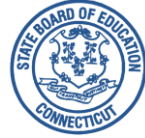




STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



TO: Superintendents of Schools

FROM: Ajit Gopalakrishnan, Chief Performance Officer
John D. Frassinelli, Division Director

DATE: January 24, 2022

SUBJECT: Mental Health Wellness Days

This memorandum serves to provide information related to new legislation passed during the 2021 Legislative Session. [Public Act 21-46, An Act Concerning Social Equity and the Health Safety and Education of Children](#), Section 19 (a) and (b), defines and allows students to have two Mental Health Wellness (MHW) Days in a school year. The new legislation is as follows:

Sec. 19. (NEW) (Effective July 1, 2021) (a) As used in this section and section 10-198b of the general statutes, as amended by this act, "mental health wellness day" describes a school day during which a student attends to such student's emotional and psychological well-being in lieu of attending school.

(b) For the school year commencing July 1, 2021, and each school year thereafter, a local or regional board of education shall permit any student enrolled in grades kindergarten to twelve, inclusive, to take two mental health wellness days during the school year, during which day such student shall not be required to attend school. No student shall take mental health wellness days during consecutive school days.

Districts should consider the following when developing local policies that are aligned with the requirements of Public Act 21-46, Section 19 (a) and (b).

Tracking and Monitoring MHW Absences

When tracking MHW absences, district policies should consider the following:

1. Students are limited to two MHW days per school year;
2. MHW days cannot be taken on consecutive school days, (e.g., Friday and Monday, Wednesday and Thursday);
3. MHW absences should always be excused when parent or guardian permission is documented, regardless of the number of absences a student has accrued in the school year (i.e., Level 1 or Level 2) as per the [Guidelines for Implementation of the Definitions of Excused and Unexcused Absences](#)*;
4. MHW absences should not be included in reporting or referrals related to truancy;
5. MHW absences will count towards chronic absence calculations as students are missing opportunities to learn; and
6. Districts are encouraged to create codes in their student information systems for tracking and monitoring use of MHW days.

* The [Guidelines for Implementation of the Definitions of Excused and Unexcused Absences](#) will be updated in the future to include reference to MHW days.

Supporting Students and Families in the Use of MHW Days

When students feel it necessary to be excused from school to tend to their mental health, it is an opportunity for conversations with school personnel regarding their wellness and connecting students and families to additional supports.

Districts and schools may consider systems for monitoring and supporting students and families when MHW days are taken. A protocol for when a student takes a MHW day could include wellness screening and communication with the family and student regarding available systems of support within the school. Proactive, preventative programming to support student health and wellness could help reduce the need for MHW days.

It will be critical for schools to carefully consider how they will communicate the use of these days with students/families, follow up with any needed resources or support, and support students proactively by educating students on self-care.

The [CSDE Chronic Absenteeism webpage](#) has additional information to improve attendance and engagement. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact:

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