

**2021 -- H 5071**

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**STATE OF RHODE ISLAND**

**IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2021**

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**A N A C T**

**RELATING TO EDUCATION -- COMPULSORY ATTENDANCE**

Introduced By: Representative Joseph M. McNamara

Date Introduced: January 22, 2021

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 year  
14        divided by the total number of children under the jurisdiction of the board for that school year; and

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

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

19        (i) Has a district chronic absenteeism rate of ten percent (10%) or higher shall establish an

1      attendance review team for the school district;  
2            (ii) Has a school under the jurisdiction of the board or committee with a school chronic  
3            absenteeism rate of fifteen percent (15%) or higher shall establish an attendance review team at  
4            such school;  
5            (iii) Has more than one school under the jurisdiction of the board or committee with a  
6            school chronic absenteeism rate of fifteen percent (15%) or higher shall establish an attendance  
7            review team for the school district or at each such school; or  
8            (iv) Has a district chronic absenteeism rate of ten percent (10%) or higher and one or more  
9            schools under the jurisdiction of the board or committee with a school chronic absenteeism rate of  
10            fifteen percent (15%) or higher shall establish an attendance review team for the school district or  
11            at each such school. Attendance review teams shall be established to address chronic absenteeism  
12            in the school district or at the school or schools.

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

22            **16-19-12. Chronic absenteeism prevention and intervention plan.**

23            (a) Not later than January 1, 2022, the Rhode Island department of elementary and  
24            secondary education shall develop a chronic absenteeism prevention and intervention plan for use  
25            by municipal and regional school boards and committees of education to reduce chronic  
26            absenteeism in the school district.

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

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

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

33            (iii) How family and school partnerships with community resources, including, but not  
34            limited to, family resource centers and youth service bureaus, can reduce chronic absenteeism and

1     improve student attendance:

2         (iv) A means of collecting and analyzing data relating to student attendance, truancy and

3         chronic absenteeism for the purpose of:

4             (A) Disaggregating such data by school district, school, grade and subgroups, such as race,

5         ethnicity, gender, eligibility for free or reduced priced lunches and students whose primary

6         language is not English; and

7             (B) Assisting local and regional boards of education in:

8                 (I) Tracking chronic absenteeism over multiple years and for the current school year;

9                 (II) Developing indicators to identify students who are at risk of being chronically absent

10         children;

11             (III) Monitoring students' attendance over time; and

12             (IV) Making adjustments to interventions as they are being implemented.

13         (2) The chronic absenteeism prevention and intervention plan may include, but need not

14         be limited to:

15             (i) A research-based and data-driven mentorship model that addresses and attempts to

16         reduce chronic absenteeism through the use of mentors, such as students, teachers, administrators,

17         intramural and interscholastic athletic coaches, school resource officers and community partners;

18         and

19             (ii) Incentives and rewards that recognize schools and students that improve attendance

20         and reduce the school chronic absenteeism rate.

21         (c) The council on elementary and secondary education shall include the applicable

22         district's chronic absenteeism rate of each school district within the report on school discipline

23         presented annually to the general assembly pursuant to the provisions of §16-60-4. The council

24         shall also incorporate and include the applicable school or district's chronic absenteeism rate in any

25         report card or evaluation of the effectiveness of a school or district.

26         SECTION 2. This act shall take effect on July 1, 2021.

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EXPLANATION  
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL  
OF  
A N A C T  
RELATING TO EDUCATION -- COMPULSORY ATTENDANCE

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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, 2022. 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, 2021.

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