



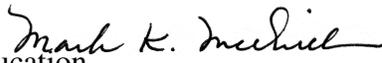
STATE OF CONNECTICUT

STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



Series 2009-2010
Circular Letter: C-2

TO: Superintendents of Schools
Executive Directors, Regional Educational Service Centers
Directors, Magnet and Charter Schools
Directors, Youth Service Bureaus

FROM: Mark K. McQuillan 
Commissioner of Education

DATE: August 4, 2009

SUBJECT: Utilizing Local Support Resources Prior to Referral of Students for Family With Service Needs

During the June 2007 special legislative session, the Connecticut General Assembly made changes to Connecticut General Statutes (C.G.S.) Section 46b-149 directing schools to identify local resources, and deliver and report on services to students who are referred for supports provided under the Families With Service Needs (FWSN) provision. The responsibilities of this legislation were outlined in correspondence from the Honorable Barbara M. Quinn, Deputy Chief Court Administrator, dated September 11, 2007, and my own guidance provided in a letter to Superintendents dated January 30, 2008.

FWSN petitions must identify: the issue bringing the student within the jurisdiction of the court; the name, date of birth, sex and residence of the child; the name and residence of the child's parent or parents, guardian or other person having control of the child; and the appropriate action by the court in conformity with the provisions of Section 46b-149. When a petition is filed because a student has been habitually truant, the court shall order the local or regional board of education to cause an educational evaluation of the student to be performed if no such evaluation has been performed within the preceding year. Costs for the evaluation will be the responsibility of the school district.

An educational evaluation is an assessment of a student's educational development. Based upon the student's presenting characteristics, such an evaluation would assess, as appropriate, the following areas: health, vision, hearing, social and emotional status, general intelligence, academic performance, communicative status and motor abilities. Such evaluations would be administered by appropriately certified and/or licensed personnel and conducted on an individual basis.

For a student who requires or may require special education and related services, a planning and placement team (PPT), which is responsible for conducting an educational evaluation for such a student, would select evaluation procedures, instruments and techniques, as appropriate, to assess the specific areas of concern. Upon completion of the evaluation, the PPT would reconvene to

consider a student's eligibility for special education and related services and/or write and/or revise a student's individualized education program (IEP).

For a regular education student, the educational evaluation would be conducted and/or arranged for by appropriate school personnel. Such evaluations are generally reviewed by child study teams which are comprised of school personnel who would recommend and, as appropriate, implement alternative procedures and programs within regular education. In addition, this team may refer the student for further evaluation and consideration for eligibility of special education.

As the implementation of this legislation moves forward, it is important to reinforce adherence to two provisions addressing truancy within C.G.S. Section 10-198a(b)(1) and (2). The first of these provisions is that **the school must hold a meeting with a parent of a child who is truant not later than 10 days after the child's fourth unexcused absence in a month or 10th unexcused absence in a school year**. Documentation of the meeting will be necessary to make adequate any referral to the Superior Court, Juvenile Matters Division. The second provision is that **the school must have a policy and procedure for coordinating services with and referrals of children to community agencies providing child and family services**. Documentation of efforts to contact and include families and provide early intervention has become critical to ensure acceptance of FWSN referrals.

To facilitate such a referral, schools must provide evidence of coordinating services with and referrals of children to community agencies providing child and family services. To this end, schools will need to have proactive relationships with their local provider agencies. It will be important for schools to determine whether the truancy is associated with behavioral, emotional, psychological or family issues. The following resources will assist schools in meeting the requirements of this legislation.

For students whose truancy is related to behavioral issues, schools should consider referral to the local Youth Service Bureau for inclusion in programs targeting extended learning opportunities and positive youth development. A listing of the Connecticut Youth Service Bureaus and their coverage areas can be found at <http://www.ctyouthservices.org/listysb.htm>.

Students with emotional or psychological conditions that contribute to their truancy may require counseling services different from those available through school support services staff. The System of Care is a consortium of the Department of Children and Families funded child guidance and family service clinics that provide psychological counseling for mental health issues. The clinics have the capacity to address more complex psychiatric issues with the support of medical staff. A listing of community collaboratives participating in the System of Care, along with their respective service areas, can be found at <http://www.ct.gov/dcf/cwp/view.asp?a=2558&q=314352>.

In addition to the prevention activities undertaken by schools to ameliorate truancy through school climate and positive behavioral supports, schools may have to address issues associated with substance use and/or abuse. The local Regional Action Council (RAC) has programs or activities

available to assist schools and their students in addressing these issues. Regional Action Councils establish and implement action plans to develop and coordinate services in the field of substance abuse. These services address a continuum of care that includes community awareness and education, prevention, intervention, treatment and aftercare. A web link to a listing of RACs can be found at <http://www.ct.gov/DMHAS/cwp/view.asp?a=2908&q=334690#racs>.

An additional resource that may be helpful in developing programs to address truancy is Connecticut Infoline, a United Way program that provides referral, contact information and is an excellent source for finding answers to specific needs. Infoline can be contacted on the internet at <http://www.infoline.org/> or by telephone by simply dialing #211. Finally, the Connecticut Clearinghouse located at Wheeler Clinic in Plainville, and supported through funding provided by the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, has an excellent library of training and program resources available for loan. The Clearinghouse can be contacted through <http://www.ctclearinghouse.org/> or by telephone at 800-232-4424.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Scott Newgass, Education Consultant, Bureau of Health/Nutrition, Family Services and Adult Education, at scott.newgass@ct.gov or by telephone at 860-807-2044.

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