most recent truancy information for that student. The information will include the online or written acknowledgment by the parent and student. The sending district will use the standard choice transfer form for releasing a student to a nonresident school district for the purposes of accessing an alternative learning experience program.

### **Community Engagement Board (CEB)**

A "community engagement board" means a board established pursuant to a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between a juvenile court and the school district and composed of members of the local community in which the student attends school. The district will enter into an MOU with the juvenile court in Clallam County to establish a community engagement board prior to the current school year. The district will designate and identify to the juvenile court (and update as necessary) and to the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction a staff member to coordinate district efforts to address excessive absenteeism and truancy, including outreach and conferences, coordinating the MOU, establishing protocols and procedures with the court, coordinating trainings, sharing evidence-based and culturally appropriate promising practices. The district will also identify a person within each school to serve as a contact regarding excessive absenteeism and truancy and assisting in the recruitment of community engagement board members.

### **After the student's seventh unexcused absence within any month during the current school year and not later than the fifteenth unexcused absence during the current school year-**

If the school's attempts to substantially reduce a student's absences have not been successful and if the student is under the age of eighteen, the district will file a petition and supporting affidavit for a civil action in juvenile court. In most cases, if a CEB meeting has not already occurred the truancy petition will request a stay, so the student can attend CEB.

### **Petition to juvenile court**

The petition will contain the following:

1. A statement that the student has unexcused absences in the current school year.
2. An attestation that actions taken by the school district have not been successful in substantially reducing the student's absences from school;
3. A statement that court intervention and supervision are necessary to assist the school district to reduce the student's absences from school;
4. A statement that RCW 28A.225.010 has been violated by the parent, student or parent and student;
5. The student's name, date of birth, school, address, gender, race and ethnicity; and the names and addresses of the student's parents/guardians, whether the student and parent are fluent in English, whether there is an existing individualized education program (IEP) and the student's current academic status in school.
6. A list of all interventions that have been attempted, a copy of any previous truancy assessment completed by the student's current school district, the history of approved best practices

intervention or research-based intervention(s) previously provided to the student by the school, and a copy of the most recent truancy information document provided to the parent.

7. Facts that support the above allegations.

Petitions may be served by certified mail, return receipt requested, but if such service is unsuccessful, personal service is required. At the district's choice, it may be represented by a person who is not an attorney at hearings related to truancy petitions.

If the allegations in the petition are established by a preponderance of the evidence, the court shall grant the petition and enter an order assuming jurisdiction to intervene for a period of time determined by the court, after considering the facts alleged in the petition and the circumstances of the student, to most likely cause the student to return to and remain in school while the student is subject to the court's jurisdiction.

If the court assumes jurisdiction, the school district will periodically report to the court any additional unexcused absences by the student, actions taken by the school district, and an update on the student's academic status in school at a schedule specified by the court. The first report must be received no later than three (3) months from the date that the court assumes jurisdiction.

All sanctions imposed for failure to comply with the attendance policies and procedures will be implemented in conformance with state and district regulations regarding discipline or corrective action. (See WSSDA policy 3241, Student Discipline.)

Adoption Date: N/A

Sequim School District No. 323

Classification: Essential

WSSDA Revised Dates: 06.99; 06.01; 06.11; 12.11; 10.12; 12.12; 06.15; 07.16; 07.17; 08.18; 09.20; 06.21; 06.22