

State Requirements that Impact Student Enrollment & Withdrawal

Background

Common practice in Washington state has been to involuntarily withdraw students without confirmation that students are enrolled elsewhere. This is a gap in our social safety net for children and youth. This guidance provides information and tools for districts to maintain student enrollment in order to reengage students in their education. This is a summary of statutory requirements, administrative rule and guidance. For more comprehensive guidance, see our list of [Resources](#).

This guidance provides summaries of the three primary areas of state regulations that impact school district withdrawal and enrollment practices:

1. [Compulsory attendance](#)
2. [Apportionment](#)
3. [Comprehensive Education Data and Research System \(CEDARS\)](#)

Key highlights

- The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) does not require districts to withdraw students for either apportionment purposes or CEDARS reporting
- Districts must follow the required steps in the truancy intervention process even if a student is withdrawn from enrollment
- OSPI strongly encourages school districts to follow the steps in the truancy intervention process before withdrawing a student from enrollment

For more comprehensive guidance, see our list of [Resources](#).

Compulsory attendance: districts' required steps when students are absent

Truancy

If a student accumulates unexcused absences, the school and district must follow the required steps outlined in the Compulsory Attendance law ([RCW 28A.225](#)) even when a student is withdrawn from enrollment due to district policy. OSPI strongly encourages school districts to



follow the steps in the truancy intervention process before withdrawing a student from enrollment.

These steps include, but are not limited to:

- Inform parent(s) of each unexcused absence
- Schedule a parent conference to understand the underlying barriers to attendance
- Administer the Washington Assessment for Risks and Needs of Students (WARNS) or other assessment
 - See [OSPI's guidance on selecting a screener](#).
- Provide data-based interventions
- Refer the student to a Community Engagement Board.
 - See the [Washington Community Engagement Board webpage](#).
- File a truancy petition with the local juvenile court between the student's 7th unexcused absences in a month or 15th unexcused absence in a year

For a detailed summary, see OSPI's Attendance & Truancy [Legally Required Steps for Elementary and Secondary](#) and [Chapter 28A.225 RCW](#).

Absence Rule

The OSPI absence rules define an absence and the reasons a student's absence must be excused. In addition, [WAC 392-401-045](#) requires districts to conduct outreach and attempt to reengage students even if they have been withdrawn, in addition to the steps required in the truancy process.

Students that do not attend at the beginning of the year

A school district maintains the responsibility to conduct outreach ([WAC 392-401-045](#)) and intervene ([RCW 28A.225.020](#) & [RCW 28A.225.030](#)) when a student does not attend school in the first several days of the school year.

Students who may still live in the district

OSPI strongly recommends that districts not withdraw students that are known to be living within the school district boundaries or students for whom there is no evidence that they have enrolled in another district.

Apportionment

Apportionment rules **do not require or direct** school districts to withdraw students from enrollment. Apportionment guidelines only address which students can be claimed for state funding. See the [OSPI Enrollment Reporting webpage](#) for more details.

Which students cannot be claimed for state funding?

Students who have not attended school within the first four school days of September or within twenty consecutive school days prior to the other monthly count days during the school year cannot be claimed on Form P-223 for state basic education funding ([WAC 392-121-108\(1\)](#)). This includes both excused and unexcused absences.

Exception to the funding rule

There is one exception to this funding rule, as outlined in [WAC 392-121-108\(1\)\(a\)](#). If there is an agreement in place between the district and the student's parents that the student will continue their educational progress while temporarily absent from school, the student can be counted for two months. However, the student must return to school by the end of the school year. This exception does not apply to ALE enrollment.

Apportionment & Enrollment for Students with Disabilities

A student who is eligible for special education services but has not received special education services in the month prior to the count day, cannot be claimed on Form P-223H for special education funding.

However, a district is not automatically relieved of its special education and Section 504 obligations if a student is not claimed for funding and is still enrolled. School districts are still obligated to provide Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) for students that live in the district but are not enrolled in their district. Unenrolling a student can breed conflict and potentially calls the district's FAPE obligation into question.

It is important to maintain student enrollment for students with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) because the family and IEP team should be working on identifying reasons behind any prolonged absences or school refusal.

CEDARS: Reporting Enrollment to CEDARS

CEDARS Guidance does not require or direct districts to withdraw students from enrollment.

School districts have the flexibility to define minimum enrollment thresholds for their students (e.g. how long to keep students enrolled) in their district policy and procedure. For CEDARS data reporting, a threshold of 20 consecutive full days of unexcused absences is suggested as the minimum amount of time to keep a student enrolled prior to withdrawing the student for non-attendance.

OSPI strongly recommends that districts not withdraw students that are absent for known reasons (excused absences). OSPI also strongly recommends that districts take preventative and early intervention measures to support students with excused absences, like nudge letters and parent conferences. See [OSPI's Attendance webpage](#) for more resources.

Reporting students who do not attend at the beginning of the year

Districts are not required to report students as withdrawn to CEDARS if they were enrolled in the previous school year and do not attend at the beginning of the next school year. Again, OSPI strongly recommends that districts take the steps outlined above prior to withdrawing students. If the school district has taken these steps, then the district should make the determination whether to report students as withdrawn in the previous year or in the current school year.

Reporting absences

If a district **does not report a student to CEDARS as withdrawn** (not exited and no withdrawal code), the student is considered enrolled and absences must be submitted to OSPI.

If a district **does report a student to CEDARS as withdrawn** (exited with a withdrawal code), then the district does not submit absences as of the date of withdrawal and the district must continue to submit the students record for the remainder of the school year.

CEDARS submissions October 15 deadline

Please note that current school year CEDARS submissions are not due until October 15 ([CEDARS Data Manual 2022-23](#)). Even after October 15, districts can retroactively change or update CEDARS submissions to reflect changes in enrollment.

This timeline provides school districts with ample time to attempt the outreach and interventions steps for students that do not attend at the beginning of the school year, before committing to reporting students as enrolled to CEDARS for October enrollment counts.

Additionally, CEDARS reporting is **not required** to be aligned with P223 reporting dates for claiming students for apportionment. Different deadlines and reporting rules apply to these collections.

Contact

For questions regarding Attendance, Truancy and Reengagement, please contact Krissy Johnson at krissy.johnson@k12.wa.us.

For questions regarding Enrollment Reporting and Apportionment, please contact Becky McLean at becky.mclean@k12.wa.us.

For questions regarding CEDARS Reporting, please contact Lisa Ireland at lisa.ireland@k12.wa.us.

Resources

- [OSPI Withdrawing Students Webinar \(March 2023\)](#)
- [OSPI Attendance Policies, Guidance and Data Reporting resources](#) – we will publish any further guidance on this topic on this webpage.

- [OSPI Attendance webpage](#)
- [Enrollment Reporting Webpage](#)
- [CEDARS Manual and Reporting Guidance](#)