



STATE OF ALABAMA  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



Eric G. Mackey, Ed.D.  
State Superintendent of Education

August 24, 2020

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** City and County Superintendents of Education  
**FROM:** Eric G. Mackey   
State Superintendent of Education  
**RE:** Attendance Awareness Month and Updates

Attendance Matters in Alabama whether students are receiving instruction within the classroom walls in a traditional setting or beyond the classroom as virtual or remote learners! This conceptual understanding supports the 2020-2021 theme, "Attendance Matters Beyond the Classroom" as Attendance Awareness Month is launched. See attached Highlights During Attendance Awareness Month 2020. During this unprecedented time, traditional school enrollment is evolving and transitioning to digital formats or being conducted from a distance via phone or videoconferencing. Although these practices are necessary to protect the health and safety of all involved, it is important to remember some enrollments could present challenges, which may require the school enrollment registrar to take a more personal approach when enrolling the student. Schools should be reminded that the current economic status of the student's household could result in circumstances that have led to the loss of housing due to economic hardship, students living with other family members, students living in locations not usually considered for housing, or other living arrangements. When this occurs, the local education agency (LEA) enrollment specialist should assist with enrollment. Furthermore, the possibility of a student being unaccompanied due to the death of a parent or guardian can result in a lack of proper documentation. Careful consideration of each individual case is necessary so that no barriers to enrollment exist.

Many of you have wrestled with the nuances of code values involved with attendance to ensure accuracy and reflect what is actually happening during these unprecedented times. The *RoadMap to Reopening Schools* shared two basic code values regarding attendance—COVID Quarantine Positive (**COVIDQP**) and COVID Quarantine Exposed (**COVIDQE**). At the current time, LEAs should use COVIDQP for students who test positive and COVIDQE for students who are executing self-isolation, experiencing any or a combination of the COVID symptoms as reported by school nurse or parents, and implementing the 6-15 RULE (six feet apart for 15 minutes or more with a person who has tested positive).

The LEA may enhance the descriptions for these code values to support a more transparent explanation or to soften the identification of the student who will require medical attention. Both code values are to be placed under the Attendance Level: ALL DAY OTHER and will not count against an LEA on chronic absenteeism.

The *Alabama Administrative Code*, Chapter 420-4-1: Notifiable Diseases, shares the responsibility and process for notifying proper agencies and follow up required by the school principal and nurse. Thanks to everyone at the LEA levels and the collaborative partnership with the Department of Public Health as we continue to strive in a positive manner to support the wellness and safety of students and families.

If you have any questions, please contact Dr. Kay Atchison Warfield at email [kaw@alsde.edu](mailto:kaw@alsde.edu) or by telephone at 334-694-4717.

EGM/KAW/TD

Attachment

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## **HIGHLIGHTS DURING ATTENDANCE AWARENESS MONTH 2020**

Exemplary "LEA Showcase" will tell the Attendance story of how virtual and remote learning has broadened the definition of attendance. This allows various indicators to show evidence of students participating and being engaged as relevant in supporting the **NEW NORMAL** for assessing attendance. Contact Ed Crenshaw, Communications Specialist, at [ecrenshaw@alsde.edu](mailto:ecrenshaw@alsde.edu) if you have a story to tell!

- All schools are encouraged to review attendance data prior to March of 2020 to identify the students who may have missed 14 (estimated chronic number with only 7 months of school) or more days until school was released. Also, students should be identified with a 70 or less cumulative average in core subjects to receive additional support. Chances are that these students are the current remote learners!
- Remind all Attendance Officers/Supervisors to enter accurate information in the Education Directory (**Ed DIR**) as this will serve as a vehicle of communication, delivery for professional development, and updates for this current year. The goal is for the Attendance Officers to join, "All Hands-on Deck" to serve students and families remotely should COVID 19 interrupt the continuation of school as we know it.
- Unprecedented times have been difficult on many families in regard to economics and family illnesses, possibly resulting in issues for students to enroll with all the required documentation. Please demonstrate personal attention and leniency as students enroll and documentation is gathered. This pertains to **NO SHOWS** as well. Allow for a three-to-four-day grace period before the course syllabus and assignments are deleted from the computer. Ask someone from the LEA such as the Attendance Officer to investigate the location of the students/families. Sometimes face book is a great resource for this discovery or asking other students in the building. Many times, the mere "rollover/rollup roster" method is inaccurate!
- *Alabama Attendance Manual* is under revision to include the 18 days for chronic absenteeism, new legislation for the past two years, and many of the new projected code values with our new technology platform, PowerSchool.
- As we all embrace the **New Normal** of acknowledging what constitutes attendance (students participating and being engaged in an instructional learning delivery either at school or remotely), please share your ideas and best practices with everyone via a Best Practice Template found on Prevention and Support Services Section on the website at [www.alsde.edu](http://www.alsde.edu).