




STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



TO: Superintendents of Schools

FROM: Charlene Russell-Tucker, Chief Operating Officer 

DATE: February 22, 2018

SUBJECT: Youth Service Bureau Referral for Truancy and Defiance of School Rules

Public Act (P.A.) 16-147, *An Act Concerning the Recommendations of the Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee*, includes a provision that removes truancy and defiance of school rules as reasons for Family with Service Needs (FWSN) referrals to juvenile court. The following is an excerpt from the public act:

Section 7 of P.A. 16-147, amends subdivision (5) of Section 46b-120 of the general statutes so that the definition of a FWSN no longer includes a family with a child who is at least seven years of age and is under eighteen years of age who *“is a truant or habitual truant or who, while in school, has been continuously and overtly defiant of school rules and regulations.”*

This means that, effective August 15, 2017, the Court Support Services Division (CSSD) of the judicial branch no longer accepts FWSN referrals for truancy or defiance of school rules.

Court referrals for truancy were eliminated in order to remove the link between truancy and the school-to-prison pipeline. Judicial involvement for non-criminal matters such as truancy has been documented to increase the likelihood of future engagement in criminal acts, dropping out of school or incarceration. Additionally, national research shows that students who are truant benefit from school and community-based interventions designed to identify and address the reasons for missing school.

Since 1991, state statute has required districts and schools to work with families and community agencies to support students who are truant to return to school. The following is an excerpt from Connecticut General Statutes (C.G.S.) Sec. 10-198:

[C.G.S. Section 10-198a\(b\)](#) requires each local and regional board of education to adopt and implement policies and procedures concerning truants who are enrolled in schools under their jurisdiction. These policies and procedures must include but need not be limited to *“(1) The holding of a meeting with the parent of each child who is a truant, or other person having control of such child, and appropriate school personnel to review and evaluate the reasons for the child being a truant . . . (2) coordinating services with and referrals of children to community agencies providing child and family services. . .”*

Many districts and schools in Connecticut are implementing school-based and/or community-based interventions which have helped thousands of students who have been truant and/or chronically absent improve their attendance. However, the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) recognizes that an alternative intervention may be necessary if collaboration with the parent/guardian has not resulted in improved outcomes for the student who is truant. In that case, a formal referral to a community-based partner for support services can help the student and/or family access a system of coordinated care.

Youth Service Bureaus (YSBs) are well-positioned to serve as a critical partner for community-based services. [C.G.S. Section 10-19m](#) defines the role of a YSB as *“the coordinating unit of community-based services to provide comprehensive delivery of prevention, intervention, treatment and follow-up services.”*

YSBs were designed to facilitate a system of supports and services that are individualized and developmentally appropriate for the child/youth and their family. As a coordinating partner outside of the school system, a YSB can be a resource for schools/districts, a referral source for community services and a partner in service planning, navigation and family engagement. A community-based intervention from a YSB may be especially helpful if the relationship between a family and school has become strained.

To assist districts in developing a system to formally refer students who are truant to the community’s YSB, the CSDE has developed a [Youth Service Bureau Referral for Truancy and Defiance of School Rules Form](#). This form is intended for districts to use to make referrals to YSBs in lieu of the previous FWSN referral form. The CSDE also developed a [Youth Service Bureau Referral Guide](#) designed to be used as a side-by-side resource to assist in completing the *Youth Service Bureau Referral for Defiance of School Rules Form*.

The Department recommends developing partnerships with the YSBs that serve students in your community. Contact information for all YSBs can be found on the [Connecticut Youth Services Association website](#). Refer to the Connecticut Youth Services Association for guidance if your community does not have a YSB.

In addition, the [CSDE Chronic Absence webpage](#) contains resources to assist districts in improving student attendance.

If you have questions or need additional information, please contact John Frassinelli, Bureau Chief, at 860-807-2050 or john.frassinelli@ct.gov.

DRW:jf
cc: Connecticut Youth Services Association