

HB 1834 Mental Health Absences Youth Advisory

Background on HB 1834

During the 2022 legislative session, the Washington Legislature passed HB 1834 and required OSPI to do the following:

- Categorize, in rule, a student absence from school for a mental health reason as an excused absence due to illness, health condition, or medical appointment,
- Establish a student advisory to shape the changes in the rule and to develop guidance, and
- Have the rule changes in place for the 2022-23 school year.

OSPI Implementation Team

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Process for Creating Student Advisory

Outreach

OSPI made a broad request to recruit youth for the advisory through multiple networks and channels, primarily through program listservs and the GATE Advisory Committee. The request was made for youth who:

- were 13 – 18 years old,
- were currently or formerly enrolled in public school,
- were or have been directly impacted by student absence rules and



- represent the diversity of the public school population, including diversity in gender identity, family income, race and ethnicity, and geography

This request went out to all networks during March 2022; the deadline was May 2022.

An example of some of the networks that were contacted include:

Graduation a Team Effort (GATE) Advisory	School Nurse	Legislative Youth Advisory Council (LYAC)	Association of Washington Student Leaders (AWSL)
Legislative Youth Advisory Council (LYAC)	Children and Youth Behavioral Health Workgroup (CYBHWG)	Dept. of Health	District Excessive Absenteeism & Truancy Liaisons
OSPI Attendance Advisory	ESSER Attendance & Reengagement Project Educational SD Core Team	Association of Washington School Principals (AWSP)	Washington Association of School Administrators (WASA)
Special Education Advocates	Education Opportunity Gap Oversight & Accountability Committee (EOGOAC)	School Safety and Student Well-Being Advisory Committee (SS-SWAC)	Pizza Klatch
The Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network	Health Care Authority (HCA)	Washington State School Directors Association (WSSDA)	Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF)
ESD Behavioral Health Navigators	Healthy Students Promising Futures (HSPF) Washington Team	WA Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics	Washington School Counselor Association (WSCA)
School Psychologists	Office of Native Education (ONE)	Statewide Family Youth System Partner Roundtable (FYSPRT)	Becca Task Force

Youth Advisory Sessions

A Student Advisory Group was established with 55 youth meeting the requirements. Using the contacts shared from youth, all were invited to three sessions, each 2 hours long, taking place on June 1, June 22 and July 22, 2022.

Session one was an overview and discussion, giving youth the background of the rule change and receiving their overall feedback around necessary ideas and steps around guidance creation.

Session two used their feedback to create sections for the guidance as important topic areas. Each topic area was discussed to get further information and clarity from the group.

Session three was a review of the draft guidance and final thoughts from those in attendance. Their thoughts on capacity to both help share and explain the guidance across the State was discussed.

In between each session the entire youth advisory group was contacted by email for input, ideas and feedback as well as given minutes from the previous meeting and it was shared how to attend the next session.

Attendance & Preliminary Demographics

Of the 55 students who expressed interest in attending the Student Advisory Session, 10 students attended the June 1st advisory session, 6 attended on June 22nd and 4 attended July 21st.

Each advisory meeting ended with the participants completing a survey composed of 4 questions. Their age, school, if they have been impacted by mental health-related absences and if they met the diversity of the public-school population. OSPI did not request how each student specifically met the diversity of the population due to restrictions on collecting demographic information.

Age

Age	Total*
13	2
16	3
17	7
18	1

Schools

School	District
Federal Way High School	ESD 121
Auburn Riverside High School	ESD 121

Gateway Middle School	ESD 189
Shorewood High School	ESD 121
Sumner High School and Elhi Hill Program*	ESD 121
Sequim High School	ESD 114
Curtis High School	ESD 121

*Student attends both Sumner High School part-time and Elhi Hill Program part-time. Both are within ESD 121.

Demographic Information Still to Be Collected

It is important to note that not all attendees have completed the survey, as the survey was not a requirement for their attendance. Another school that was represented was Lewis & Clark High School in ESD 101.

OSPI is providing financial incentives and reimbursement for student participation in the advisory. OSPI is currently in the process of purchasing \$25 Amazon gift cards for the attendees of each session. Once the gift cards have been distributed and the final webinar has been held, a final survey will be sent to all the attendees to ask specific demographic questions on how they met the legislative requirements of the diversity of the public-school population (race and ethnicity, geography, family income, etc.).

Co-Facilitation

OSPI also recruited two youth co-facilitators to assist with the Youth Advisory Group. The role of the co-facilitator included pre-meetings prior to a youth session for their review of the presentation, agenda items, and/or topics of discussion for the group, and collecting thoughts/ideas on the guidance document from their peers outside of the advisory meetings.

The purpose of the co-facilitator was not only to strengthen our engagement with youth but to honor all the work that was done on their individual part to assist in the passing of HB 1834. One co-facilitator is the current chair of the LYAC and the other worked closely with Representative Callan, who not only personally recommended this student to take part in the Youth Advisory Group but also testified in support of this bill.

Continued Engagement with 1834 Youth Advisory

The OSPI 1834 Implementation team will continue to connect with the youth advisory periodically throughout the 2022-23 school year. This will be important dialogue as our state learns from initial implementation of this rule change.

We will look forward to learning from the youth's experience with the implementation of the rule and how it was impacting them.

LYAC is also interested in this learning, in the case that another rule or statutory change might be necessary. OSPI requested that we be part of that conversation if requests for amendments are to take place.

The implementation team will continue its partnership with LYAC, as LYAC develops its next legislative priorities and advocacy strategy, in an effort to support LYAC to be connected to the other related state-wide efforts to address broad systems issues like access to mental health services, increased student support staffing capacity in school districts, and other topics.

Contact

For questions about Youth Engagement, please contact Francesca Matias at francesca.matias@k12.wa.us.

For questions about this rule change, please contact MentalHealthAbsences@k12.wa.us.