

## OLR Backgrounder: Truancy Policies for Public Schools

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### Issue

Summarize the state's truancy policies that public schools must follow.

### Summary

Connecticut law defines a “truant” as a child aged five to 18 years who is enrolled in a public or private school and has four unexcused absences in any one month or 10 unexcused absences in any school year ([CGS § 10-198a\(a\)](#)). Each local and regional board of education must adopt and implement policies and procedures for truants enrolled in their school districts. Boards must annually submit to the education commissioner the number of truants for each school in their district.

To remediate high truancy rates, certain boards of education must establish “attendance review teams” for district schools or the entire district.

The State Department of Education (SDE) provides guidance and resource materials about truancy on this [webpage](#).

### District Policies and Procedures

By law, each local or regional board of education must adopt and implement policies and procedures for truants enrolled in schools within their respective districts. The policies must include at least the following provisions:

1. holding a meeting with the parent of the truant, or other person having control of the child, and appropriate school personnel to review and evaluate the reasons for the truancy, with the meeting held no later than 10 school days after the child is considered truant;
2. coordinating services with and referrals of truants to community agencies providing child and family services;
3. annually at the beginning of the school year and upon any enrollment during the school year, providing the parent or other person having control of the child enrolled in kindergarten through grade eight in the public schools (a) written notice of their obligation to enroll the child in school and (b) a request for a telephone number or other means of contact for such parent or other person during the school day;
4. implementing a truancy intervention model identified by SDE for any school in the district that has a disproportionately high truancy rate as determined by the education commissioner; and
5. implementing a system for monitoring individual unexcused absences for children enrolled in kindergarten through grade eight, which must provide that whenever such a child fails to report to school on a regularly scheduled school day, and no indication has been received by school personnel that the child's parent or other person in control is aware of the child's absence, then a reasonable effort to notify the parent or other person by telephone and mail must be made by school personnel or volunteers under their direction.

The law specifies that (1) boards of education may include additional policies beyond those listed above in their truancy policies ([CGS § 10-198a\(b\)-\(c\)](#)) and (2) boards' policies do not apply to students who are not enrolled in the public school system but receive equivalent instruction elsewhere ([CGS § 10-198a\(d\)](#)).

## Attendance Review Teams

State law requires certain boards of education to establish an "attendance review team" for schools in their district or their entire district if their school or district has a chronic absenteeism rate according to a formula established in law. This team is responsible for, among other things, reviewing truants' cases; discussing school interventions and community referrals for them; and making recommendations for truants and their parents or guardians. The team must meet at least monthly ([CGS § 10-198c](#)).

### *Probate Court Truancy Clinics*

*State law allows the probate court administrator, within available appropriations, to establish a truancy clinic within any Regional Children's Probate Court that serves an alliance district or any Probate Court that serves an alliance district and does not have a Regional Children's Probate Court. Elementary or middle school principals may refer to these clinics any parent or guardian with a child who is a truant or is at risk of becoming a truant ([CGS § 45a-8c](#)).*

## **Truancy Reporting**

State law requires each board of education to annually submit to the education commissioner the number of truants (among various other data) in its “strategic school profile report” for each school in the district. The district superintendent must also annually present this report at the next regularly scheduled public meeting of the board after November 1<sup>st</sup>.

Measures of truancy include the (1) type of data required to be collected by SDE about attendance and unexcused absences for the department to comply with federal reporting requirements and (2) actions taken by the board of education to reduce truancy in the district. This data is considered a public record under the state’s Freedom of Information law ([CGS § 10-220\(c\)](#)).

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