

ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

*This circular will remain in effect unless rescinded or superseded
by a subsequent version*

This circular reflects the School Committee's approved policies and procedures for attendance and punctuality. It contains detailed guidelines on:

- Policy background
- Chronic absenteeism
- Attendance policy
- Covid-19 attendance protocols
- Punctuality policy (tardiness)
- Recording and maintaining student attendance
- Recording and following up on DNRs (did not reports)
- Discharge/withdrawal protocols
- Notification to parents/caregivers of student absence
- Notifying parents/caregivers of a missing child
- Safety concerns related to attendance
- Approving home & hospital tutoring
- Procedures for referral to supervisors of attendance

BACKGROUND AND GENERAL PRINCIPLES

It is an essential priority of the Boston Public Schools to encourage students to maintain consistently high attendance rates throughout the school year. Students cannot take full advantage of academic and extracurricular opportunities unless

they are in school consistently. All BPS schools and their School Site Councils are expected to implement comprehensive prevention and intervention strategies to improve student attendance each school year.

The BPS student attendance policy was approved by the School Committee in 1998-1999. It was revised in May 2006 and June 2007 to include the system-wide prohibition of using cutoff times to refuse students' entry into buildings and the additional flexibility for schools to promote and ensure consistently high, on-time attendance. It was further revised in 2018 to include cultural and religious holidays as an eligible excused absence category. In 2021, it was revised to discontinue the policies of converting tardies to absences and issuing grades of "No Credit (NC)" based on attendance, as well as elevating the importance of focusing on chronic absenteeism, where all absences and missed instructional time are considered to have a detrimental impact on student outcomes.

On December 10, 2015, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) was signed into law, reauthorizing the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA). The law includes provisions to help ensure improved outcomes for all students receiving elementary and secondary education, including the following:

- States must establish high academic content standards, and schools must teach all students those standards to help prepare them for college and careers.
- States, districts, and schools must share information with families, students, and communities regarding annual statewide assessments that measure students' progress toward these high standards.

- States and districts must establish systems of support and accountability for all schools and provide particular support to the lowest-performing schools, schools with low-performing subgroups, and schools with low graduation rates.

Under ESSA, each state must develop a consolidated state plan that documents a comprehensive approach to improving outcomes for all students. The Massachusetts Consolidated State Plan under the Every Student Succeeds Act, approved in September 2017, indicates that the state has included chronic absenteeism as one of the accountability index indicators (core measures) to be adopted by all schools and school districts. Through this policy, each school is given a target goal to reduce chronic absenteeism each school year. The BPS Attendance Policy described in this document (ACA-18) has been updated to reflect changes to the core measures as it relates to attendance and chronic absenteeism.

CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM

Research recognizes that addressing chronic absenteeism is one of the most important priorities in an equitable approach to attendance, as chronically absent students are less likely to be successful academically and are disproportionately students of color. Chronic absenteeism is defined as missing 10 percent or more of the school year in any given period. All absences are included as it relates to chronic absenteeism, regardless of whether the absence is excused or unexcused. For an entire school year, a student who misses 18 school days, or about two days per month, will be considered chronically absent. Students who do not show up to school regularly miss out on fundamental learning skills and the chance to build a habit of consistent

attendance that they can maintain in their post-secondary education, their career, and throughout their life.

Chronic absenteeism significantly increases the likelihood that a student will fall off-track academically and struggle to keep pace with their peers. Chronic absenteeism in the early grades can influence whether a student reads proficiently by the end of the third grade; and by the sixth grade, it becomes a leading indicator of whether a student will drop out of high school.

Consistent with the attendance policy is the need to maintain accurate, timely, and appropriate records, including information on the attendance of students and documentation of reasons for absence. Accordingly, all staff must keep accurate records, maintain documentation, and communicate with parents/caregivers in a timely and effective manner to ensure sound school attendance practices. In addition, Boston Public Schools is committed to addressing chronic absenteeism through prevention and intervention strategies at the school and district levels that better support students and families to maintain consistently high, on-time attendance. Each school will prioritize prevention and intervention strategies that reduce chronic student absenteeism.

The following general principles apply:

- Schools are required under the law to maintain an accurate record of student attendance.
- Schools at all levels are required to make a concerted effort to contact the parent or caregiver each time students are absent.

- School leaders bear the final responsibility for attendance in their schools and complying with attendance and punctuality policies and procedures.
- External agency support will be sought in those cases where school-based meetings do not achieve a positive continuum in parental attitude and/or student attendance patterns.

BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS ATTENDANCE POLICY

Attendance: Per the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE)'s attendance policy, a student must be at school, at a school-related activity, or receiving academic instruction for at least half of the school day to be counted as present. Students who are not physically present at school but receive academic instruction from the district for at least half of the school day should be counted as present. Examples of academic instruction include tutoring, online learning, or distance learning provided by the district. Under this guidance, there are limited circumstances in which a student can be marked "constructively present."

Allowable circumstances to mark a student *constructively present*:

- Participation in Home & Hospital Instruction
- Special education school visit
- Out-of-district special education placement
- Student is in Department of Youth Services (DYS) custody
- Succeed Boston (alternative to suspension)
- College tour or college interview when sponsored by the school or approved by the school leader

Length of Time: A student must attend school for at least a half-day to be marked "present." Check with the school leader to determine what constitutes a half-day. In most schools, it is:

3 hours in elementary school

3 hours and 5 minutes in middle school

3 hours and 10 minutes in high school

Credit Recovery (No Credit Policy Discontinued): To facilitate competency-based grading across the district, the No Credit (NC) policy regarding students having three unexcused absences in a marking term (four unexcused absences in schools with three marking terms) has been discontinued. As a result, schools should no longer assign grades of "No Credit (NC)" to students. The following guidance has been provided regarding credit recovery for students:

- Passing grades should be competency-based, which may be impacted by attendance due to missed assignments or schoolwork but should not be tied exclusively to attendance or participation.
- It is essential that schools reach out early and often to students at risk of a failing grade.
- As an alternative, schools may mark a student with an "incomplete" grade to enable equitable learning recovery.
- In all cases, a student not earning a passing grade must be given the opportunity and responsibility to equitably recover any learning loss or make up the work missed within a marking period to earn a passing grade.

Excused/Unexcused Absences: Certain absences may be excused, meaning the absence will not be considered as it relates

to a referral to truancy court by a supervisor of attendance under Massachusetts law (see Massachusetts General Law c.119). However, all missed instructional time has the potential to negatively impact student outcomes. In addition, all absences are included as they relate to chronic absenteeism, regardless of whether the absence is excused or unexcused.

- For an absence to be excused, students must bring in a note after each day they are absent.
- The note must include the date absent, the reason for the absence, a phone number where a parent or caregiver can be reached, and the parent or caregiver's signature.
- Upon return to school, the note must be provided no later than seven (7) school days after the absence.
- Excused absences may include:
 - a. An illness or injury that prevents the student from attending school. If the illness or hospitalization results in absence for three or more consecutive days, a note from a health care provider documenting the health problem or hospitalization should be attached to the parent/caregiver note. Parents/caregivers are not expected to have a letter from a health care provider for an illness of fewer than three days. The requirement to have a letter from a health care provider will not supersede specific public health determinations or guidance. The school nurse can be consulted regarding any questions or changes to this policy based on specific circumstances. See COVID-19 Health and Safety Protocol for students who exhibit symptoms of COVID-19.

- b. A death in the immediate family (parent/caregiver, sibling, grandparent, aunt, uncle, cousin) or other significant personal or family crisis.
- c. Suspension: Students should be marked as suspended. In cases of suspension, the school will provide an opportunity for the student to maintain academic standing in school by being provided a list of assignments and other services which might enable the student to use the time out of school productively.
- d. Students assigned to Succeed Boston shall be assigned work by the school of assignment and marked constructively present.
- e. Court appearances: Students should present evidence of the requirement of the court appearance.
- f. Medical or psychological tests during the school day: The parent/caregiver must show evidence (such as a note from the health center) that the tests could not be scheduled after school.
- g. Visits to special education schools in some cases for students with disabilities.
- h. Other situations: From time to time, situations over which the school, parent/caregiver, and student have little or no control may cause absences (for example, transportation that does not operate during inclement weather). These absences are excusable. The school leader may determine that the students impacted shall be marked with an excused absence.
- i. Other extraordinary situations, such as a family emergency, as approved by the school leader.

- j. Cultural holidays and religious holy days: To accommodate students' cultural and religious observances on days when schools are in session, such absences will be marked excused with the reason code "Religious Holiday" upon submitting a valid note signed by a parent or guardian. Please see Superintendent's Circular LGL-06 for more guidance or contact your designated supervisor of attendance. The following is a list of examples of holidays that are eligible to be excused: Diwali, Eid al Adha, Edit al Fitr, Lunar New Year, Orthodox Good Friday, Rosh Hashanah, Three Kings Day, and Yom Kippur. This is not an exhaustive list, and students may request that absences be excused for other cultural holidays and religious holy days. Schools should provide opportunities for students who are excused to observe cultural holidays and religious holy days to submit missed assignments or other makeup work for their absence.

Please contact the Office of Equity, 617-635-9650 or bpsequity@bostonpublicschools.org, regarding any concerns related to a student absence that is more than two consecutive days or is not included on this list. This can include participation in a cultural ceremony, bereavement or funeral, pilgrimage, trip, etc., that requires students to be absent for more than two days. In these instances, a student may be required to meet the following criteria to be eligible to be given an excused absence of more than two days for observance of a cultural or religious holiday or for bereavement to attend a funeral for more than two days:

- The student is not chronically absent, meaning the student attended more than 90% of the school days to date.
- The student is earning a passing grade in all courses.

Absences that do not meet the above criteria will be considered unexcused. In all instances of student absence, students must be given the opportunity to equitably recover any missed work or learning loss during a marking period.

COVID-19 HEALTH AND SAFETY PROTOCOL

Students, families, and schools should observe the latest guidance from the Center for Disease Control (CDC), BPS Health Services, and the Boston Public Health Commission as it relates to COVID-19 health and safety protocols. Absences as appropriate per the most up-to-date COVID-19 protocols are considered excused due to “medical/illness.”

RECORD-KEEPING AND ATTENDANCE IMPROVEMENT

School leaders bear final responsibility for improving attendance in their schools, balancing between accountability and positive engagement in their approach, and ensuring that performance evaluations reflect staff members' efforts in complying with this policy and achieving the goal of improved attendance.

School-based governance: Each school's Attendance Team (AT) serves a critical role in prevention and intervention steps for students with high absenteeism. It is a best practice for school attendance teams to work in conjunction with the SST to refer students when all available attendance intervention strategies have been unsuccessful. It is also best practice for schools to initiate prevention steps with students in the early days of the school year or marking period. Schools should review students' past attendance history to initiate prevention steps for students with a history of high absenteeism and refer students to the school's AT. Students with three or more unexcused absences will be referred by a teacher or the school leader to the school's AT on an ongoing basis. The AT will review the case and work with the

family to develop a success plan to help the student improve attendance. School-based rules should be amended to include attendance-related guidelines established through the Quality School Plan (QSP). See [Attendance Team Overview](#) for additional guidance.

ATTENDANCE IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Developed as part of the QSP, a school's Attendance Improvement Plan provides a roadmap of the critical prevention and intervention activities a school will conduct throughout the school year to ensure consistently high, on-time attendance for all students. Each school is required to update its attendance strategies in the QSP every 90 days. Schools should link a document with their attendance prevention and intervention steps by tier into the QSP.

To assess their implementation progress and request more intensive assistance, the AT should complete the [QSP Attendance Implementation Progress Tool](#) (Q3PT) at the 30- and 60-day marks of the QSP cycle.

The [Attendance Fundamentals by Tier](#) serve as an additional resource.

This program should start with a warm and welcoming school climate and should include phone calls home, student meetings, parent/caregiver meetings, development of an attendance plan/contract, attendance coaching, referral to Student Success Team meetings, and/or attendance meetings.

Consistent follow-up and outreach to students and families struggling with chronic absenteeism is a fundamental best practice. Schools are expected to use the Panorama Student Success Platform to monitor student attendance progress, as

well as to document interventions and success plans. Schools should also connect with community-based programs or organizations that can support truancy issues.

Differentiating the Use of Aspen SIS and Panorama Student Success Platform:

The Aspen Student Information System (SIS) is the system to capture critical information for student records and maintain compliance with regulatory requirements. As it relates to attendance, schools will take attendance in Aspen. However, schools expect to use the Panorama Student Success Platform to document all attendance prevention and intervention activities, using both the Support Notes feature and Tier 2 and 3 Attendance Success Plans. Student attendance data entered in Aspen is transmitted nightly to Panorama for attendance monitoring and student success planning purposes. Staff should use both Aspen and Panorama as follows:

Aspen will be used to:

- input daily student attendance.
- house the master student schedules and courses.
- enter course grades.
- house individual teacher schedules.
- record teacher attendance.
- record confidential student journal entries.
- recommend to Suffolk County Juvenile Court and record documentation for an Attendance Intervention Plan (AIP).

Panorama Student Success will be used to:

- display student data.
- house Attendance Success Plans (Tier 2 and Tier 3).

- assign team members for communication and collaboration.
- record support notes related to student interventions and student success plans.
- help track information in one place, including assessments from Illuminate.

Note: The SOA is responsible for copying Attendance Success Plan documentation from Panorama if the case is recommended to the court and in other cases as necessary for compliance.

All Attendance Success Plans should be recorded as Tier 2 or Tier 3 plans in Panorama. Panorama allows the planning and recording of interventions, along with notes, to monitor the effectiveness of these interventions in setting improvement goals in the student success planning process. Attendance teams at the school level ensure Attendance Success Plans are created and monitored in Panorama for all students with high chronic absenteeism. At a minimum, every student who has attendance at or below 80% (appearing as attendance critical in “red”) should have an Attendance Success Plan in Panorama. It is a best practice for schools to coordinate and communicate student success planning with families. It is also a best practice for schools to establish an attendance success plan at the beginning of the school year for students who were chronically absent in the previous school year. Effective student success planning requires sharing the responsibility of plan creation, monitoring, and intervention strategies among school staff, including teachers, in collaboration with families,

Who should have an Attendance Success Plan?

Staff create the plan based on data in Panorama:

- Tier 2 plans (best practice): Students whose attendance is 90% or below will display as chronically absent in Panorama (yellow).
- Tier 3 plans (required): Students whose attendance is 80% or less will appear as attendance-critical (red).

An additional quality check:

- Identify students with an AIP tag in Aspen (this tag indicates the student has high absenteeism in the current marking period and is eligible for truancy court referral).

What are the Essential Steps when creating an Attendance Success Plan?

Create Attendance Success Plan in Panorama, and remember these two key details:

- Log as Attendance
- Log as Tier 2 or Tier 3
- Monitoring the plan collaborative and keeping it updated is essential to successful outcomes
- Panorama will house student success plans (Tier 2 and Tier 3) — academic, attendance, behavior.

You will find more help with Panorama at the [Office of Data & Accountability \(ODA\) Platforms Help Site](#).

Questions: mtssdata@bostonpublicschools.org

BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS PUNCTUALITY POLICY

Students who arrive after the beginning of the school day are tardy. They must follow established tardy procedures to be considered present for the day.

All students are expected to report to school on time every day. It is the policy of the Boston School Committee (approved May 24,

2006) that tardy students should be permitted into the school building and not excluded. School leaders are directed to:

- (a) review their current school tardy policies in conjunction with School Site Councils,
- (b) develop reasonable, non-exclusionary practices to deal with student tardies and positive incentives to encourage punctuality, and
- (c) closely monitor compliance with these policies.

It is important to remember that the requirement that tardy students be admitted to school does not equal a relaxation of the rules covering attendance or tardies. Schools must make every effort to encourage punctuality and discourage tardies. Schools are also encouraged to distinguish between first-time instances and repeated tardiness.

According to School Committee policy (approved June 6, 2007), all high schools are directed to work with their School Site Councils and student representatives to establish fair and reasonable procedures to decrease student tardiness. These procedures must adhere to the following guidelines:

1. Families must be notified by telephone call, in writing, or by email of a student's tardies. Schools should follow the same prevention/intervention steps conducted for student absences.
2. High school tardy procedures should explicitly detail how they plan to further involve families in working with students who exhibit excessive tardiness. As a rule of thumb, excessive tardiness can be defined as being tardy for 10% or more of school days.

3. High schools' tardy procedures should be linked in their Quality School Plan (QSP), the development of which is the responsibility of the School Site Council.
4. As a best practice, all schools should establish attendance success plans in Panorama for students exhibiting excessive tardiness.

All high schools, including pilot and Horace Mann charter schools, are required to complete their tardy procedures with the above guidelines (and other incentives/supports as deemed necessary by the School Site Council) no later than October. Each school must maintain a copy of its tardy procedures on file.

1. The teacher must take attendance at the beginning of every class period in middle and high schools. After comparison of period attendance with the school's daily attendance, student cuts should be noted and addressed following the appropriate prevention/intervention steps.
2. Middle and high school students who are tardy should be marked absent for any class(es) they miss.
3. A student must be in attendance at least half of the school day to be considered present. Notations of early dismissal must be recorded with the time of dismissal, and documentation indicating the reason should be kept on file in accordance with school protocol.

ATTENDANCE RECORDS

The accounting and reporting of the attendance or absence of each student assigned to a school is one of the school leader's most critical responsibilities. Attendance record-keeping must be precise to ensure accurate accounting of each student and timely reporting of student attendance daily in the Aspen SIS. Every school leader is required to account for the attendance

and/or absence of students and is required to investigate and take appropriate action for each absence.

GENERAL ATTENDANCE REQUIREMENTS

1. Attendance procedures must be reviewed with school staff by school leaders during the teacher professional development and training program before each school year. Each teacher must sign a document maintained at the school, verifying that they received these procedures and training.
2. During the first week of school, homeroom teachers at all levels should make personal calls to the parents/guardians/caregivers of their students to introduce themselves and invite the parents/guardians/caregivers either to visit the school or to call at any time to check on the attendance and progress of their children. The message should reinforce the need for consistent attendance and the procedures a parent/caregiver should follow if their child is absent. In the event any student has not reported at the start of the school year, the teacher should inquire about the student's failure to attend. Teachers should document all communications by updating the Aspen SIS with the attendance reason code, including if a student will not be returning to school, and update Panorama success plans and/or support notes when applicable.

Students are expected to report within eight (8) days of the first day of school or after an initial assignment. On the eighth day, the student will automatically become a DNR (Did Not Report) and be discharged from the school. Schools have the responsibility to contact the parent/caregiver if a student has not reported. Parents/caregivers should be

made aware of this procedure when called if their children have not reported.

Note: School leaders should always refer to the DNR Procedure Memo released annually by the Office of Welcome Services for the latest information regarding the DNR process. This memo also outlines the procedures for a DNR Exception. See the [DNR Exception Form](#).

DNR PROCEDURE

For all students who do not report to school (DNR), the following procedures are in effect:

- i. A student will hold a NAS (Newly Assigned Student) code for a maximum of five (5) days after the first day of school or after the initial assignment. On the sixth day, a student will automatically become a DNR (Did Not Report).
- ii. A student will hold a DNR code for a maximum of three (3) days. At the end of the third day, a DNR student will automatically lose their seat at the assigned school. This will occur at the close of business on the eighth (8th) day of school.
- iii. On the third day of DNR status (or on the eighth day since the first day of school or of initial assignment), a student's seat will be eliminated, allowing the Office of Welcome Services to assign another student to that seat.
- iv. The student will remain on the DNR list of the school. See below for important details:

Each school leader still has the responsibility of investigating the situation and, if necessary, ultimately discharging the student to remove them from the DNR list.

The discharge cannot happen until the school has conducted an exit interview and collected appropriate documentation from the family. This documentation must be uploaded to Aspen. Please see the [DNR Aspen Guide](#).

If you know that a student does not plan to enroll in BPS for the current school year and you have collected appropriate documentation from the family, you can withdraw them from BPS without waiting for them to be withdrawn as a DNR at the end of the eight-day period.

Please make sure to maintain a record of the appropriate documentation, upload it to Aspen, and use the appropriate discharge code when discharging the student. Here is a link to the [BPS Discharge Codes](#).

For students with an IEP, the Special Education Department must also conduct an exit interview to inform the student and caregivers of their rights.

The assigned supervisor of attendance (SOA) should be notified to provide additional assistance when a school cannot locate a student.

Note: The DNR process does not automatically discharge any high-need special education students in an inclusion or substantially separate program (.3 or .4 students).

3. **School Attendance Teams (AT)** at all levels are directed to monitor student attendance using the Panorama Student Success Platform and, in cases that so require, make referrals to the Student Success Team (SST) and/or the

appropriate health or human/social service agencies or district services.

One of the initial responsibilities of the AT, in collaboration with the SST, shall be to address the issues of (1) DNR students and (2) students who were chronically absent in the previous school year.

The status of each student who did not report (DNR) at the start of the school year must also be investigated and determined before discharging the student.

A primary focus of the AT is developing school-based absence prevention and intervention strategies. A three-tiered attendance system should be established, with defined prevention and intervention practices that promote consistent attendance among all students. The [Attendance Fundamentals by Tier](#) is a resource and the [BPS Tiered Attendance System \(TAS\)](#) is available to all schools as a framework to help establish and improve their attendance practices across tiers.

4. Complex cases and students with extensive patterns of chronic absenteeism should be referred to supervisors of attendance and/or the SST as appropriate after extensive prevention/intervention steps have been tried and documented.

WITHDRAWING STUDENTS

Once the school year has begun, the withdrawal of students that are no longer enrolled at your school can be made at the school level, not by Central Office staff. It is imperative that school staff verify where the student is enrolled prior to withdrawing a student. Please remember to keep documentation as to where

the student is enrolling. Written or emailed documentation is preferred. If the family texts you, we suggest sending a screenshot to your email to make sure it is saved. This documentation must be uploaded to the Aspen SIS. Also, please make sure to use the appropriate discharge code when you withdraw the student from BPS. Here are [BPS Discharge Codes](#).

Acceptable documentation for withdrawing students includes:

1. A written request for a student's records from a receiving public or private high school or an educational program (that culminates in a regular high school diploma). This includes requests from the receiving school that come to the district through Scrib Order.
2. Written record of a response from an official in the receiving school or program acknowledging the student's enrollment.
3. Written confirmation that a student has moved to another country and will be continuing their education. For example, if a parent informs a school administrator that the family is leaving the country, the school administrator may document this conversation in writing.
4. Letter from a parent/guardian updating the school enrollment status of their child, including indication that they will be continuing their education elsewhere.
5. Letter from the BPS Office of Expanded Learning Time indicating an approved Educational Plan for homeschooling.
6. Record from the state's data system (Edwin DESE Security Portal - Central Office Process)

If you do not have the above documentation at the time of withdrawal, the student must be withdrawn as a dropout. See

Aspen HelpDoc [BPS Withdrawal Codes](#) for a table of withdrawal codes with acceptable matching documentation.

Note: The assigned supervisor of attendance should be notified to provide additional assistance when a school cannot locate a student.

DISCHARGE PROCEDURES

Students 16 Years of Age or Older On October 1st of the School Year – Per MGL Ch. 76 Sec. 18:

1. By the first week of October, the school leader shall have access to the list of students with the designation NAS or DNR.
2. Within 5 days of the tenth consecutive absence, the school leader must contact in writing (in the primary language spoken in the home) the parent/caregiver of the student 16 years of age or older to inform them of the requirements of MGL c.76 s.18, and to request a meeting to discuss the educational implications for the student if they do not return to school, the benefits of earning a diploma, the student's reason(s) for wanting to leave school, and to consider alternative education or other placements. The notice shall offer at least two dates and times for an exit interview, that the parties will agree to a date, and that the meeting will take place within 10 days after the sending of the notice. The school leader must reproduce and use the sample form letter linked [here](#) and submit a copy to the director of the BPS Re-Engagement Center within one week. For students who have an IEP, the Special Education Department must also conduct an exit interview to inform the student and caregivers of their additional due process rights.

3. The school leader must conduct the meeting at the convenience of the parent/caregiver, but within 10 days of the sending of the notice. Upon parent/caregiver request, an extension not to exceed 14 days may be granted.
4. If the student reports to school after the exit interview with the parent/caregiver, the school leader must ensure that the student is marked "P" on the attendance record.
5. If the student does not or shall not return to school after the exit interview with the parent/caregiver, the school leader must request a statement of the parent/caregiver on the [Sample Form Letter](#) linked here. Submit a copy of this letter to the [BPS Re-Engagement Center](#) and operational leader and discharge the student using the protocol described in this circular. This form is for a student whose assignment within the Boston Public Schools is to be terminated, i.e., the student is going to a private or public school outside the City of Boston, or the unknown student whose absences have been investigated thoroughly, or the student who has "dropped out" of school. This process requires the following:
 - a. Retain one copy of the documentation at the school in which the discharge is initiated.
 - b. Upload documentation to the Aspen SIS.
 - c. Issue one copy to the parent/caregiver of the student going to a private school or another public school system.
 - d. Issue one copy to the superintendent of the new school system. If the student has transferred to either a private school or to a charter school, this copy is sent to the principal of the new school.

6. Only after a good-faith effort to include the parent/caregiver can the exit interview with the student take place without the presence of the parent/caregiver.
7. The school leader must maintain detailed and readily accessible records for each student justifying the activation of discharge, which should be uploaded to the Aspen SIS.

Students Under 6 Years of Age on October 1st of the School Year

1. Within a week after the receipt of the NAS/DNR printout, the school leader must contact in writing the parent/caregiver of the student to inform them that a place for the student has been reserved in the educational program of the school. The parent/caregiver is encouraged to ensure the student's attendance, AND the student must report within one week, or the student shall be discharged. Please use the [attached form letter](#).
2. If the student does not report within one week, the school leader must discharge the student according to the procedures described in this circular. No additional communication with the parent/caregiver is required.

Note: School leaders shall not discharge a student between the ages of six and sixteen years until all procedures noted in this circular are completed. Written notice should be received by the supervisors of attendance.

Discharge Codes

It is important to use the appropriate discharge code when withdrawing the student from BPS. Here is a copy of the [BPS Discharge Codes](#).

GENERAL ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY PROCEDURES

1. School leaders must designate a member of their staff who will be responsible for coordinating and monitoring the school's attendance plan. This person shall report directly to the building administrator concerning this effort and should be part of the school AT. A best practice is to have this person lead or co-facilitate the AT when appropriate. The plan should take a whole-school approach and fully engage the staff in implementing a tiered attendance system. School leaders should also ensure that staff is assigned to monitor attendance data and trends on an ongoing basis, which may require additional training from the Office of Instructional and Information Technology, Office of Data and Accountability, or Department of Opportunity Youth (SOAs).
2. Each student is marked Absent in the Student Information System (SIS) on the first day of school and must be marked Present to begin official enrollment. Enter a P on the first day of attendance. Students who appear after the first day of school should be entered on the date of appearance with a P.
3. Official attendance will be taken and reported on the SIS system by teachers. The central office will make an automated call to all students coded as Absent by 11:00 am every day.
4. Students who arrive after the beginning of the day are tardy. They must follow established tardy procedures to be considered present for the day.

SUGGESTED STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS TARDINESS AND ABSENTEEISM

In developing their Attendance Improvement Plan, schools should focus on a positive approach to attendance, using consistent prevention/intervention steps and implementing specific strategies to address tardiness and absenteeism. The district has developed a [Tiered Attendance System \(TAS\)](#) to support schools in ensuring the consistency and effectiveness of their attendance practices across the school, while the Panorama Student Success Platform provides a framework to track and monitor individual student attendance, interventions, and success planning. See also [Attendance Fundamentals by Tier](#).

Examples of strategies to address tardiness and absenteeism include:

- Tiered intervention and prevention programs:
 - Tier 1:** Reliable attendance reporting from every classroom; positive school climate initiatives such as maintaining positive relationships among school staff, students, and families; consistent intervention and prevention activities with documentation in Panorama; School Attendance Committee; School Attendance Culture.
 - Tier 2:** Targeted attendance letters; attendance contracts; student/family conferences; attendance success plans; attendance coaching; mentorship programming.
 - Tier 3:** Intensive case management or mentorship; specialized programming; assigning staff to intentional student check-ins; connections with and/or referrals to specific support services or community resources.
- Use of restorative justice practices

- Parent/caregiver and/or student-centered conferences
- Contracting with the student and/or parent/caregiver
- Learning Recovery/Attendance Buy-Back Time (for repeated tardiness or unexcused absences)

Note: Schools are prohibited from excluding students from physical activity during the school day, such as during recess or physical education, as a disciplinary consequence. However, a student may be prohibited from participating in athletics or extracurricular activities on a school day when an unexcused absence causes a student to miss more than 50% of the school day.

Suggested other steps:

- Make MBTA schedules available at schools.
- Post rules on tardiness and punctuality in visible locations.
- Hold a conference with student and family for repeated tardiness.
- Make phone calls to families of students who are tardy.
- Work with Attendance Team and/or SST and/or to investigate root causes for student tardiness.
- Establish Student Planning Centers.

Please see the BPS Code of Conduct for additional guidance regarding suggested strategies.

NOTIFICATION TO PARENTS/CAREGIVERS WHEN STUDENTS ARE ABSENT

School leaders should inform all students and parents/caregivers by means of a written bulletin, newsletter, or SchoolMessenger at the beginning of each school year of the Attendance Policy and the basic school attendance procedures adopted by the School

Site Council. This information should be sent in the language of the home.

Parents/caregivers should be advised that a signed note of explanation shall be required each time a student is absent. The note should state the date(s) of absence, the reason, the parent/caregiver contact information, and the parent/caregiver signature. The note should be sent in on the day the student returns to school. The note must be received within seven (7) school days following the absence. Here is a [Sample Parent/Caregiver Note for Excused Absence](#). Schools are expected to use Panorama to document and monitor attendance intervention activities, including documentation of each step described below.

1. First Absence

The building administrator is responsible for ensuring that school staff notifies parents/caregivers by telephone of all student absences. This is best accomplished by the homeroom teacher. In these conversations, parents/caregivers should be reminded of (1) the need to submit a note of explanation to document the reason each time a student is absent, (2) the importance of consistent, on-time attendance for a student to be successful in school, and (3) that unexcused absences could result in the student falling behind academically.

2. Second and Third Absence

Parents/caregivers must be notified in writing no later than the student's third absence (even if the absences were "excused") and on a regular basis thereafter. This notification should include the attendance requirement, the number of

days missed compared to the number of school days in the marking period, and the impact of continued absence on the student's success. **Note:** These absences do not need to be consecutive. This letter must be written in the language of the home. Here is a [Sample Absence Letter](#) which can be placed on the school's letterhead.

3. Third Unexcused Absence

After the third unexcused absence, the student must be referred to the SST by the homeroom teacher. The team will review the case and meet to develop recommendations to assist the student in improving attendance. The team may invite the parent/caregiver and, at the secondary level, the student to the meeting; however, if the parent/caregiver does not attend the meeting, an effort must be made by the school to contact and discuss the case with the parent/caregiver. It is recommended that the SST develop an attendance success plan in Panorama at this step.

4. Fourth Unexcused Absence

At the fourth unexcused absence in any term, a meeting shall be convened by the school leader, to which the parent/caregiver shall be invited. If the school is unable to contact the parent/caregiver, a home visit should be conducted. The implications of student absence from school, as well as the current academic status of the student, will be discussed at this meeting. The success plan developed by the SST after the third unexcused absence should be reviewed.

5. Fifth Through Seventh Unexcused Absence

At the fifth unexcused absence, the student and the family should be referred to the Family Resource Center or assigned supervisor of attendance.

6. Eighth Unexcused Absence

After the eighth unexcused absence, for a student younger than 16 years of age, the school's designated attendance representative shall coordinate with the assigned supervisor of attendance to determine if it is necessary and appropriate to file a truancy case with the Suffolk County Juvenile Court. [Instructions for Recommending an Attendance Intervention Plan for Court](#) describe the necessary steps to recommend a case for court. In addition, the school should coordinate with the school social worker for additional support.

This [Notification to Parents/Caregivers When Students Are Absent](#) condenses the process described above. It serves as a reference document for staff.

Absence, tardy, and early dismissal notations must be recorded in the Aspen SIS daily as the official system of record. School-wide attendance monitoring using the Panorama Student Success Platform should be conducted by the school leader or their designee on a regular basis, but no less frequently than monthly.

EXCUSED ABSENCES

The student attendance record must be updated to reflect the excused absence. An excused absence is defined as an absence caused by sickness, injury, hospitalization, court appearances, religious holy days, or the death of an immediate family member.

The school may accept other reasons for an excused absence as approved by the school leader; however, if a note of explanation is not received, the absence shall be deemed “unexcused.”

However, it is important to remember that all absences are included as it relates to chronic absenteeism, regardless of whether the absence is excused or unexcused. Prevention and intervention steps should be conducted by the school to minimize missed instructional time, regardless of whether absences are excused or unexcused. In addition, parents/caregivers should be informed of the definition of chronic absenteeism and the impact it has on student outcomes:

Chronic absenteeism is defined as missing 10 percent or more of the school year in any given period. All absences are included as it relates to chronic absenteeism, regardless of whether the absence is excused or unexcused. For an entire school year, a student who misses 18 school days, or about two days per month, will be considered chronically absent.

Parents/guardians/caregivers should be informed, as part of the School-Based Rules, of those reasons that are accepted as

“excused” and those that are not acceptable to excuse an absence.

NOTIFICATION TO PARENTS/CAREGIVERS SHOULD A CHILD LEAVE SCHOOL

1. All students must be supervised by a responsible adult at all times during the school day.
2. Should a child be noted as missing, the school leader should be notified immediately.
3. After an initial search of the school and immediate neighborhood, the parent/caregiver should be notified by telephone as promptly as possible, and the appropriate departments should be notified. (See Superintendent's Circular SAF-09, Lost Children Procedures).

SAFETY CONCERNS RELATED TO ATTENDANCE

To maximize the protection and safety of all students, schools should take the following measures:

1. Emphasize to the parent/caregiver that they should arrange to be sure that their children reach the bus stop on time every morning and that they board the bus. This should be stressed in newsletters sent home at the start of each school year.
2. Inform the parent/caregiver that they should notify the school by telephone each day that their child will be absent due to illness, etc.
3. Inform the parent/caregiver as soon as possible, including through the SchoolMessenger system, of their children's absence.

4. Ensure that the parent/caregiver supplies the school with accurate, up-to-date home and emergency telephone numbers and indicates the place their children should go if they miss the bus, e.g., the home of a relative, friend, neighbor, etc. These emergency numbers should be updated as necessary.

HOME & HOSPITAL TUTORING

When a physician determines that a student is physically unable to attend school for more than 14 consecutive days or anticipated to accumulate more than 14 absences in a school year, the student should be offered tutoring at home or in the hospital. The referral should be made to the Home & Hospital Instruction program when the school nurse receives a Physician Statement. The attendance for students participating in the Home & Hospital Instruction Program should be marked "constructively present" (CP). The school must document in writing all offers of home tutoring and acceptances or rejections by the parent or caregiver. If a parent/caregiver rejects home tutoring or other appropriate academic services for a child who will be absent for an extended period, a record of that rejection must be retained in the student's file, and a 51A should be filed with the Department of Children and Families (DCF). When it is deemed by the student's attending physician or pediatrician that they will be confined to a home or hospital setting for more than 60 days, the student will then be considered for evaluation (if not a student with an IEP); or if a student with an IEP, the student will then be considered for a possible IEP amendment or new IEP by the Office of Special Education under state regulation 603 CMR 28.04(4).

PROCEDURES FOR REFERRAL TO SUPERVISORS OF ATTENDANCE

SOAs build schools' capacity to reduce chronic absenteeism. See [SOA Overview](#) for details on how they can support your school.

This iteration of the attendance policy calls on schools to take ownership of attendance and supportive interventions and to use referrals to supervisors of attendance as only a measure of last resort. In that context, this circular reflects the Boston Public Schools' procedures for referring students to the supervisors of attendance (SOA). Under M.G.L. c.119, Section 21, Section 39E, Section 39F, and Section 39G, Boston Juvenile Court may hear petitions to determine if a child needs services. In Boston Public Schools, only the SOA may file a Child Requiring Assistance (CRA) petition on behalf of the district for attendance or behavior-related matters.

It contains guidelines on:

- Procedures for referrals and Attendance Intervention Plan (AIP)
- Child Requiring Assistance (CRA) filings
- Adult Failure to Cause (ADF).

BACKGROUND

M.G.L. c.119 Part 1 Title XII Chapter 69 Section 10 states that the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education shall adopt regulations establishing a truancy prevention program certification process, consistent with the behavioral health and public schools framework developed pursuant to section 19 of chapter 321 of the acts of 2008, and shall require that the truancy prevention program evaluate the level of out-of-school support for students and families and address conditions that make students more likely to become truant including, but not limited

to, previously unidentified or inadequately addressed special needs, bullying, and harassment. Any truancy prevention program established under this section by a school district shall meet the requirements for certification adopted by the department.

Supervisors of attendance, working in collaboration with school staff and external agencies, may file a court referral based on investigative findings, prior attendance patterns, and present problematic attendance. The filing of a CRA is the last resort if other interventions by school, external agencies, and/or attendance staff fail to bring about improvement.

The SOA may file the following CRA petitions with the mandatory parent/caregiver date of birth:

- **Habitually Truant:** Civil charge filed on students who miss school for 8 days in a quarter.
- **Student Who Repeatedly Fails to Obey Regulations of the School:** Civil charges filed on students who repeatedly fail to obey the lawful and reasonable regulations of the student's school.
- **Adult Failure to Cause:** Petition filed when a student's absence is beyond their control, but due to a caretaker's action or inaction, e.g., the child is too young to get to school on their own.

ATTENDANCE INTERVENTION PLAN (AIP)

While all attendance intervention activities should now be documented in the Panorama Student Success Platform, the Attendance Intervention Plan (AIP) is available for each student having four or more unexcused absences in the Aspen SIS. The AIP in Aspen SIS serves the following purposes:

- To identify students who are eligible for a court referral due to eight or more unexcused absences in a marking period.
- For school leaders to recommend a case to court as a last resort when all attendance prevention/intervention strategies have been exhausted.
- To document any compliance-related attendance intervention activities, particularly for cases that are recommended to the court. Supervisors of attendance (SOAs) will ensure that any compliance-related documentation from Panorama is also entered to Aspen (that is: if a case moves toward the court, the SOA is responsible for copying the intervention plan from Panorama into Aspen).
- For a quality check, wherein school attendance staff can verify that all students who have an AIP generated in Aspen SIS (because of four or more unexcused absences in a marking period) also have an Attendance Success Plan created in Panorama. As a best practice, all chronically absent students should have an Attendance Success Plan in Panorama.

Once a student has eight unexcused absences in a marking period, the school leader may recommend the AIP for court in the SIS. Supervisors of attendance (SOAs) will ensure that any compliance-related documentation is also entered into Aspen, including the attendance success plan, with attendance intervention steps that were conducted with the student, as documented using Panorama.

The parent/caregiver date of birth (DOB) is required in the judicial process. The AIP will require the submission of the parent/caregiver date of birth and documentation of intervention

steps as an Attendance Success Plan in Panorama. Without this information, the AIP cannot be recommended for court.

The SOA will investigate and report their recommendation in the SOA comment section. The comments can be viewed by the senders and the school leaders. The senders and the school leaders can view the comments. [Instructions for Recommending an Attendance Intervention Plan for Court](#) are here.

SCHOOL STEPS IN THE CHILD REQUIRING ASSISTANCE (CRA) PROCESS

CRA: Truancy

1. Upon the 4th unexcused absence, the school leader or designated staff and homeroom teacher will receive an email notification from SIS informing them that an Attendance Intervention Plan (AIP) has been initiated during the term for a student.
2. Upon the 8th unexcused absence during the term, the school leader or designated staff or homeroom teacher can recommend that a student AIP be sent to court due to excessive absences and non-compliance with the student's Attendance Success Plan, as documented in Panorama. The AIP cannot be recommended for court if the student does not have an Attendance Success Plan documented in Panorama. At this time, the appropriate SOA will investigate the case, referring to the action already taken by the school to date and to the results that they have reported. The investigation may include phone calls, home/parent/caregiver work-site visits, school visits and telephone calls, letters to parents/caregivers where necessary, and, in some cases, contact with and referral to involved agencies.

3. The SOA will report the results of the investigation to the school through the SIS system. The supervisor will also ask that schools keep them informed of further attendance problems.
4. If attendance does not improve, schools must send additional AIPs to the Attendance Office only if the open CRA has been closed, alerting the SOA to follow up once more. Additional interventions should be documented in Panorama to update the SOA on the school's subsequent actions and results.
5. Subsequent investigation and follow-up will occur through response in the SIS system, email, or attendance meeting.
6. Supervisors of attendance, working with school staff, make decisions on future action based on investigative findings, prior attendance patterns, and correspondence with parents/caregivers and the school. One option is court referral. The decision to file a CRA is made by the SOA based on the finding and results of steps 1-4 and only after exhausting all other possible courses of action. The CRA will only be filed if the student has accumulated eight or more unexcused absences in a single quarter and the school has documented intervention steps using the Attendance Success Plan feature in Panorama.
7. When the AIP is recommended for court, the SOA will notify the school of this action using the Attendance Supervisor's Information Form or will make personal or telephone contact. A probation officer will be assigned to the child by the court if a CRA is filed.
8. If attendance does not improve following a CRA filing, communication with the assigned probation officer and/or the SOA is required.

CRA FOR STUDENT WHO REPEATEDLY FAILS TO OBEY REGULATIONS OF THE SCHOOL

Decisions to file a Child Requiring Assistance (CRA) for a student who repeatedly fails to obey regulations of the school with the Suffolk County Juvenile Court should follow the prevention/intervention steps and best practices of the BPS Code of Conduct, including the Philosophy and Guiding Principles. **NOTE:** A CRA for a student who repeatedly fails to obey the regulations of the school can only be filed for students in grade 6 and above.

1. After the third serious violation of school rules, the school will request a CRA (repeatedly fails to obey school regulations) in the SIS system to the Attendance Office for follow-up and investigation. After filling out the request, the following documents should be accompanied via fax: copies of a letter signed by a school official on letterhead with the prevention/intervention steps taken to improve the student's behavior. The school should also provide documentation of the three serious violations.
2. The SOA will investigate the case and determine whether a filing is warranted. They will report the decision to the school.
3. When the CRA petition is filed, the SOA will notify the school of this action using the attendance supervisor's SIS card or will make personal or telephone contact. A probation officer will be assigned to the child by the court.
4. If the student's behavior does not improve following a CRA filing, communication with the assigned probation officer and/or the SOA is required, and the school should continue to proceed with appropriate action under the Code of Conduct.

CRA: ADULT-FAILURE-TO-CAUSE PROCESS (ADF)

These cases are criminal complaints filed against parents/caregivers who willfully prevent their children from attending school. This is a serious charge requiring the sworn testimony of the SOA on the school's behalf. Courts can fine parents/caregivers, and in extreme cases, further consequences can result from non-compliance.

The steps are the same as described for CRA cases, except that it is filed against the parent/caregiver if the investigation conducted by the SOA finds evidence to justify the filing, and information about the parent/caregiver is required, which, in some cases, can only be obtained by school staff. For example, the complaint cannot be filed without the parent/caregiver's date of birth and physical description, as well as documented evidence of attendance interventions using the Attendance Success Plan feature in Panorama. Therefore, it is important that school staff capture this information in advance of recommending a case for court.

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