**Operating Policy No. 3122**

**Students**

**EXCUSED AND UNEXCUSED ABSENCES**

**Definitions of Absence**

**Absence from in-person learning**

[WAC 392-401-015](http://apps.leg.wa.gov/WAC/default.aspx?cite=392-401-015) states the definition of an absence:

1. A student is absent from in-person instruction when they are:
	1. Not physically present on school grounds; and
	2. Not participating in the following activities at an approved location:
		1. Instruction;
		2. Any instruction-related activity; or
		3. Any other district or school approved activity that is regulated by an instructional/academic accountability system, such as participation in district-sponsored sports.

**Definition of absence from synchronous and asynchronous instruction**

1. A student is absent from synchronous online instruction when the student does not log in to the synchronous meeting/class. (2) A student is absent from asynchronous instruction when there is no evidence that the student accessed the planned asynchronous activity. (3) Evidence of student participation in asynchronous activities must occur daily, within a twenty-four-hour time frame of when the participation is planned or expected.

**Minimum Time for Being Considered Present**

ReLife School has authority to establish minimum thresholds similar to in-person attendance for the time in which a student must be logged in to be considered present. The ReLife School Principal will develop a consistent and equitable approach that is documented in the student handbook and communicated clearly to all students and families. Determining a threshold for when a student is present or absent should not be left to individual teachers.

**Presence vs. Participation**

Participation, such as turning video on and participating in discussion or chat, are not to be considered when determining if a student is present or not. These are examples of participation and should be considered distinct from attendance.

**Absence from Asynchronous Instruction**

Similar to local determinations on what constitutes presence for synchronous online instruction, a consistent and equitable approach that establishes what constitutes “evidence of participation” Will be established. This approach will be documented in the student handbook and communicated clearly to all students and families. Determining what constitutes “evidence of participation” should not be left to individual teachers.

**Tardies**

ReLife School has the flexibility to determine what constitutes a tardy in synchronous online settings. The school differentiates a tardy from an absence (where the student does not attend at all) and will exclude tardies from any reports that tally absences for the purposes of filing a truancy petition.

**Daily attendance taking**

ReLife School will take daily attendance for all enrolled students whether the instructional modality is in-person, synchronous, or asynchronous. When instruction is synchronous online or asynchronous, the school will take attendance daily in each course with planned instruction.

  **Excused and Unexcused Absences**

Educators and administrators have a responsibility to monitor absences to determine if students and families need support. Students are expected to attend all assigned in-person classes each day or participate in all assigned remote instructional activities; except when there are necessary reasons for the student to be absent. ReLife students are expected to attend the full offering of ReLife School programming each day. Upon enrollment and at the beginning of each school year, ReLife shall inform students and their parents/guardians of this expectation, the benefits of regular school attendance, the consequences of truancy, the role and responsibility of the district regarding truancy, and resources available to assist the student and their parents and guardians in correcting truancy. ReLife will also take reasonable steps to ensure parents can request and be provided such information in a language they can understand. Parents will be required to date and acknowledge review of this information online or in writing.

**Excused Absences**

Regular school attendance is necessary for mastery of the educational program provided to students. At times, students may be absent from class or not able to participate remotely. At times, students may be appropriately absent from class. School staff will keep a record of absence and tardiness, including a record of excuse statements submitted by a parent/guardian, or in certain cases, students, to document a student’s excused absences. The following principles will govern the development and administration of attendance procedures:

1. Absences due to the following reasons are excused:
2. 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);
3. Family emergency including, but not limited to, a death or illness in the family;
4. Religious or cultural purpose including observance of a religious or cultural holiday or participation in religious or cultural instruction;
5. Court, judicial proceeding, court-ordered activity, or jury service;
6. Post-secondary, technical school or apprenticeship program visitation, or scholarship interview;
7. State-recognized search and rescue activities consistent with RCW [28A.225.055](http://app.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=28A.225.055);
8. Absence directly related to the student's homeless or foster care/dependency status;
9. Absences related to deployment activities of a parent or legal guardian who is an active-duty member consistent with RCW [28A.705.010](http://app.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=28A.705.010);
10. Absences due to suspensions, expulsions or emergency removal imposed pursuant to chapter [392-400](http://apps.leg.wa.gov/WAC/default.aspx?cite=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](http://apps.leg.wa.gov/WAC/default.aspx?cite=392-121-107);
11. Absences due to student safety concerns, including absences related to threats, assaults, or bullying;
12. Absences due to a student's migrant status; and
13. 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;
14. Absences due to the student's lack of necessary instructional tools, including internet access or connectivity.
15. 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:
16. Absences related to the student's illness, health condition, or medical appointments due to COVID-19 or other communicable disease;
17. 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;
18. 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
19. Absences due to the student's parent's work schedule or other obligations during regularly scheduled school hours, until other arrangements can be made.

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

1. If an absence is excused, the student will be permitted to make up all missed assignments outside of class under reasonable conditions and time limits established by the appropriate teacher; where reasonable, if a student misses a participation-type class, they can request an alternative assignment that aligns with the learning goals of the activity missed.
2. An excused absence will be verified by a parent/guardian or an adult, emancipated or appropriately aged student, or school authority responsible for the absence. If attendance is taken electronically, either for a course conducted online an absence will default to unexcused until such time as an excused absence may be verified by a parent or other responsible adult. If a student is to be released for health care related to family planning or abortion, the student may require that the school keep the information confidential. Students thirteen and older have the right to keep information about drug, alcohol, or mental health treatment confidential. Students fourteen and older have the same confidentiality rights regarding HIV and sexually transmitted diseases.
3. Except as provided in subsection (2) of this section, in the event that a child in elementary school is required to attend school under RCW 28A.225.010 or 28A.225.015(1) and 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 shall schedule a conference or conferences with the parent and child at a time reasonably convenient for all persons included for the purpose of identifying the barriers to the child's regular attendance, and the supports and resources that may be made available to the family so that the child is able to regularly attend school. To satisfy the requirements of this section, the conference must include at least one school employee such as a nurse, counselor, social worker, teacher, or community human services provider, except in those instances regarding the attendance of a child who has an individualized education program or a plan developed under section 504 of the rehabilitation act of 1973, in which case the reconvening of the team that created the program or plan is required.

This conference is not required if the school has received prior notice or a doctor’s note has been provided and an academic plan put in place so that the student does not fall behind.

**Unexcused Absences**

1. Any absence from school for the majority of hours or periods in an average school day is unexcused unless it meets one of the criteria above for an excused absence.
2. A student's grade may be affected if a graded activity or assignment occurs during the period of time when the student is absent.
3. ReLife will notify a student’s parent or guardian in writing or by telephone whenever the student has failed to attend school after one unexcused absence within any month during the current school year. The notification will include the potential consequences of additional unexcused absences.
4. A conference with the parent or guardian will be held after two unexcused absences within any month during the current school year. A student may be suspended or expelled for habitual truancy. Prior to suspension or expulsion, the parent will be notified in writing in his/her primary language that the student has unexcused absences. A conference will be scheduled to determine what corrective measures should be taken to ameliorate the cause for the student's absences. If the parent does not attend the conference, the parent will be notified of the steps the school has decided to take to reduce the student’s absences.
5. Not later than the student’s seventh unexcused absence in a month, ReLife will notify the student’s home district so they may enter into an agreement with the student and parents that establishes school attendance requirements and no later than the 7th unexcused absence within any month during the current school year or upon the fifteen unexcused absence during the current school year, refer the student to a Community Engagement Board or file a petition and affidavit with the juvenile court alleging a violation of RCW 28A.225.010.

Because the full knowledge and cooperation of students and parents are necessary for the success of the policies and procedures, procedures will be disseminated broadly and made available to parents and students annually.

**Tardies and Disciplinary Actions**

1. Students shall not be absent if:
	1. They have been suspended, expelled, or emergency expelled pursuant to chapter [392-400](http://apps.leg.wa.gov/WAC/default.aspx?cite=392-400) WAC;
	2. Are receiving educational services as required by RCW [28A.600.015](http://app.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=28A.600.015) and chapter [392-400](http://apps.leg.wa.gov/WAC/default.aspx?cite=392-400) WAC; and
	3. The student is enrolled in qualifying "course of study" activities as defined in WAC [392-121-107](http://apps.leg.wa.gov/WAC/default.aspx?cite=392-121-107). Course of study activities do not include sending homework packets home.
2. A full day absence is when a student is absent for fifty percent or more of their scheduled day.
3. A school or district shall not convert or combine tardies into absences that contribute to a truancy petition.

A student shall be considered absent if they are on school grounds but not in their assigned setting.

**Tiered response system for student absences**

WAC 392-401A-045:

Requires: School districts to implement minimum requirements of a multitiered system of support for attendance to address barriers to student attendance, provide timely interventions and best practices to reduce chronic absenteeism and truancy. Multitiered systems of support include:

(a) Monitoring daily attendance data for all students who are absent, whether the absence is excused or unexcused;

(b) A process to contact families and verify current contact information for each enrolled student that includes multiple attempts and modalities in the parent's home language;

(c) Differentiated supports that address the barriers to attendance and participation that includes universal supports for all students and tiered interventions for students at-risk of and experiencing chronic absence, including school attendance or engagement teams, connecting to community resources, and community engagement boards; and

(d) A process for outreach and reengagement for students who have been withdrawn due to nonattendance and there is no evidence that the student is enrolled elsewhere. This outreach and reengagement process must include:

(i) ReLife School point person/people to maintain the list, keep it updated, and coordinate the outreach;

(ii) School staff assigned to conduct the outreach and attempts at reengagement in coordination with community partners or other programs;

(iii) Multiple methods of communication and outreach in a language or mode of communication that the parent understands including phone calls, texts, letters, and home visits;

(iv) Referral to community-based organizations;

(v) Documentation of the attempts to reach student and family; and

(vi) Follow the required steps to address unexcused absences in chapter 28A.225 RCW, including early communication to parents, holding parent conferences, and administering a truancy screener to understand the underlying reasons for the absences, and providing evidence-based or best practice interventions, even if the student has been withdrawn due to nonattendance.

**Students dependent pursuant to Chapter 13.34 RCW**

A PSESD representative or ReLife School principal will coordinate with the student’s home district to review unexpected or excessive absences of a student who has been found dependent under the Juvenile Court Act with that student and adults involved with that student. Adults includes the student’s caseworker, educational liaison, attorney if one is appointed, parent or guardians, foster parents and/or the person providing placement for the student. The review will take into consideration the cause of the absences, unplanned school transitions, periods of running from care, in-patient treatment, incarceration, school adjustment, educational gaps, psychosocial issues, and the student’s unavoidable appointments that occur during the school day. A designated ReLife staff member will proactively support the student’s management of their schoolwork.

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Relevant Board Governance Policies: El 3 Transformational Relationships

Cross References: Operating Policy No. 3230 Student Privacy and Searches

Operating Policy No. 3241 Student Discipline

Legal References: Chapter 28A.225 Compulsory school attendance and admission [new section added pursuant to SSHB 2449 (2016 legislative session)]

RCW 13.34.300 Relevance of failure to cause juvenile to attend school to neglect petition

Chapter 392-401 WAC Statewide definition of absence, excused and unexcused