

Revised: 7/1/2016

ARIZONA DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION

NO. EX - 1

GUIDELINES &
PROCEDURES

Supersedes: 6/7/2016

SUBJECT:

School Finance- Excused Absences

SHEET 1 of 2

FILING INSTRUCTIONS

(Guidelines & Procedures Manual)

Section: External

As item: EX - 1

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this guideline is to inform district schools and charter schools when an absence shall be considered excused effective 7/1/2016.

II. GUIDELINE

A. Pursuant to A.R.S. §15-901(A)(1), "...excused absences shall be identified by the Department of Education...". The Department of Education defines an excused absence as being an absence due to illness, doctor appointment, bereavement, family emergencies and out-of-school suspensions. The Department of Education delegates the decision of family vacations as an excused absence to individual school districts and charter holders. All absences in excess of a cumulative 10% of the instructional days for the school year shall be reported to ADE as unexcused. Statute does not prohibit the reenrollment of a student withdrawn after 10 consecutive unexcused absences. However once a student crosses the 10% threshold, all absences shall be reported to ADE as unexcused regardless of multiple enrollments within the same LEA.

i. Absences during a Chronic Illness (as defined in A.R.S. §15-346) are exempt from the cumulative 10% rule as follows:

a. If the excused absences accumulated prior to and during the Chronic Illness are greater than 10% of the instructional days for the school year, then every absence subsequent to the Chronic Illness shall be reported to ADE as unexcused. Status of absences prior to and during Chronic Illness should not be changed to unexcused absences for this guideline.

b. If the excused absences accumulated during the Chronic Illness are less than 10% of the instructional days for the school year, then every excused absence accrued during the Chronic Illness shall count towards the cumulative 10%.

B. Pursuant to A.R.S. §15-803(A), in order for any of the above absences to be excused, a child who is under 16 years of age must be accompanied by a parent, guardian, or authorized person.

C. Pursuant to A.R.S. 15-805(B) an attendance officer may issue a citation to the guardian or the child that is in violation of A.R.S. 15-803. A student that violates district attendance policies and is in violation of the laws is considered habitually truant.

D. Pursuant to A.R.S. §15-806, "the governing board of each school district shall adopt a policy governing the excuse of students for religious purposes. The policy may permit a student to be excused from school

attendance for religious purposes, including participation in religious exercises or religious instruction. If the policy permits a student to be excused for religious purposes, the policy shall stipulate the conditions under which the excuse will be granted.” Pursuant to A.R.S. §15-806(1) and (2) these conditions will include at least a written consent from the person who has legal custody of the student and the religious instruction or exercises must take place at a suitable place away from school property. Pursuant to Op.Atty.Gen. No. R76-292, the total number of days of excused absences for religious purposes shall be reasonable and not abused.

III. Required Documentation

In order for absences relating to illness, doctor appointment, bereavement, family emergencies, or district approved family vacation to be counted as excused absences, the school must be notified of the absence prior to the absence or when the absence occurs by the parent or legal guardian who has custody of the student. The school will document on paper or paperless format the date and reason for the absence. The documented record shall be maintained for not more than four (4) years.

If an absence occurs relating to any other term or condition that is not specifically designated herein, the absence shall be counted as unexcused. Students absent for ten (10) consecutive school days, except for excused absences identified herein, shall be withdrawn from the school, pursuant to A.R.S. §15-901 (A)(2). The governing board may take disciplinary action that may lead to expulsion pursuant to A.R.S 15-342.

Districts and charters are no longer required to submit for absence adjustments for excessive absences that occur as a result of widespread illness, adverse weather, or situations that affecting the safety of persons or property. The Department of Education is to be notified of calendar changes resulting from the above conditions using the Calendar Change Request form.

Districts and charters no longer need to apply to the Department of Education for chronic health problem exceptions. Documentation pertaining to chronic health problems should be retained by districts and charters. The documented records shall be maintained for not more than four (4) years.

*If you have any questions or comments concerning the interpretation or clarification of these guidance statements, please contact School Finance: SchoolFinance@azed.gov or call 602-542-5695.