

**YouthBuild Philadelphia Charter School**  
**Truancy Policy and Program**

Purpose: A primary goal of education is for every student to graduate from high school ready for college or employment regardless of their individual background or circumstance. Truancy is a barrier to the achievement of that goal and is often a precursor to a student's decision to drop out of school. This policy is adopted by YouthBuild Philadelphia Charter School (School) in order to–

- provide procedures for the attendance and truancy process,
- improve attendance for all students, and
- identify and address attendance challenges in order to support desired student outcomes

in compliance with the truancy elimination procedures developed by the Philadelphia Court of Common Pleas Family Court, the Department of Human Services, the Mayor’s Office of the City of Philadelphia, and with Applicable Laws regarding truancy, including without limitation Act 138 of 2016.

I. Compulsory School Attendance

The Pennsylvania School Compulsory Attendance Law requires students to attend school on a daily basis until the student reaches age 18.

The Pennsylvania School Code and Department of Education Regulations provide the YouthBuild Philadelphia Board of Trustees (“Board”) with the authority to set and enforce attendance requirements.

Attendance shall be required of all students during the days and hours that school is in session, except that School staff may excuse a student for temporary absences in accordance with applicable laws and regulations.

II. Compulsory School Attendance Requirements and Excused Absences

All students of compulsory school age (i.e., under age 18) are subject to the compulsory school attendance requirements. A student who is not “in attendance” is considered absent. This Policy defines what constitutes an “excused” or “lawful” absence in order to be able to determine when a student who is enrolled has an “unexcused” absence.

*Excused/Lawful Absence*

An excused absence is when a student is absent from school for a reason identified by the School as legitimate, valid and reasonable. Under this Policy, the following are some conditions that may constitute reasonable cause for absence from school:

- Obtaining Professional Health Care or Therapy
- Illness (including teen parent leave for 30 school days, after the birth of a child)
- Recovery from Accident
- Death/Funeral-Related Absence

- Educational Tour/Trip or Activity
- Required Court Appearance
- Out of School Suspension
- Observance of a Religious Holiday
- Family Emergency
- Other Urgent Reasons
- Quarantine
- \* Homelessness
- \* Homebound Instruction
- \* Hospitalized/Partial Program/Residential Treatment Facility.

### III. Enforcement of Compulsory School Attendance Requirements

The steps for addressing a student's unexcused absences shall proceed according to the following schedule:

#### A. *Unexcused Absences 1 - 3: Notice of Truancy (3-Day Legal Notice)*

For each student absence recorded, parents/guardians receive notification via phone call, email, or text. When a student has been absent for three (3) days (consecutive or non-consecutive), during the current school year without a lawful excuse, School staff shall provide notice to the parent/guardian within ten (10) school days of the student's third unexcused absence. "Parent/guardian" includes foster parent, DHS Caseworker, etc.

This notice must be in the language of communication preferred by the parent/guardian.

#### *School Attendance Improvement Conference (SAIC)*

At the student's third unexcused absence (consecutive or non-consecutive), the notice to the parent/guardian shall include an offer to hold a School Attendance Improvement Conference (SAIC), if one was not previously held. The purpose of the conference is to examine the student's absences, identify barriers and develop meaningful strategies in an effort to improve attendance with or without additional services. The Attendance Specialist will facilitate the conference.

School staff shall—

- notify the parent/guardian and student in advance, in writing, and by telephone of the date and time of the SAIC, and
- convene a SAIC Team.

Neither the student nor the parent/guardian shall be required to participate, and the SAIC shall occur even if the parent/guardian declines to participate or fails to attend the scheduled conference. However, they are encouraged to attend the conference to

address the needs of the student. All efforts to invite the parent/guardian must be documented.

Additional individuals that should be invited to the SAIC are:

- Individuals identified by the parent/guardian who may be a resource (e.g., grandparent, sibling, family friend, advocate, community member, etc.).
- Appropriate school personnel. This should include members of the student's IEP or 504 Teams, if the student is a student with a disability or has a written accommodation.
- Recommended service providers (e.g., case managers, truancy provider, behavioral health providers, probation officers, children & youth practitioners, etc.).

The outcome of the SAIC shall be documented in a written School Attendance Improvement Plan (SAIP). A SAIP should be completed at the SAIC. The SAIP is a tool to document the identified barriers to attendance and interventions implemented to alleviate those barriers. A copy of the plan shall be provided to the parent/guardian, student, service provider(s), and appropriate School staff who can support the student with this plan.

#### *B. Unexcused Absences 4 - 5*

Academic/Workforce Instructors shall reach out to the student to discuss the impact of the multiple absences on the student's ability to complete classes and graduate.

#### *C. Unexcused Absences 6-7*

The student's SAIC Team reconvenes and—

- reviews, re-evaluates, and modifies the SAIP as needed, by designing an individualized school-based attendance improvement program,
- notifies the student's parent/guardian of the improve program, and
- discusses the impact of the student's continued absences on the student's ability to complete classes and graduate.

#### *D. Unexcused Absences Over 7*

The student's SAIC Team reconvenes and—

- refers the student to the Student Assistance Program (SAP),
- notifies the student's parent/guardian of the referral to SAP, and
- determines if a home visit would be beneficial to the student.

In any event—

- students will not receive exclusionary consequences for truant behavior, and
- a SAIC will take place prior to any referral to a legal entity.

#### IV. Mandatory Withdrawal From Enrollment

The School shall withdraw any student from enrollment after ten (10) consecutive days of unexcused absence. However, for any student with a valid, current IEP and for whom the School continues to be responsible for providing a Free Appropriate Public Education, prior to terminating such student after ten (10) consecutive days of unexcused absence, the Attendance Specialist shall confirm with a student's parent/guardian that the reason for a student's absences is not a manifestation of the student's disability.

#### V. Attendance Policy

Copies of the attendance policy are provided to parents at the beginning of each year and to all new enrollees upon enrollment in the School. The attendance policy is also posted on the School's publicly-accessible website. The attendance policy is written in a way that is easily understood by all parents.