

# YOUTH SERVICE BUREAU REFERRAL GUIDE

## *For Truancy and Defiance of School Rules*

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### **Introduction**

The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) has developed a *Youth Service Bureau Referral for Truancy and Defiance of School Rules* Form to use in place of the Family with Service Needs (FWSN) form for making referrals for community services for students who are truant. This guidance document is designed to be used as a side-by-side resource to complete the new *Youth Service Bureau Referral for Truancy and Defiance of School Rules* Form.

The CSDE has recently released a *Catalog of Truancy Intervention Models* to assist districts in developing and implementing locally driven, customized truancy intervention models in partnership with community-based organizations to provide school-linked services to prevent and address truancy. It is available on the [CSDE Chronic Absence webpage](#) along with other resources to assist districts in improving student attendance.

### **Background**

Public Act (P.A.) 16-147, *An Act Concerning the Recommendations of the Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee*, includes a provision that removes truancy and defiance of school rules as reasons for Family with Service Needs (FWSN) referrals to juvenile court. The following is an excerpt from the public act:

**Section 7** of P.A. 16-147, amends subdivision (5) of Section 46b-120 of the general statutes so that the definition of a FWSN no longer includes a family with a child who is at least seven years of age and is under eighteen years of age who *“is a truant or habitual truant or who, while in school, has been continuously and overtly defiant of school rules and regulations.”*

This means that, effective August 15, 2017, the Court Support Services Division (CSSD) of the judicial branch no longer accepts FWSN referrals for truancy or defiance of school rules.

Court referrals for truancy were eliminated in order to remove the link between truancy and the school-to-prison pipeline. Judicial involvement for non-criminal matters such as truancy has been documented to increase the likelihood of future engagement in criminal acts, dropping out of school or incarceration. Additionally, national research shows that students who are truant benefit from school and community-based interventions designed to identify and address the reasons for missing school.

Since 1991, state statute has required districts and schools to work with families and community agencies to support students who are truant to return to school. The following is an excerpt from Connecticut General Statutes (C.G.S.) Sec. 10-198:

[C.G.S. Section 10-198a\(b\)](#) requires each local and regional board of education to adopt and implement policies and procedures concerning truants who are enrolled in schools under their jurisdiction. These policies and procedures must include but need not be limited to *“(1) The holding of a meeting with the parent of each child who is a truant, or other person having control of such child, and appropriate school personnel to review and evaluate the reasons for the child being a truant . . . (2) coordinating services with and referrals of children to community agencies providing child and family services. . .”*

Many districts and schools in Connecticut are implementing school-based and/or community-based interventions which have helped thousands of students who have been truant and/or chronically absent improve their attendance. However, the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) recognizes that an alternative intervention may be necessary if collaboration with the parent/guardian has not resulted in improved outcomes for the student who is truant. In that case, a formal referral to a community-based partner for support services can help the student and/or family access a system of coordinated care.

Youth Service Bureaus (YSBs) are well-positioned to serve as a critical partner for community-based services. [C.G.S. Section 10-19m](#) defines the role of a YSB as *“the coordinating unit of community-based services to provide comprehensive delivery of prevention, intervention, treatment and follow-up services.”*

YSBs were designed to facilitate a system of supports and services that are individualized and developmentally appropriate for the child/youth and their family. As a coordinating partner outside of the school system, a YSB can be a resource for schools/districts, a referral source for community services and a partner in service planning, navigation and family engagement. A community-based intervention from a YSB may be especially helpful if the relationship between a family and school has become strained.

## Definitions

The Connecticut State Board of Education policy states:

*A student is considered to be “in attendance” if present at his/her assigned school, or an activity sponsored by the school (e.g., field trip), for at least half of the regular school day.*

According to this policy, a student who is not “in attendance” is considered absent. The definitions of excused and unexcused absences apply only to those absences that meet the standards of the State Board of Education [guidelines for excused and unexcused absences](#).

**Truant** – according to [C.G.S. section 10-198a](#), a “truant” is a student who has four unexcused absences in a month (period of time, not specific months named in a calendar) or 10 unexcused absences in a school year.

**Habitual Truant** - according to [C.G.S. section 10-198a](#), a “habitual truant” is a student age five to eighteen, inclusive, who is enrolled in a public or private school and has twenty unexcused absences within a school year.

**Defiant** - a student who has been continuously and overtly defiant of school rules.

## **School-based Coordination and Parental Engagement**

The *Youth Service Bureau Referral for Truancy and Defiance of School Rules* Form is designed for districts and communities to use as a replacement for the FWSN complaint form for issues related to truancy and defiance of school rules. Prior to filing a referral form, districts and schools are encouraged to ensure that the following two requirements (as previously outlined in the FWSN process) are completed before referring a student to the Youth Service Bureau.

1. **The school must hold a meeting with a parent of a student who is truant not later than 10 days after the student's fourth unexcused absence in a month or 10th unexcused absence in a school year.** Documentation of the meeting is required to make a referral to the community hub.
2. **The school must have a policy and procedure for coordinating services with and referrals of students to community agencies providing student and family services.** Documentation of efforts to contact and include families and provide early intervention is critical to the acceptance of truancy referrals by the community hub and successful outcomes for the student.

If these two requirements have not been met, the referral may be returned without any further action. A referral should only be filed after ALL other attempts to improve the student's attendance have been exhausted. If a family is engaging with district personnel to develop and implement a plan to improve the student's attendance and the interventions have improved the student's attendance, a referral to the hub for community-based services would not be appropriate.

This form **should be** submitted if collaboration with the parent/guardian **has not** resulted in improved outcomes.

Documentation of efforts to contact and include families and provide early intervention is necessary to ensure that the community hub will accept the referral.

### **Instructions**

**Please fill out the form in its entirety.**

**Name of Student:** Student's legal name. Include first, middle and last name. Please be sure to use the student's full legal first name, avoiding nicknames. If only a middle initial is known, please include that. If applicable, also include student's generation suffix. For example Jr., Sr., II, III.

**Address of Student:** Address where the student is currently living. The student's address determines which Youth Service Bureau the referral will be made. Therefore, it is very important that this information is accurate, especially if the student is enrolled in a magnet, regional and charter school.

**Note:** If a student's family is experiencing housing instability or homelessness and the student is living in a location other than his/her home of record, that student may qualify for protections under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act and the district must provide documentation that the days absent are not due to transportation problems or other issues that may be related to the student's displacement. The student should not be unenrolled due to lack of response to phone or mail efforts to

reach the family. This applies whether the student is living in the district of record or another local education area. Guidance is available on the [CSDE Homeless Education webpage](#) along with other resources to assist districts to support students who are experiencing homelessness.

**District Student ID:** ID generated by local district/school based system.

**Grade:** Grade placement of the student.

**Gender Code:** Gender Code (“M” – Male, “F” – Female, “N” – Non-Binary). Non-Binary should be used for students who do not identify exclusively as male or female.

**Date of Birth:** The student’s date of birth according to birth records provided at the time of registration in school.

**Indian Tribe/Reservation, if any:** Tribal identification, if applicable.

**Student’s Ethnicity: Hispanic or Latino? Yes/No:** Please indicate “yes” if the student is of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race.

**Student’s Race:** Please check the appropriate box indicating the student’s race. Mark one or more races if appropriate.

**Parent/Guardian Name:** Full legal name of the student’s parent/guardian, if known. Repeat for all parents/guardians.

**Parent/Guardian Address:** Last verified address of the student’s parent/guardian where they can, and will, receive written correspondence. Repeat for all parents/guardians.

*If the student is committed to DCF, please note such in Parent/Guardian section. Be sure to include the name of the DCF Social Worker, and, if applicable, information about the foster parent or the surrogate parent.*

**Parent/Guardian Telephone Numbers:** Last working telephone number used to contact the student’s parent/guardian. Repeat for all parents/guardians.

**School Name and Contact Person at School:** Name of the school the student attends at the time the referral is made. **NOTE:** *The **contact person** is the person authorized to provide the community hub with additional information if/when necessary, acts as a resource to the community hub and follows the matter to its conclusion.*

**Telephone Number:** Telephone number of the school contact person.

**E-mail Address:** E-mail address where school contact person can receive information from the community hub.

**Referred for Special Education—Yes/No:** Has the student been referred to determine eligibility for special education and related services?

Pursuant to Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies 10-76d-7(c) regarding referral of children requiring special education, *“Provision shall be made for the prompt referral to a planning and placement team of all children who have been suspended repeatedly or whose behavior, attendance, including truant behavior, or progress in school is considered unsatisfactory or at a marginal level of acceptance.”*

**Special Education—Yes/No:** Has the student been determined to be eligible for special education and related services?

**Planning and Placement Team (PPT) – Yes/No:** For students that are already eligible for special education and related services: Has the school held a PPT meeting for the student to specifically address the truancy and/or behavior of concern? This should be documented in the student’s Individualized Education Program (IEP). **NOTE:** *PPTs, or a parent/guardian meeting, should be held prior to making a truancy referral.*

**PPT Date:** What date was a PPT meeting held for the student?

**Parent/Guardian Attended PPT—Yes/No:** Did the student’s parent or guardian attend the PPT meeting after being provided with proper notice? **NOTE:** *A parent/guardian’s failure to attend a PPT meeting, following proper notice, may be sufficient grounds for a truancy referral.*

**504 —Yes/No:** Does the student have a Section 504 plan in place?

**504 Plan:** What date was the Section 504 plan put into place?

**Each of the following must be done prior to a referral. A referral may be found insufficient if it does not include the following requirements: (“X” box provided if action has been taken)**

- A meeting was held with the parent of the student who is truant and appropriate school personnel reviewed and evaluated the reasons for the student being truant. The meeting was held no later than 10 school days after the student’s 4<sup>th</sup> unexcused absence in a month or the 10<sup>th</sup> unexcused absence in a school year.**
  - The school should make referrals to address issues identified during the meeting. Parents should be assisted in making connections with community providers. The student and parent should be given an opportunity to engage with providers in order to determine if the intervention has a positive impact on school attendance. The school should document all

such efforts on page 2 of the *Youth Service Bureau Referral for Truancy and Defiance of School Rules* Form.

**Efforts were made to engage and coordinate services and supports with community agencies that provide child and family services.**

- Please provide detailed outcomes of such community engagement efforts if known, in the Community Services section on page 2.

**Every year, at the beginning of the school year and upon any enrollment during the school year, the parent/guardian was informed, in writing, of his or her obligations under Section 10-184 of the Connecticut General Statutes.**

**School personnel made reasonable efforts to notify the parent/guardian by telephone and whenever the student failed to report to school on a regularly scheduled school day and no indication was received by school personnel that the student's parent/guardian was aware of the student's absence.**

**If the records are incomplete or do not exist, please attach an explanation with this referral.**

- This information should be highlighted in an attachment that provides a brief description so it is not overlooked.

#### **TYPE OF REFERRAL**

- Truant (4/Month)** *(a student age five to eighteen, inclusive, who is enrolled in a public or private school and has 4 unexcused absences from school in any one month)* C.G.S. Section 10-198a(a)
- Truant (10/Year)** *(a student age five to eighteen, inclusive, who is enrolled in a public or private school and has 10 unexcused absences from school in the current school year.)* C.G.S. Section 10-198a(a)

**By law, a "truant" is a student age five to 18 who is enrolled in public or private school and has either 4 unexcused school absences in a month or 10 unexcused school absences in a school year.**

- Referring students after four (4) unexcused absences in one month would be appropriate for students who have a history of truancy during previous school year(s) and interventions were attempted. Students should be identified at the earliest point legally acceptable following appropriate interventions. Please do not refer students whose parents have provided medical documentation for absences.
- Definitions of excused and unexcused absence can be found in the Connecticut State Department of Education Guidelines for Implementation of the Definitions of Excused and Unexcused Absences and Best Practices for Absence Prevention and Intervention. These

definitions were adopted by the State Board of Education in 2012 for use by schools and districts to implement the statutory policies and procedures concerning students who are truant and the reporting of truancy. The guidelines can be found on-line at:

[http://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Chronic-Absence/guidelines\\_excused\\_and\\_unexcused\\_absences.pdf?la=en](http://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Chronic-Absence/guidelines_excused_and_unexcused_absences.pdf?la=en)

- The practice of counting multiple late arrivals to school (tardy) as an absence is not in compliance with the CSDE guidance.
- Habitually Truant** (*a student age five to eighteen, inclusive, who is enrolled in a public or private school and has 20 unexcused absences within a school year*) C.G.S. Section 10-200
- Defiant of school rules—Continuously and overtly defiant of school rules and regulations.**
  - **NOTE:** Sections 10-233c and 10-233l of the Connecticut General Statutes outline the restrictions and requirements regarding out-of-school suspensions, including prohibiting out-of-school suspensions for Preschool students; specific restrictions for students in Grades Kindergarten to 2, and students in Grades 3 to 12. Please refer to the following links:

[https://www.cga.ct.gov/current/pub/chap\\_170.htm#sec\\_10-233c](https://www.cga.ct.gov/current/pub/chap_170.htm#sec_10-233c)

[https://www.cga.ct.gov/current/pub/chap\\_170.htm#sec\\_10-233l](https://www.cga.ct.gov/current/pub/chap_170.htm#sec_10-233l)

## ATTENDANCE

List specific dates of all unexcused absences in the space provided.

- If a list of dates with an attendance code is sent, please provide the **attendance code definitions**.

## BEHAVIOR

If this referral is based on the student's in-school conduct rather than truancy, provide documentation that the student has been continuously and overtly defiant of school rules and regulations indicating a pattern of behavior over a specific time period. List all dates and descriptions of the behavior and all relevant incidents.

- Please indicate what efforts the school has made to remediate the problem under the Community Engagement section on page 2.

Schools are reminded of the federal requirement to implement Child Find protocols that require prompt referral to a Planning and Placement Team meeting of all children who have been suspended repeatedly or whose behavior, attendance or progress in school has been considered unsatisfactory or at a marginal level of acceptance. This ensures compliance with Code of Federal Regulations [\(CFR\) Title](#)

34 § 300.111 that requires that that all children with disabilities who are in need of special education and related services are identified, located and evaluated.

### **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

Document attempts to engage community agencies providing child and family services. List dates and agencies and provide outcomes.

- Please provide the dates, agency information, services provided or attempted, dates services were provided and outcome. If a student is committed to the Department of Children and Families (DCF), please indicate any services provided, if known. Sufficient time should be allowed to make a determination as to the effectiveness of services prior to a referral.

### **PARENT/GUARDIAN MEETING**

**List dates of parent/guardian attendance meetings. Note if the parent/guardian did/did not attend meetings**

- Please provide any additional comments including outcomes of the meeting(s).

### **Authorization (Parent and Authorized School Official signatures)**

- The referral must be signed by student's parent/guardian.
- The referral must be signed by the authorized school official, as identified by the district. Please indicate if the person signing is the superintendent or a designee permitted to sign referrals for the superintendent.
- Please PRINT or TYPE name of person signing.