

RCW 28A.300.046 "Student absence from school"—Rules—Collection of attendance and discipline data. (1)(a) The superintendent of public instruction shall adopt rules establishing a standard definition of student absence from school. By the beginning of the 2022-23 school year, the rules must categorize an absence for a mental health reason as an excused absence due to illness, health condition, or medical appointment.

(b) In developing the rules, the superintendent shall review current practices in Washington school districts, definitions used in other states, and any national standards or definitions used by the national center for education statistics or other national groups. Prior to filing notice of the rules under RCW 34.05.320, the superintendent shall consult with the graduation: a team effort partnership advisory committee established under RCW 28A.175.075 and a student advisory group with membership as described in (c) of this subsection.

(c) The superintendent shall develop and publish guidelines for public schools to implement the definition of student absence from school adopted under this section. The superintendent must consider including guidance for schools to integrate their responses to student excused absences for physical and mental health into their support systems for student well-being. In developing the guidelines, the superintendent shall consult with a student advisory group whose members are directly impacted by student absence rules and policies and who represent the diversity of the public school population, including diversity in gender identity, family income, race and ethnicity, and geography, among other characteristics. The advisory group must also include a member of the legislative youth advisory council appointed by the lieutenant governor.

(d) Using the definition of student absence adopted under this section, the superintendent shall establish an indicator for measuring student attendance in high schools for purposes of the PASS program under RCW 28A.175.130.

(2)(a) The K-12 data governance group under RCW 28A.300.507 shall establish the parameters and an implementation schedule for statewide collection through the comprehensive education and data research system of: (i) Student attendance data using the definitions of student absence adopted under this section; and (ii) student discipline data with a focus on suspensions and expulsions from school.

(b) Student suspension and expulsion data collected for the purposes of this subsection (2) must be:

(i) Made publicly available and easily accessible on the superintendent of public instruction's website; and

(ii) Disaggregated and cross-tabulated as established under RCW 28A.300.042.

(c) School districts must collect and submit student attendance data and student discipline data for high school students through the comprehensive education and data research system for purposes of the PASS program under RCW 28A.175.130 beginning in the 2012-13 school year. [2022 c 31 § 2; 2013 2nd sp.s. c 18 § 306; 2011 c 288 § 10.]

Finding—Intent—2022 c 31: "After hearing from youth across the state of Washington, the legislature recognizes that students' mental health is a component of their physical health and that students' mental health can affect their ability to learn. The legislature finds

that school districts are not consistently recognizing student absences for mental health reasons as excused absences. Therefore, the legislature intends to require that student absences for mental health reasons be categorized as excused absences." [2022 c 31 § 1.]

**Application—Enforcement of laws protecting health and safety—
2013 2nd sp.s. c 18:** See note following RCW 28A.600.022.