

Dakota County Social Services
Children and Family Services Division
School Attendance Partnership Meeting
September 18, 2020

Questions and Answer Guide

At this time, Dakota County will not count Flex days as unexcused absences. Can you provide more detail about this?

There is such a variety in how each school is using and defining flex days that there is no consistency across the county in applying those days toward unexcused absences. Dakota County will revisit this decision in January 2021.

Do we need to make a referral if a student is completing their work via distance learning but never checking in with staff?

Truancy is defined as youth who are not attending school and because of this are not making academic progress. If a student is making academic progress, the Truancy staff will discuss with the school if there is a need for a Social Services response and intervention.

Will the flex days assigned each week count toward the 15 day drop?

All questions regarding 15-day drops should be directed to the MN Department of Education.

Should we refer students who have not shown up for school this school year and there has been no records request from another school district. Do we have to wait until they get to the 15 day drop to refer to Truancy.

Please call our Children and Family Intake Unit to consult about how to proceed with a referral if a student has not shown up for school nor has there been any records requested from another district. Our intake staff will want to know what attempts have been made by the school to reach the family.

If a student has seven unexcused absences to refer for educational neglect, but the interventions put in place by the school appear to be working are we required to make a referral?

Please call our Children and Family Intake Unit to receive additional guidance to determine if a Child Protection response is necessary based on the interventions and communications between the family and school staff.

If a student has seven unexcused absences to refer to Truancy, but the interventions put in place by the school appear to be working are we required to make a referral?

Schools are not required to file Truancy at seven unexcused days. If school staff feel there is a strong student attendance plan in place and the student is making progress they are not required to refer for Truancy.

What about students who complete their work, but do not show up online for their synchronous classes/check-ins?

We want to focus on kids who are not attending school at all (in-person or online) and because of this are not making academic progress. We also want to focus on families who need social services supports and interventions.

Our school district determined that they would not count any absence unexcused the first two weeks of school, is this a district or a County policy?

This is a school district policy. Dakota County strongly encourages districts to create district wide school attendance policies to provide consistency across all their schools.

How will Dakota County staff know the procedures for visiting students at school?

Schools are to contact their district's Family Assessment liaison with this information.

Traditional Online schools are set up to track attendance via work completion not by simply logging on. Dakota County's referral policy does not take this into account.

This is a challenge for our agency too as the statute defines truancy as not attending school - not about work completion.

Do online schools have an educational neglect liaison in the Family Assessment Unit?

Yes, see 2020-2021 referral guide.

COVID Related Absences related to symptoms, diagnosis, exposure.

Dakota County will not accept unexcused absences if they are related to COVID-19. We recognize there is much variability in students reporting exposure, diagnosis, symptoms etc. Dakota County Public Health has designated COVID-19 liaisons to each district (including private and charter schools located in Dakota County, to assist in managing COVID-19 diagnosis, exposure, safety protocols etc. All school district nurses have the contact information for their public health nurse liaisons.

Can a school connect with their school district's Family Assessment liaison or Truancy Social Worker before they make a referral?

It is appropriate for school staff to contact their district's Family Assessment educational neglect liaison or Truancy Social Worker to answer questions about the program or process and to discuss the interventions tried by school staff and 360 Communities staff. The Liaisons and Social Workers cannot screen in or screen out referrals for Truancy or Educational Neglect. In addition, the Liaisons and Social Workers are unable to tell school staff if a family is already open to services in one of the other programs (Children's Mental Health, Child Protection, Community Living Services).

Are contacts between Social Workers and Families in person or online?

This changes daily based on infection rates, exposure risk, program type and child risk factors. Due to this, the intervention type will be on a case by case basis. Some meetings, including diversion meetings, may happen via videoconferencing or phone calls.

Last year during Distance Learning our school district would disable the student's iPad to force the student to engage in online learning. What is the county's stance on this?

Dakota County has no stance on this as this is a school decision.

