

Toronto District School Board

Operational Procedure PR707A

Title: **STUDENT ATTENDANCE AND SAFE ARRIVAL PROCEDURES
(ELEMENTARY)**

Adopted: June 17, 2014

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Authorization: Administrative Council

1.0 OBJECTIVE

- 1.1 To establish intervention strategies and best practices to address problematic and prolonged absenteeism, and lateness.
- 1.2 To provide guidance to Toronto District School Board (TDSB) staff regarding the reporting, tracking, and monitoring of student attendance.

2.0 RESPONSIBILITY

Director and Associate Director(s)

3.0 DEFINITIONS

Problematic absence refers to patterns and/or frequencies of absences that can impede student learning, achievement, and well-being. It may also include absences that occur on certain days or occasions (e.g., tests), or that may result from suspected bullying, anxiety, or other emotional or physical factors.

Prolonged absence refers to an absence of at least 15 consecutive school days.

Safe Arrival Program A safe-arrival program is a system of procedures which are performed together with daily school attendance taking. Parents and guardians are responsible for their children's safety. Safe-arrival programs are a mechanism that parents and schools can use to account for any pupil's unexplained failure to arrive at school (Ministry of Education, Policy/Program Memorandum 123, para. 1).

Unexplained absence refers to when a pupil is absent and no reason has been provided to the school (e.g., parent(s)/guardian(s) have not phoned or provided documentation explaining the reason for the pupil's absence).

4.0 PROCEDURES

- 4.1 The intervention strategies and best practices outlined in this procedure shall apply to all pupils who are enrolled in regular TDSB day-schools. The obligation of a registered pupil to attend school applies even if the pupil is not of compulsory school age (e.g. Junior and Senior Kindergarten).
- 4.2 The Principal is responsible for coordinating internal office processes and how communication with pupils' parent(s)/guardian(s) is managed by office and teaching staff.

PART A: SAFE ARRIVAL PROGRAM PROCEDURES AND REPORTING

A.1 Collection of Information

- (a) At the start of each school year or upon new registration, the Principal will communicate the need for parents/guardians to provide accurate, complete, and current contact information.
- (b) The Principal will request contact information including telephone numbers (home, cellular, and/or work), email addresses (if available), and home address for the parents/guardians of the pupil and an emergency contact such as a relative or neighbour.
- (c) The parent(s)/guardian(s) must inform the school if their contact information changes during the school year.

A.2 Parent(s)/Guardian(s) Responsibilities

- (a) If a pupil is absent or late for any reason, the parent(s)/guardian(s) must contact the school immediately and report the reason for the absence.
- (b) If the school is not informed about the absence, the school Principal will make attempts to contact the parent(s)/guardian(s) to determine the reason for the absence.

A.3 Reporting of Morning Attendance

- (a) Each morning, the classroom teacher will report all attendance (presence, absence, and lateness) to the school office promptly after the start of the school day.

- (b) The Office Administrator (or designate) will identify the pupils on the classroom list whose parent(s)/guardian(s) have already contacted the school or who have arrived late.
- (c) The Office Administrator (or designate) will attempt to contact the parent(s)/guardian(s) of each pupil who is absent for reasons unknown. This should be done as soon as possible in the morning.
- (d) The case is escalated to the Principal if a pupil's whereabouts are unknown and the parent(s)/guardian(s) cannot be reached or if harm is suspected.
- (e) The Principal will decide whether to take further action, including calling the police or a Children's Aid Society (CAS).
- (f) If the police or CAS become involved, the Principal will advise the Superintendent of Education, the Trustee, and the Communications department accordingly.

A.4 Reporting of Afternoon Attendance

- (a) The procedure outlined for morning attendance should be applied again in the afternoon.

PART B: TRACKING ABSENCES AND LATENESS

B.1 School Information Systems (SIS)

- (a) In order to contribute to pupils' overall academic and personal profiles as well as address any issues with prolonged and/or problematic absences, all absences and lates will be tracked electronically through the SIS.
- (b) The Principal is also responsible for ensuring the following information is entered into the SIS before the end of each school day:
 - (i) Student attendance;
 - (ii) The names of pupils who are absent including those reported to the school by parents/guardians;
 - (iii) The reasons for all student absences;
 - (iv) The names of pupils who arrived late (these names may appear on the classroom absence list); and
 - (v) Any other pertinent information (e.g., messages left for parent(s)/guardian(s) who could not be reached).

- (c) It is imperative that the information entered into the SIS is accurate and complete. Daily recording is required to identify potential problems.

PART C: MONITORING ABSENCES AND LATENESS

C.1 Strategies for Addressing Problematic Absences, Prolonged Absences, and Lateness

- (a) The following procedures will outline the responsibilities of school staff across three levels of interventions:
- (i) immediate strategies for when a pupil is discovered as late or absent without explanation;
 - (ii) longer-term strategies for when a pupil demonstrates patterns of problematic or prolonged *unexplained* absences; and
 - (iii) longer-term strategies for when a pupil demonstrates patterns of problematic and prolonged *explained* absences.
- (b) To enable more timely interventions, the SIS will flag all absences and lates at the following intervals:
- (i) 5, 10, and 15 day absences/lates (consecutive and cumulative)
 - (ii) Every 5 out of 10 and 10 out of 30 days absences/lates (cumulative)
 - (iii) 15 day-intervals up to 60 days (consecutive)

C.2 Guidelines for Identifying Problematic Attendance including the Implementation of Interventions and Strategies

(a) 1-Day Unexplained Absence

- (i) The Office Administrator (OA) (or designate) will contact the parent(s)/guardian(s) and then update the SIS.
- (ii) If parent(s)/guardian(s) cannot be reached, please refer to procedures A.3 (d-f).

(b) 2-4 Unexplained Absence (consecutive only)

- (i) The OA (or designate) will continue to contact home daily and update the SIS.
- (ii) If parent(s)/guardian(s) cannot be reached, please refer to procedures A.3 (d-f).

(c) 5 Days (consecutive) or 5 out of 10 Days (cumulative), Explained and Unexplained Absence

- (i) The Principal may request an external confirmation for absences (e.g., medical note, travel verification, etc.). If absences are explained, the Principal will review the reasons provided and determine whether further information is required in order to validate the absences.
- (ii) If absences are unexplained, the OA (or designate) will continue to contact home daily and update the SIS. The Principal will call home and request a meeting.
- (iii) If parent(s)/guardian(s) cannot be reached, please refer to procedures A.3 (d-f).
- (iv) When first connecting with the pupil's parent(s)/guardian(s), the Principal will attempt to determine why regular school attendance is an issue and what can be done to rectify the situation.
- (v) If a meeting is held, the Principal must follow up with a letter to the parent(s)/guardian(s). If the pupil is 12 years of age or over, they too should receive a copy of the letter from the Principal.
- (vi) The Principal can refer the pupil to the In-School Support Team (IST) if absences continue to be unexplained and the Principal suspects the pupil's learning, achievement, and well-being is being negatively impacted.
- (vii) Should any information come to the attention of the school staff or be revealed through the IST process that a pupil may be at risk of or has suffered physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, exposure to family violence or neglect by their caregivers, the employee shall report to a Children's Aid Society (CAS) in accordance with Section 72 of the *Child and Family Services Act* and TDSB policy and procedure.

(d) 6-9 Day Unexplained Absence (consecutive only)

- (i) The OA (or designate) will continue to contact home daily and will update the SIS.
- (ii) If parent(s)/guardian(s) cannot be reached, please refer to procedures A.3 (d-f).

- (iv) If unsuccessful in establishing contact through other methods, the Principal will send a TDSB letter home requesting an explanation for absences and requests a meeting with the pupil's parent(s)/guardian(s).

(e) 10 Days (cumulative) or 10 out of 30 Days (consecutive), Explained and Unexplained Absence

- (i) The Principal can request an external confirmation for absences (e.g., medical note, travel verification, etc.). If absences are explained, the Principal will review the reasons provided and determine whether further information is required in order to validate the absences.
- (ii) If parent(s)/guardian(s) cannot be reached, please refer to procedures A.3 (d-f).
- (iii) If absences are unexplained, the OA (or designate) will continue to contact home daily and will update the SIS.
- (iv) The Principal will continue to request a meeting with parent(s)/guardian(s).
- (v) The Principal will consider the available interventions to encourage attendance such as:
- a. Involvement of in-school support such as the guidance counselor and Student Success staff;
 - b. Daily attendance monitoring sheet;
 - c. Timetable or program change;
 - d. Consideration of modified day;
 - e. Change of school; or
 - f. Referral to the TDSB's Professional Support Services or external community counselling agency.
- (vi) The Principal can refer the pupil to the School Support Team (SST) particularly if absences continue to be unexplained or if the pupil's achievement or well-being is being negatively impacted.

Should any information come to the attention of the school staff or be revealed through the SST process that a pupil may be at risk of or has suffered physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, exposure to family violence or neglect by their caregivers, the employee shall report to a CAS in accordance with Section 72 of the *Child and Family Services Act* and TDSB policy and procedure.

(vii) Where appropriate, implementation of interventions will be pursued in consultation of the Superintendent of Education.

C.3 Implications of a Referral to the School Support Team and/or Professional Support Services for Problematic Attendance

- (a) When a recommendation for attendance support emerges from the School Support Team (SST) in response to problematic attendance, the Principal must send a completed Professional Support Services Referral form, with a copy of the Attendance Referral Checklist and the pupil's Attendance Profile, to the appropriate Attendance Department. Areas A and B are located at 1 Civic Centre Court and Areas C and D are located at 140 Borough Drive.
- (b) In the elementary school panel, assistance is available from the designated social worker (who acts as an attendance counselor).
- (c) The attendance counselor/social worker will conduct inquiries, identify the cause of the pupil's absenteeism, and explore options such as mobilizing the resources of the family, school, and community.
- (d) The attendance counselor/social worker will further investigate the reason(s) for the absences and report back to the school. Should any information come to the attention of the attendance counselor/social worker that a pupil may be at risk of or has suffered physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, exposure to family violence or neglect by their caregivers, the employee shall report to a CAS in accordance with Section 72 of the *Child and Family Services Act* and TDSB policy and procedure.
- (e) The school staff and the attendance counselor/social worker will discuss possible interventions, and who will assume responsibility for implementing the plan.

PART D: GUIDELINE FOR ADDRESSING PROLONGED ABSENCES

D.1 Prolonged Absences

- (a) If a pupil is absent for more than 15 consecutive unexplained days, the absence is considered and addressed as a prolonged absence.

D.2 Implications of Prolonged Absences

- (a) Student attendance is recorded on school registers and sent to the Ministry of Education (Ministry) for funding purposes.
- (b) The TDSB is required to record enrolment and maintain enrolment records according to the format prescribed by the Ministry and according to the enrolment register instructions provided annually by the Ministry.

- (c) There are specific instructions in the enrolment register guidelines related to Prolonged Absences. Schools must follow these guidelines to ensure full compliance as registers are subject to audit from the Ministry at any time. Failure to follow these guidelines can result in significant financial impact to the TDSB.

D.3 15 Day Unexplained Absence (consecutive only)

- (a) The OA (or designate) will continue to contact home daily and will update the SIS.
- (b) If parent(s)/guardian(s) cannot be reached, please refer to procedures A.3 (d-f).
- (c) Day 15 triggers a referral to Attendance Services. The Principal shall initiate a Professional Support Services Referral Form on the 16th day of consecutive unexplained absence and complete the Attendance Checklist and Attendance Profile for the pupil.

D.4 After an Additional Unexplained 15 Days (consecutive only)

- (a) If the pupil misses an additional 15 consecutive days after a referral has been made to the attendance counselor/social worker, the attendance counselor/social worker must immediately provide the school with a completed Prolonged Absence Form. An additional completed Prolonged Absence Form must be sent to the school after each additional 15-day period of consecutive absence.

D.5 Attendance Services Support to Address Prolonged Absences

- (a) If the full spectrum of learning options, resources, and school and emotional supports is unable to result in an improvement in the pupil's attendance, the attendance counselor/social worker may arrange for the pupil, parent(s)/guardian(s), and a school representative to attend an Attendance Review Committee (ARC) meeting. The attendance counselor will attend all Attendance Review Committee meetings. The Committee may discuss a possible recommendation for the pupil's return to school or enrolment in an approved alternative program. At the meeting, staff may inform the parent(s)/guardians(s) and pupil that possible measures could include:
 - (i) An application to the Provincial Offences Court and a charge laid under the *Education Act* against pupils between the ages of 12 to 16 years of age;
 - (ii) An application to the Provincial Offences Court and a charge laid under the *Education Act* against the parent(s) of pupils under the age of 12.

5.0 REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

Education Act, sections 21-31

Child and Family Services Act, section 72

Policy/Program Memorandum No. 123 Safe Arrivals

Ministry Enrolment Register Instructions for Elementary and Secondary Schools

TDSB Policy P085: Student Attendance and Safe Arrival

Operational Procedure PR707B: Student Attendance and Safe Arrival Procedures (Secondary)

Operational Procedure PR554 SCH Home Instruction