



STATE OF ALABAMA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



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

August 18, 2021

MEMORANDUM

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

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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 2021-2022 theme, “Attendance Matters Beyond the Classroom” as Attendance Awareness Month is launched (see attached Highlights During Attendance Awareness Month 2021). 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. 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 exists.

Many of you have wrestled with the nuances of code values involved with attendance to ensure accuracy and reflect what is 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, local education agencies (LEAs) should use the 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 the school nurse or parents/guardians, and implementing the 3-6-15 RULE (three to 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. Students who are marked with COVIDQP and COVIDQE codes are counted as Present under “Presence Status” for attendance. Both code values are to be placed under the Attendance Category: Chronic Exempt and will not count against an LEA on chronic absenteeism.

The *Alabama Administrative Code*, Chapter 420-4-1: Notifiable Disease, 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 student and families.

If you have any questions, please contact Dr. Kay Atchison Warfield by email at kaw@alsde.edu or Ms. Shenitra Dees at shenitra.dees@alsde.edu or by telephone at 334-694-4717.

EGM/KAW/SB
Attachment
FY21-2109



Alabama State Department of Education
Division of Instruction
Prevention and Support Services Section

HIGHLIGHTS DURING ATTENDANCE AWARENESS MONTH 2021

Exemplary “LEA Showcase” will tell the attendance story of how virtual and remote learning has broadened the definition of attendance. This showcase allows various indicators to show evidence of students participating and being engaged as relevant in supporting attendance “Beyond the Classroom.” For assessing attendance, contact Mr. Ed Crenshaw, Communications Specialist, at ecrenshaw@alsde.edu if you have a story to tell!

- All schools are encouraged to review attendance data from August to May 2021 to identify the students who may have missed 18 or more days until school was released. Also, identify students with a 70 or below cumulative average in core subjects to receive additional support.
- 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 of professional development, monthly Zoom meetings, and updates as the 2021-2022 Attendance Manual is released for the current year.
- 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 action pertains to **NO SHOWS** as well. Ask someone from the LEA, such as the Attendance Officer to investigate the location of the students/families. Sometimes Facebook is a great resource for this discovery or ask other students for assistance. Many times, the mere “rollover/rollup roster” method is inaccurate!
- The 2021-2022 Alabama Attendance Manual, approaching a launch date pending approval, is 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 student information system (SIS), 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 the Monthly Attendance Zooms beginning October 7, 2021, and in the Attendance Group located in Schoology at the Alabama State Department of Education.