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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2019

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A N A C T

RELATING TO EDUCATION - COMPULSORY ATTENDANCE

Introduced By: Representatives McNamara, Casimiro, Ackerman, Amore, and Lyle

Date Introduced: January 03, 2019

Referred To: House Health, Education & Welfare

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1           SECTION 1. Chapter 16-19 of the General Laws entitled "Compulsory Attendance [See  
2 Title 16 Chapter 97 - The Rhode Island Board of Education Act]" is hereby amended by adding  
3 thereto the following sections:

4           **16-19-11. Attendance review teams.**

5           (a) As used in this section and in §16-19-12:

6           (1) "Absence" means an excused absence, unexcused absence or disciplinary absence, or  
7 an in-school suspension that is greater than or equal to one-half (1/2) of a school day;

8           (2) "Chronically absent child" means a child who is enrolled in a school under the  
9 jurisdiction of a municipal or regional school board or committee and whose total number of  
10 absences at any time during a school year is equal to or greater than ten percent (10%) of the total  
11 number of days that the student has been enrolled at the school during that school year;

12           (3) "District chronic absenteeism rate" means the total number of chronically absent  
13 children under the jurisdiction of a local or regional board of education in the previous school  
14 year divided by the total number of children under the jurisdiction of the board for that school  
15 year; and

16           (4) "School chronic absenteeism rate" means the total number of chronically absent  
17 children for a school in the previous school year divided by the total number of children enrolled  
18 in the school for that school year.

19           (b)(1) Each municipal or regional school board or committee that:

1           (i) Has a district chronic absenteeism rate of ten percent (10%) or higher shall establish  
2 an attendance review team for the school district;

3           (ii) Has a school under the jurisdiction of the board or committee with a school chronic  
4 absenteeism rate of fifteen percent (15%) or higher shall establish an attendance review team at  
5 such school;

6           (iii) Has more than one school under the jurisdiction of the board or committee with a  
7 school chronic absenteeism rate of fifteen percent (15%) or higher shall establish an attendance  
8 review team for the school district or at each such school; or

9           (iv) Has a district chronic absenteeism rate of ten percent (10%) or higher and one or  
10 more schools under the jurisdiction of the board or committee with a school chronic absenteeism  
11 rate of fifteen percent (15%) or higher shall establish an attendance review team for the school  
12 district or at each such school. Attendance review teams shall be established to address chronic  
13 absenteeism in the school district or at the school or schools.

14           (2) Any attendance review team established under this section may consist of school  
15 administrators, guidance counselors, school social workers, teachers and/or representatives from  
16 community-based programs who address issues related to student attendance by providing  
17 programs and services to truants, and chronically absent children and their parents or guardians.  
18 Each attendance review team shall be responsible for reviewing the cases of truants and  
19 chronically absent children, discussing school interventions and community referrals for truants  
20 and chronically absent children and making any additional recommendations for such truants and  
21 chronically absent children, and their parents or guardians. Each attendance review team shall  
22 meet at least monthly.

23           **16-19-12. Chronic absenteeism prevention and intervention plan.**

24           (a) Not later than January 1, 2020, the Rhode Island department of elementary and  
25 secondary education shall develop a chronic absenteeism prevention and intervention plan for use  
26 by municipal and regional school boards and committees of education to reduce chronic  
27 absenteeism in the school district.

28           (b)(1) The chronic absenteeism prevention and intervention plan shall include, but need  
29 not be limited to, the following information that describes:

30           (i) Chronic absenteeism, including, but not limited to, the definition of a chronically  
31 absent child under §16-19-11, and the causes of chronic absenteeism, such as poverty, violence,  
32 poor health and lack of access to transportation;

33           (ii) The effect of chronic absenteeism on a student's academic performance;

34           (iii) How family and school partnerships with community resources, including, but not

1 limited to, family resource centers and youth service bureaus, can reduce chronic absenteeism and  
2 improve student attendance;  
3 (iv) A means of collecting and analyzing data relating to student attendance, truancy and  
4 chronic absenteeism for the purpose of:  
5 (A) Disaggregating such data by school district, school, grade and subgroups, such as  
6 race, ethnicity, gender, eligibility for free or reduced priced lunches and students whose primary  
7 language is not English; and  
8 (B) Assisting local and regional boards of education in:  
9 (I) Tracking chronic absenteeism over multiple years and for the current school year;  
10 (II) Developing indicators to identify students who are at risk of being chronically absent  
11 children;  
12 (III) Monitoring students' attendance over time; and  
13 (IV) Making adjustments to interventions as they are being implemented.  
14 (2) The chronic absenteeism prevention and intervention plan may include, but need not  
15 be limited to:  
16 (i) A research-based and data-driven mentorship model that addresses and attempts to  
17 reduce chronic absenteeism through the use of mentors, such as students, teachers, administrators,  
18 intramural and interscholastic athletic coaches, school resource officers and community partners;  
19 and  
20 (ii) Incentives and rewards that recognize schools and students that improve attendance  
21 and reduce the school chronic absenteeism rate.  
22 (c) The council on elementary and secondary education shall include the applicable  
23 district's chronic absenteeism rate of each school district within the report on school discipline  
24 presented annually to the general assembly pursuant to the provisions of §16-60-4. The council  
25 shall also incorporate and include the applicable school or district's chronic absenteeism rate in  
26 any report card or evaluation of the effectiveness of a school or district.

27 SECTION 2. This act shall take effect on July 1, 2019.

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EXPLANATION  
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL  
OF  
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1           This act would direct school districts experiencing high rates of student absenteeism to  
2 establish attendance review teams to address this absenteeism. The act would also direct the state  
3 department of education to establish a chronic absenteeism prevention and intervention plan by  
4 January 1, 2020. The act would also direct the council on elementary and secondary education to  
5 include each school district's absenteeism rate within the report on school discipline presented  
6 annually to the general assembly, and to include the school or district's absenteeism rate in any  
7 report card or evaluation of the effectiveness of a school or district.

8           This act would take effect on July 1, 2019.

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