

BRIDGEPORT PUBLIC SCHOOLS

PURPOSE

This policy establishes attendance guidelines and procedures, and describes the responsibility of teachers in maintaining an effective attendance program.

Attendance Policy for Teachers

The interaction between the teachers and students is the most influential factor affecting student academic success. It is critical that teachers be available to provide continuous high-quality education. However, it is understood that there are times when it is necessary to be absent because of illness or personal obligations. In those cases, the teachers must adhere to SubFinder-MUNIS reporting procedures:

The Bridgeport School District has established SubFinder as the official Time and Attendance system for all certified employees and the sole method for arranging substitute coverage. All certified employees are mandated to report absences to SubFinder, whether or not substitute coverage is required. Timely reporting is essential. The guidelines for reporting absences are delineated in the SubFinder-MUNIS reporting procedures.

A. Reporting Requirements

- **Deadline:** The deadline for reporting a same day absence is thirty (30) minutes prior to your school start time.
- **If Unable to Report by the Deadline:** In the unlikely event that circumstances prevent the teacher from reporting by the deadline, the teacher will then be required to notify the HR Staff Coordinator at the District Office by sending an e-mail with the reason for the absence included, e.g. medical illness, personal day, copy to the principal and school clerical (responsible for attendance).
- **Long-term Absence:** Long-term absences are processed through the Office of Human Resources (HR), based upon submission of the proper documentation. Generally, a long-term absence is defined as continuous absence exceeding ten (10) work days. At least ten (10) work days in advance, you must notify the Executive Director, Office of Human Resources in writing, preferably by e-mail, of the initial date and reason; e.g., medical illness, maternity leave. HR will make the entry in SubFinder.
- **Professional Development:** A teacher may not report a professional development day to SubFinder, and the principal has authorized the professional development day on the basis of prior written approval from the Chief Academic Officer.

B. Substitute Coverage Arrangements

- All substitute coverage must be arranged through the SubFinder system.
- No arrangements for substitute coverage may be made outside of the SubFinder system.

C. Importance of Compliance

- Compliance with the reporting procedure is essential, in order to facilitate continuity of instruction at the school level and maintain a safe, orderly environment.

D. Compliance Standards

- Failure to comply with the reporting requirements may lead to disciplinary action.
- **The principal will follow up in cases where a teacher does not report an absence to SubFinder and does not notify Human Resources (HR) Staff Coordinator at the District Office.**

Principals' Responsibilities

Each Principal is responsible for monitoring and enforcing this policy. While it is the teacher's responsibility to correct the attendance problems and prevent absenteeism, the principal should emphasize the following:

Communicate the Board of Education's policy of requiring good attendance to all unit teachers.

For Long Term Absences

- Teachers **must** personally call their principal directly if illness will prevent them from reporting to work **due to a long-term absence**. The principal must advise the teacher that they are to maintain contact for any period of absence beyond one day, unless the teacher has provided a doctor's certification covering a specified period.
- Determine when the teacher expects to return to work.
- It is the principal's responsibility to consistently monitor the teacher's attendance records on a monthly basis.
- The attendance records of each teacher should be considered individually with reference made to the following types of attendance problems:
 - **Frequency of Absence:** Frequent short-term absences often indicate basic poor attendance habits.
 - **Pattern of Absence:** Unscheduled absences that reflect a pattern of Monday or Friday absences, or absences on the day before or after a holiday or long week-end, or other suspicious absence patterns related to operational conditions (e.g. weather, workload, etc.)
 - **Cause of Absence:** The nature of frequent absences is unrelated and may reflect a poor attendance record.
- The primary responsibility for maintaining a satisfactory attendance record rests with the teacher.
- If a principal detects an abuse of sick time by a teacher, disciplinary action should be taken as described below. **NOTE: The principal must counsel the teacher prior to issuing an oral or written warning. In addition, prior to taking any action beyond counseling or an**

oral or written warning, the principal must consult with the Office of Human Resources.

When a matter of interpretation arises, the principal shall contact the Executive Director of Human Resources, or designee, so as to assure the proper application of these standards.

ATTENDANCE STANDARDS & PROCEDURES

Definitions:

Absence

An "absence" is defined as any unscheduled absence from work during scheduled working hours (including failing to report for scheduled or unscheduled overtime) or failure to remain at work as scheduled. The use of the term scheduled is significant to this definition because it automatically excludes vacation, personal leave or other forms of approved and scheduled time off. An absence excludes any work related injury, or a reoccurrence of such an injury, approved by the City's Worker's Compensation Administrator.

An unscheduled consecutive absence in excess of one day shall be considered as only one absence against the employee, regardless of its length (Example: An employee is absent for four consecutive workdays with the flu which is considered one absence for purposes of this policy).

Chronic Illness

An illness requiring periodic visits or treatment by a physician that continues over an extended period of time and which causes an episodic rather than a continuous period of incapacity.

- **Corrective counseling** may be warranted when an teacher has:

Six (6) absences within any Ten (10) month school calendar period

The principal must counsel the teacher prior to issuing an oral warning. The principal shall discuss with the teacher contributing problems and possible corrective measures. The principal should also advise the teacher that an additional absence could result in an oral warning.

- **Oral warning** may be warranted when an teacher has:

Seven (7) absences within any Ten (10) month school calendar period

The oral warning must be documented by a written memorandum to the teacher from the principal. In determining whether to issue an oral warning, the principal may consider the number of absences, any pattern of absences, the teacher's past record and any other extenuating circumstances.

The principal should advise the teacher that an additional absence could result in a written warning.

- **Written warning** may be warranted when an teacher has:

Eight (8) absences within any Ten (10) month school calendar period

The principal may consult with the Office of Human Resources, prior to issuing the written warning. In determining whether to issue a written warning, the principal may consider the number of absences, any pattern of absences, the teacher's past records and any other extenuating circumstances.

- **A written reprimand** may be warranted when an teacher has reached:

Nine (9) absences within any Ten (10) month school calendar period

The principal must consult with the Office of Human Resources, prior to issuing a written reprimand. The principal must advise the teacher that more severe discipline may be warranted following one (1) additional absence, regardless of the circumstances.

- **More stringent discipline** may be imposed, in conjunction with the Office of Human Resources, if a teacher has reached:

Ten (10) absences within any 10 month school calendar period

Any discipline imposed pursuant to this policy is subject to the just cause standard described in section 11.2 and the grievance procedure described in Article III of the collective bargaining agreement (CBA) between the Bridgeport Board of Education and the Bridgeport Education Association.

Physician's Documentation

Any absence for five (5) school days, or for three (3) days or more in a holiday or vacation week, may need to be validated by a doctor's certificate.

A doctor's statement(s) and any other medical records for a teacher shall be maintained in the teacher's medical file. The information in this file shall be maintained as confidential unless disclosure is necessary for the health and/or safety of other personnel (such as issues of dangerous contagious disease) or for purposes of disciplinary or any other action taken pursuant to this policy.

If a teacher attempts to return to work after being absent for a "health related" reason and can document with a physician's statement, acceptable to the Executive Director of Human Resources, that a second absence (within 2 days of a previous absence) is the result of a single medical condition, the second absence will be considered as a single absence.

Chronic Illness

An absence attributable to a chronic illness will be a factor considered when imposing discipline pursuant to this policy. If the teacher suffering from such an illness can provide documentation from a treating physician reflecting that the absence was a direct result of said illness. The physician's documentation must reflect that the illness is chronic (as defined above) and severe enough to prevent the teacher from performing his/her duties. **Prior to imposing discipline pursuant to this policy for absences that may be caused by a chronic illness; the principal must consult with the Office of Human Resources.**

Family and Medical Leave / Maternity Leave

Any sick time taken by a teacher on an approved family and medical leave, or an approved maternity leave, shall not be considered when imposing discipline pursuant to this policy.

Absence Due to Military Leave or Jury Duty

Any time taken by a teacher to serve in the Military or to serve on a Jury as a result of being summoned shall be recognized as a patriotic duty and shall not be considered when imposing discipline pursuant to this policy.

American With Disabilities Act

The American with Disabilities Act (ADA) prohibits employers from discriminating against "qualified" individuals with disabilities. The Board of Education relies on the City of Bridgeport to ensure non-discrimination in all terms and conditions of employment. Prior to imposing any discipline, beyond an oral or written warning, principals must consult with the Office of Human Resources or the ADA Coordinator to ensure compliance with this Act. Teachers may contact the City's ADA Coordinator with any questions concerning the ADA.

Good Attendance

A teacher with "good attendance" is one with fewer than four (4) absences within a Ten (10) month school calendar period. A teacher's attendance record shall be considered when evaluating a teacher's job performance, and in determining eligibility for promotions.

Teacher Records

Documentation of any action taken pursuant to the policy and procedures established herein shall be returned to the teacher's personnel file, unless and until, removal is required under any applicable collective bargaining agreement.

Any questions concerning this Policy shall be directed to the Office of Human Resources.