

Student Absenteeism Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

January 2011

What does “compulsory school age” mean?

A child is of compulsory school age until they complete Year 10 or they turn 17 years of age, whichever is the earlier. Where a child completes Year 10 but is not yet 17, they must then participate in education, training or employment until they turn 17.

Who is responsible for student enrolment and attendance at school?

Unless parents have applied for and been granted approval to educate their child at home, it is the legal responsibility of parents to ensure that their child of compulsory school age is enrolled in a school and that they attend school every day. Where a child does not attend school on a particular day it is a legal requirement that the parents provide the school with a reason for that absence which is acceptable to the principal.

Northern Territory Government schools work in partnership with families and communities to encourage and support regular student attendance.

What are the *Student Absenteeism Guidelines*?

The *Student Absenteeism Guidelines* outline the minimum steps that Northern Territory Government schools must take in addressing individual student absenteeism prior to seeking additional assistance and/or being able to refer a child to the Chronic Absenteeism Referral Database (CARD). Schools are encouraged and supported to do as much as is in their capacity to reengage students, their parents/guardians and their families in addition to the minimum requirements.

Who is responsible for ensuring that the *Student Absenteeism Guidelines* are followed/adhered to?

It is most likely that action at the local level will result in improved attendance. It is therefore the responsibility of all principals to ensure that parents and students are followed up as required by the *Student Absenteeism Guidelines* and the *Student Absenteeism Policy*. It is the Director School Performance responsibility to ensure that principals are enforcing these policies.

What happens if the school cannot make contact with the parent(s)?

If the school cannot make contact then further efforts should be made and efforts should be made to confirm contact details etc. If a home visit is made but no-one is at home a note should be left asking the parent to contact the school. Details of all attempts should be recorded in the Student Activity area¹ in SAMS.

¹ Student Activity area in SAMS, using the Student Activity Type “Enrolment and Attendance”

If the parent refuses to meet then a further attempt should be made at a later date or alternatively contacted with the other parent or a family member should be attempted. Again, all attempts should be recorded in the Student Activity Enrolment and Attendance parameter in the Student Administration Management System. It should be clearly stated that “the parents/guardians could not be contacted” or “the parents/guardians refused contact”. Where applicable, additional details regarding the inability to make contact or refusal should also be noted.

Where can a student be referred?

The student can be referred for placement and case management in the Chronic Absenteeism Referral Database (CARD). Individual circumstances of the student/s, their parents and family together with information provided by the school will be used to form decisions around the support and/or consequences necessary to reengage that student. For example, some families may be asked to enter into formal Family Responsibility Agreements/Orders, others may be referred to Centrelink for suspension of income support as applicable in School Enrolment and Attendance Measure (SEAM) trial sites, others may be referred to outside agencies such as the Department of Health and Families (DHF) for additional support and as a last resort, prosecution under the *Education Act* may be sought.

If you have any queries please contact the School Enrolment and Attendance Team on 8944 9372 or at sat.det@nt.gov.au