



THE NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

JOEL I. KLEIN, *Chancellor*

OFFICE OF YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

52 Chambers Street, Room 320, New York, NY 10007

MEMORANDUM

TO: Principals, Regional Superintendents, Local Instructional Superintendents, Community Superintendents/Local Instructional Superintendents, Senior Directors of Youth Development, Directors of Regional Operations Centers and Network Team Leaders

FROM: Michele Cahill, Senior Counselor to the Chancellor for Education Policy/
Senior Executive for the Division of Youth Development and School-Community Services

Lilian Garelick, Director of Mandated Responsibilities
Office of Youth Development

SUBJECT: Attendance Law and Policy
Clearance of Register Procedures
Revised Procedures for Addressing Student Absences
New Requirements for Educational Neglect and Child Abuse
Discharge and Transfer Procedures
Planning Interview Procedures

DATE: September 2006

The New York City Department of Education is committed to the academic success and social development of all students. Our objective for the 2006 – 2007 school year is to ensure that all students are provided with the necessary intervention and supports that encourage regular school attendance. Regular attendance is critical to successful achievement in school. Conversely, poor attendance is one of the most significant indicators of potential risk. It is our goal to ensure that students are provided with every available resource to support and facilitate their successful completion of school. To this end, the accurate tracking of student attendance is fundamental to the implementation of effective educational services.

The Department of Education has established a clearly defined system for recording, tracking and monitoring school attendance. This system is supported and implemented by a series of attendance guidelines and procedures set forth in Chancellor's Regulations, State Education Laws, and descriptive memoranda distributed to school staff.

This Memorandum provides information about attendance law and policy, attendance procedures for this school year, the implementation of attendance services, clearance of register procedures, revised procedures for addressing student absences, requirements for

reporting educational neglect and child abuse, and discharge and transfer procedures including the process for conducting and tracking planning interviews on the ATS system. Additionally information about, "ILOG" the new student intervention screen on ATS, will be provided.

ATTENDANCE LAW and POLICY

Please find below a summary of the attendance law and policy upon which all Department of Education attendance procedures and guidelines are based.

Attendance Law:

- All children in New York City between the ages of 6 through 21 have the **right** to a free public education which leads to the attainment of a regular high school diploma.
- All children in New York City between the ages of 6 through the completion of the school year in which they turn 17 are **required** to attend school.

Attendance Policy:

- Schools must make every effort to ensure the regular attendance of students and to address any problems or issues that inhibit regular attendance.
- Student attendance must be tracked and recorded daily.
- Student absences must be followed up with telephone calls, letters/postcards or home visits.
- Students who are being discharged or transferred to programs that will not result in a regular high school diploma **must** be provided with counseling about their educational options and **must** be informed of their right to return to school through the school year in which they turn 21.

Please find below an overview of school responsibilities for the implementation of attendance policies and procedures;

School Responsibilities:

- Develop and implement clear and concise attendance procedures to support regular school attendance.
- Establish an attendance committee, which meets at least once a month, that addresses attendance issues, develops approaches to improve attendance, and monitors the school attendance program.
- Develop an incentive program to recognize and encourage excellent and improved attendance.
- Demonstrate efforts to involve the school's parent association in attendance improvement initiatives.
- Establish a process to ensure effective and regular communication with parents.
- Update student biographical information as new information is received to ensure the accuracy of all addresses (including apartment numbers) and telephone numbers.
- Update emergency contact information on a regular basis (two times per year) or as new information is received. Parents should be advised of the importance of informing the school of any changes.
- Ensure the implementation of a procedure whereby the principal is informed of any possible neglect or abuse situations.
- Ensure that all cases of educational neglect are reported in a timely manner.
- Ensure that school staff has been trained and/or has received information on attendance regulations and procedures.
- Assign an attendance coordinator to actively monitor the daily operation of the school attendance process.
- Assign an assistant principal or guidance counselor who will be responsible for all discharges.

The following is an overview of attendance requirements and procedures for the 2006-2007 school year and a summary of the attachments which include; 2006-2007 Transfer, Discharge and Graduation Code Guidelines, Planning Interview Procedures and materials, the September Attendance Calendar and Clearance of Register Procedures:

REGISTER MONITORING PROCEDURES – OFFICE OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL

Each year the Office of the Auditor General (OAG) monitors and reviews school registers to ensure the accuracy of the October 31st official register counts. It is important that all schools ensure the accuracy of their registers by reviewing discharge, admission and attendance recording procedures. Particular attention should be focused upon students with less than five days of attendance for September and October and discharges processed during November. In order to ensure the appropriate documentation of guidance counselor sessions, OAG will forward, during the course of its register review a form for the proper documentation of such visits, including the date and duration of the visit, as well as the purpose of the visit. Independent of this form, however, guidance counselors should maintain detailed guidance logs.

REVISED PROCEDURES FOR ADDRESSING STUDENT ABSENCE IN GRADES PRE-KINDERGARTEN THROUGH EIGHT

In order to ensure a focused level of follow-up and tracking for excessive absences among students in grades pre-kindergarten through grade 8, a revised procedure for addressing absences among students in these grades has been developed. Every Monday schools and the Youth Development Borough Teams will receive a "School Absence Alert" which includes the names of students in grades pre-kindergarten through eight who have 407's open in excess of ten days. Schools are to complete the attendance investigation for these students within ten days of the issuance of the 407. Schools should update the U407 screen to indicate whether the investigation has been completed as well as the reason for the student's absence.

If, following an investigation, school staff believe that the student may be the subject of education neglect, or if any other suspicion of abuse or neglect exists, school staff must report the allegations to the State Central Register. Reports made to the State Central Register should be documented on the U407 screen on ATS. Investigations that cannot be completed within ten days will be reviewed by the Youth Development Borough Teams in order to facilitate a resolution. Training on these procedures will be offered by the Office of Youth Development.

NEW STUDENT INTERVENTION SCREEN (ILOG)

A new function is now available on ATS that allows school staff and attendance teachers to enter into ATS all outreach efforts that have been provided to students. The purpose of this new function is to provide greater coordination of interventions provided to students by allowing for a universal recording process among school staff who have interfaced with the student and or parent. The new ILOG screen will enable student interventions such as telephone calls, mailings, home visits and counseling to be entered and documented in ATS. Access to this screen will be given to principals, assistant principals, guidance counselors, attendance coordinators, pupil accounting secretaries, attendance teachers, SAPIS counselors and other school staff responsible for providing intervention services to students.

STANDARDS FOR REPORTING EDUCATIONAL NEGLECT

Schools should view excessive absences as a potential early indicator of abuse or neglect and should ensure that these cases are investigated in a timely manner. Schools must file a report of educational neglect with the State Central Register (SCR) when the following conditions exist:

- reasonable cause to suspect that the parents are aware or should have been aware of the illegal absenteeism;
- reasonable cause to suspect that the parents contributed to the problem or are failing to take steps to effectively address the problem (i.e. failure to provide a minimum degree of care); and
- reasonable cause to suspect educational impairment/harm to the child or imminent danger of impairment/harm (proof of actual educational harm is not necessary as long as harm can be reasonably presumed).

Specific training on these standards will be provided by the Office of Youth Development.

CLEARANCE OF REGISTER PROCEDURES

The Clearance of Register process is the means whereby the status of each “no show” student who appears on the register of a school is determined. It is each school's responsibility to investigate, as expeditiously as possible, the circumstances of any student on register who does not appear at the beginning of the semester. The fact that a student does not appear for the beginning of school could be indicative of a problem and must be investigated. To this end, a series of specific procedures to address the intensive level of follow up that is necessary has been provided. **(See attached “Clearance of Register Procedures” for a detailed description of the process to be followed by school staff beginning on the first day of school.)**

SEPTEMBER 2006 ATTENDANCE CALENDAR

In order to assist schools in the implementation of attendance procedures during the month of September, a calendar of specific attendance monitoring, oversight and follow-up actions has been prepared. **(Please disseminate the attached calendar to school attendance and support staff.)**

TRANSFER, DISCHARGE AND GRADUATION CODE GUIDELINES

For your convenience a quick reference chart of all discharge, transfer and graduation codes has been attached together with guidelines for the use of each of the codes. **(See attached “Transfer, Discharge and Graduation Code Guidelines.”)**

PLANNING INTERVIEW PROCEDURES

It is our goal to ensure that all students who are discharged and/or transferred prior to the attainment of a regular high school diploma are provided with appropriate intervention services, counseling and support to encourage them to remain in school or to facilitate their return to school at a future date. The discharge policy reflects the Department of Education's commitment to educating all students in New York City and ensures that students who are over the compulsory school age and choose to leave school prior to obtaining a high school diploma are effectively counseled and provided with the necessary information and tools that will facilitate their return to school. Please find below an overview of the procedures concerning planning interviews. **(See attached “Planning Interview Procedures.”)**

- A planning interview must be provided to all students who leave school without having attained a diploma.
- Each school with students 16 years of age or older must designate an assistant principal or identify guidance counselors to conduct the planning interviews and to be responsible for discharges.
- The school principal is responsible for ensuring that all planning interviews are conducted according to requirements.
- All planning interviews must be approved by the borough Senior Youth Development Director prior to discharge.

PLANNING INTERVIEW INFORMATION PACKET

The Planning Interview Information Packet is a critical component of the planning interview process and must be provided to each student during the planning interview or must be mailed to the home of the student. The updated 2006-2007 Planning Interview Packet is attached for duplication. **(See attached “Planning Interview Information Packet.”)**

PLANNING INTERVIEW FORM

The Planning Interview Form must be completed for each student who is scheduled for a planning interview. **(See attached “Planning Interview Form.”)**

Thank you for your continued cooperation.

cc:

Andres Alonso
Eric Nadelstern
Shane Mulhern
Phyllis Marino