
ICEARY ADVOCACY UPDATE



SPRING 2022

New Laws to Know

New laws went into effect on January 1, 2022 that will impact schools. Here's what you need to know:

Public Act 102-321 ~ Excused Student Absence for Mental Health Reasons ~ An excused absence includes an absence due to "the mental or behavioral health of the student." Schools must excuse students for up to 5 days before a medical note is required. The child must be given the opportunity to make up any school work missed. After the second mental health day used, students may be referred to the appropriate school support personnel.

Public Act 102-360 ~ No Discrimination Based on Hairstyles ~ Schools may not prohibit hairstyles associated with race, ethnicity, or hair texture, including, but not limited to, protective hairstyles such as braids, locks and twists. Prohibits school uniform or dress codes from applying to hairstyles as described above.

Religious Observance - Excused Absence ~ A child is exempt from compulsory attendance due to religious reasons, including observance of a religious holiday or participation in religious instruction. Parents may be required to provide a notice of exemption.

Absenteeism/Truancy Policy

A new section has been added to the school code concerning absenteeism and truancy. Each school district, charter school or alternative school or any school receiving public funds shall develop and communicate to its students and their parent/guardian, on an annual basis, an absenteeism and truancy policy.

Policy must include:

- a definition of a valid cause for absence in accordance with Section 26-2a of the Code. More details can be found [here](#)
- a description of diagnostic procedures to be used for identifying the causes of unexcused student absenteeism. Minimum requirement includes interview with student, parent/guardian and any school officials who may have information about the reasons for the student's attendance problem
- identification of supportive services to be made available to truant or chronically truant students. Services shall include, but not limited to, parent conferences, student counseling, family counseling, and information about existing community services that are available to truant and chronically truant students and relevant to their needs
- incorporation of the provisions relating to chronic absenteeism in accordance with Section 26-18. More details can be found [here](#)
- Policy must be updated every 2 years and filed with the State Board of Education and the regional superintendent of schools

Bill to Watch

The Advocacy Committee is watching **SB3093**. This bill proposed to limit the number and duration of transfers school districts can make to alternative schools for disciplinary reasons.

Looking Ahead

- Spring legislative sessions have been cut short due to rising COVID cases. Session days and schedules are subject to change at any time. When advocating for ICEARY, RSSP and TAOEP, we may need your help quickly in order to reach as many legislators as possible. We will send emails in as timely manner as possible.
- Directors meeting is January 31, 2022 at 2:00 pm via Google Meets. Email [Julie Wollerman](#) for more details.
- Our annual ICEARY conference is March 3rd & 4th at the Marriot Conference Center in Bloomington-Normal. Registration information is [here](#).
- Outstanding Student Nominations are due January 28, 2022. Information and forms can be found at [iceary.net](#).
- Excellence in Education nominations are due January 28, 2022. Information and forms can be found at [iceary.net](#).
- Truancy and Attendance Specialist Appreciation Day is March 11, 2022. See [iceary.net](#) for more details!