



CONNECTICUT ASSOCIATION OF BOARDS OF EDUCATION

Jody I. Goeler, Senior Staff Associate *for* Policy Service
81 Wolcott Hill Road, Wethersfield, CT 06109
(860) 571-7446 – Fax (860) 571-7452

Update Mailing No. 3
April 29, 2026

POLICY DEPARTMENT:

Jody I. Goeler, Senior Staff Associate

jgoeler@cabe.org

Pam Brooks, Senior Administrative Associate

pbrooks@cabe.org

Shannon Hamilton, Administrative Assistant

shamilton@cabe.org

QUARTERLY POLICY UPDATE SERVICE

This, the Third issue of *Policy Update* for the 2025-2026 school year.

Information regarding the following topics below are included in this packet for your use.

CABE Policy Priorities

- A. Digital Recording of Students and Staff
- B. Public Complaints (Form)
- C. School Lunch Services
- D. Attendance (Transitional Waiver) & Kindergarten Enrollment and Early Entry Waiver (2026-2027)
- E. Child Abuse and Neglect
- F. Online Social Networking (Anticipates Phone Free Requirement)
- G. Time, Place and Notice of Meeting

SAMPLE POLICIES & REGULATIONS ARE INCLUDED.

Please Note:

Sample policies are distributed for demonstration purposes only. Unless so noted, contents do not necessarily reflect official policies of the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education.

The Update Service publication is an annual subscription service, published quarterly which provides an overview of current policy issues of concern to Connecticut school districts. Sample policies, which reflect changes in state and federal law and judicial action affecting policy, are part of the publication.

The sample policies are intended to provide a basis for drafting policy which meets the needs of the local school district. Some issues also contain model administrative regulations. The model policies are comprehensively researched and reviewed for effectiveness and legal compliance. The samples should always be considered as open to modification nor do they replace the advice of the district's legal counsel. Rarely does one policy statement reflect the needs and concerns of all districts.

To make the best use of the Update Service, it is suggested that a discussion on the various issues be held. The models provided are open to local decisions and modification. The sample policies should be used to determine the areas for which policy should be developed or revised, to get ideas for what a policy should contain and as a starting point for editing, modifying and discussing the local district's positions.

If you have questions about Update Service, sample policies or about policy in general, please call CABE Policy Services Department at (860) 571-7446.

*CABE's Customized Policy Service & Policy Update Service
will keep you up-to-date with all the latest issues.*

POLICY UPDATE SERVICE

Update Mailing No. 3

April 29, 2026

This Policy Update includes significant revisions to seven CABE model policies:

Policy 1112.6 Digital Recording of Students and Staff

This model policy provides a contemporary framework for balancing the educational benefits of emerging technologies, such as AI-enabled tools and cloud storage, with the District's obligation to protect the privacy and safety of its school community. By establishing clear definitions for Personally Identifiable Information (PII) and addressing the nuances of AI transcription and recording, this model policy moves beyond traditional media releases to offer a tiered consent model that respects parental choice and provides enhanced protections for students receiving special services.

The accompanying administrative regulations (R1112.6) and appendices provide staff with actionable guardrails, such as the requirement to use district-approved devices, the strict prohibition of storing student data on personal hardware, and clear protocols for the secure handling of surveillance footage. Adoption of this policy will ensure our district remains compliant with evolving state and federal laws—including FERPA, IDEA, and COPPA—while ensuring educators use digital media responsibly for instruction, professional development, and community engagement.

Policy 1312 Public Complaints (form)

This revised Public Complaint Form serves as an administrative tool to help implement Policy 1312 by ensuring all public concerns—distinct from library material challenges—are addressed through a structured, "lowest-level-first" resolution process. In light of recent Connecticut General Assembly mandates regarding library materials, this updated form clarifies the process for general grievances, protecting Board members from the legal risks of bias and "ex parte" communication that arise when complaints are heard outside official channels. By requiring complainants to document their prior attempts to resolve issues with teachers and building administrators, the form reinforces the district's chain of command and ensures that only the most complex or unresolved matters reach the Board for final appeal. This systematic approach not only maintains First Amendment content neutrality during public comment periods but also provides a clear, transparent roadmap for community members to ensure their voices are heard and documented appropriately.

Policy 3542

School Lunch Services

As your board considers adopting this policy, there are three “placeholder” items embedded in the text that the board and superintendent will need to define in the accompanying administrative regulations:

- **The Debt Threshold:** In section 3(a), you’ll need to establish the specific dollar amount that triggers formal parent notification. (Commonly \$10.00 - \$20.00, or a specific number of meals)
- **Communication Method:** In section 3(b), you are required to specify how parents are notified. (Automated email, letter, phone call, etc.)
- **The “Plan for Improvement”:** Ensure the Food Service Director knows that if the fund balance exceeds the three-month operating average, a spending plan must be provided to the board detailing items such as kitchen upgrades and/or food quality enhancements.

In addition to ensuring compliance with federal and state law, boards can build a strong rationale for updating their policies:

- **Food Insecurity:** In Connecticut, approximately 10% of households face food insecurity. For Black and Hispanic households, these rates are historically higher.
- **Nutritional Gap:** School meals can provide up to 50% of a child’s daily calories. Policies that mandate whole grains and limit sugar are primary tools in addressing long-term health disparities.
- **Debt Reality:** Before the 2023 legislative shifts, some CT districts reported unpaid meal debt in the tens of thousands of dollars. Your policy’s focus on the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) and other proactive interventions may be the most effective way to drive those numbers down while ensuring your students have access to nutritious meals.

This model policy aligns with the 2024-2026 legislative shifts in Connecticut and Federal law. Key areas of revision include unpaid meal debt protections (Public Act 21-46 and 23-101), updated USDA nutrition standards, and expanded non-discrimination categories. Such changes include:

- **Stigmatization Ban:** Explicitly adding language from PA 23-101 prohibiting the “shaming” of students with lunch debt.
- **Civil Rights:** Expanding the non-discrimination clause to match current USDA and State requirements regarding gender identity and expression.
- **Nutrition Standards:** Updating references to include the most recent USDA Final Rules, which impact sodium and sugar limits in school meals through 2026.
- **Administrative Flow:** Streamlining the “Aims” section to prioritize student access over administrative convenience.

Policy 5112 and new Policy 5112.01

Attendance (Transitional Waiver)

The CABE Policy Department has updated the model policy on Ages of Attendance, Admissions, and Placement to ensure districts remain compliant with the evolving requirements of Public Act 23-208 and C.G.S. 10-186. Central to this revision is the inclusion of a one-year "Transitional Waiver" for the 2026-2027 school year, designed to provide boards with a formal mechanism to mitigate family hardship caused by the state’s shift to a September 1 kindergarten cutoff.

To maintain administrative consistency and legal defensibility during this transition, districts, where boards of ed have updated their policies to allow such waivers, should direct parents to the newly developed Form #4: Request for a Waiver, which formalizes the request for a holistic developmental assessment and ensures parents acknowledge the specific readiness criteria required for early entry. Please note that this transitional provision is designed to sunset on June 30, 2027, at which point enrollment will be governed by the standing state-mandated cutoff and standard district assessment protocols. This dual-policy approach allows districts to maintain strict age requirements while utilizing the sunset provision to accommodate families during the 2026-2027 implementation window.

Policy 5141.4

Child Abuse and Neglect

Model policy **5141.4** has been updated to incorporate important legislative changes from the 2024 and 2026 Connecticut General Assembly sessions, specifically addressing the nuances of mandated reporting. The primary focus of this update is the formalization of Mandated Report Preliminary Inquiries, as established by Public Act 24-41. This language clarifies that school administrators are authorized to conduct a brief, immediate inquiry to determine if "reasonable cause to suspect" exists before triggering the 12-hour reporting window; however, these inquiries must be strictly limited in scope to ensure they do not interfere with formal forensic investigations conducted by the Department of Children and Families (DCF). Crucially, the policy now restores "Good Faith Immunity," providing legal protection for reporters whose preliminary inquiries, conducted in good faith, do *not* reveal reasonable cause to report. These administrative regulations ensure that while immediate student safety remains the priority, the distinction between a school-level inquiry and a formal agency investigation is clearly maintained.

Policy 6141.326

Online Social Networking (anticipates phone free requirement)

Model policy **6141.326** and its associated administrative regulations have been updated to address the significant shifts in Connecticut's digital safety landscape following the 2025-26 legislative session. This comprehensive update introduces a framework for transitioning to phone-free schools, mandating that personal wireless communication devices be powered off and secured during the school day to mitigate social media addiction and instructional distraction. Beyond physical device management, the policy establishes strict privacy and mental health protections, requiring that any sanctioned digital tool default to the highest privacy settings and undergo a vetting process for "addictive features" such as infinite scrolling. Furthermore, the regulations formalize emergency communication protocols to ensure parents can reach students without relying on personal devices, while reinforcing compliance with new state requirements for third-party software vetting via the Connecticut Educational Software Hub and strict age-verification standards.

Bylaw 9321

Time, Place and Notice of Meeting

The CAFE Policy Department has updated model bylaw **9321** to align with recent statutory updates in the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) regarding public agency (Board of Education) meetings. This revision authorizes Electronic Participation, allowing boards to conduct meetings in In-Person, Fully Remote, or Hybrid formats.

Key updates include the provision that board members participating via electronic means—such as video conferencing or teleconference—are considered "present" for quorum purposes and possess full voting rights, provided they can hear and be heard by all participants and the public. To ensure transparency and public access, the bylaw now mandates specific notice requirements, clear public access instructions on agendas, and the requirement that all votes be taken by roll call unless unanimous. Furthermore, the bylaw establishes critical contingency procedures, such as a mandatory meeting suspension if a remote connection necessary for a quorum is lost, ensuring the integrity of the deliberative process in a digital environment.

A sample policy to consider.

Community Relations

Digital Recording and Media of Students/Staff

The _____ Board of Education is committed to ensuring the privacy, safety, and security of all students and staff while allowing for the use of currently available technology for educational, professional development, and other purposes determined appropriate by the District.

1. Definitions

- a. **Digital Recording:** The act of capturing audio, video, or still images using electronic equipment, where the data is encoded into a format that can be stored, transmitted, and retrieved.
- b. **Electronic Consent:** A legally recognized agreement or permission obtained through digital means, such as an e-signature, a checked box on a parent portal, or an emailed confirmation, rather than a physical paper form.
- c. **Personal Technology Devices:** Any non-district-owned hardware capable of recording or storing data, including smartphones, personal tablets, smartwatches, and private laptops.
- d. **Cloud Storage:** The practice of storing digital recordings on remote servers accessed via the internet rather than a local hard drive or physical server.
- e. **Protected Settings:** Specific designated private/confidential areas that restrict access to recordings and prevent the content from being publicly searchable or shareable.
- f. **Encryption:** The process of encoding recordings so only authorized parties can view them.
- g. **Personally Identifiable Information (PII):** Any data that can be used to distinguish or trace an individual's identity. In the context of digital recordings, it includes a student's face, voice, or even a unique birthmark. Under FERPA, PII is strictly protected to ensure that a classroom video does not, by accident, become a public record of a specific child's presence.
- h. **AI-Enabled Recording Tools:** For the purpose of this policy, "AI Recording Tools" include any hardware or software that uses Artificial Intelligence to transcribe, summarize, or analyze audio/video in real-time. This includes, but is not limited to, AI meeting "bots" or assistants, wearable smart glasses with integrated cameras, and automated classroom tracking cameras with AI-enhanced audio filtering.

Community Relations

Digital Recording and Media of Students/Staff (continued)

2. Consent Requirements

- a. **Staff Members:** Digital and AI-assisted recording (video or audio) of school district employees requires the prior written or electronic consent of the Principal and the participating staff.
- b. **Students:** If a student is the primary subject of a recording or is clearly identifiable, prior written consent via a Media Release/Waiver must be obtained from the student's legal guardian.
- c. **Students Receiving Special Services:** Enhanced privacy protections apply to students receiving special education services (IDEA) or accommodations through Section 504. If a recording identifies a student as receiving specialized services, explicit consent must be obtained acknowledging the disclosure of that status.

3. Scope of Use

- a. **Purpose Limitation:** Recordings may only be used for the specific purpose outlined in the original consent form, including but not limited to a specific classroom project, teacher evaluation, or school website content.
- b. **Secondary Use:** If a recording is to be repurposed, as with moving a classroom recording to a public social media platform, a new release/waiver must be signed by all identifiable parties.
- c. **Personal Devices:** The use of personal smartphones or wearable technology by staff to record students is strictly prohibited unless specifically authorized by the administration for a documented educational purpose.

4. Exceptions

- a. **Security Surveillance:** Recordings made by authorized school security/CCTV systems.
- b. **Public Events:** Large-scale recordings of public performances, including but not limited to graduation ceremonies, or athletic events where there is no expectation of privacy.
- c. **Instructional Necessity:** Short-term recordings used solely for immediate student feedback or clearly identified instructional purposes that are deleted immediately after use and not stored or shared.

The Board of Education authorizes the Superintendent to develop and implement Administrative Regulations to ensure this policy is implemented consistently with the Board's expectations and compliant with all State and Federal Law, judicial decisions, and other compliance requirements.

Community Relations

Digital Recording and Media of Students/Staff (continued)

(cf. 1112 - News Media Relations)
(cf. 1112.5 - Media Access to Students)
(cf. 5125 - Student Records)
(cf. 6145.4 - Student Performances)

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes
10-209 Records not to be public
1-200 et seq. (Freedom of Information Act)
1-226 Recording, broadcasting or photographing meetings
31-48d Employers engaged in electronic monitoring to give prior notice to employees
53a-189a Disseminating Voyeuristic Material

Federal Statutory References

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), 20 U.S.C. § 1232g and 34 CFR Part 99
Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), 20 U.S.C. § 1400 et seq
Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA), 15 U.S.C. §§ 6501–6506
Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA), 20 U.S.C. § 1232h

Judicial Decisions

Safford Unified School District #1 v. Redding, 557 U.S. 364 (2009), Docket No. 08-479
Letter to Wachter (FPCO, 2017)

A sample regulation to consider.

Community Relations

Digital Recording and Media of Students/Staff

A. General Authorization

Before any recording occurs, staff are required to check the Media Clearance List maintained by the main office. This list identifies students whose parents/guardians have opted out of all media recordings.

B. Storage and Security

- a. **Approved Platforms:** Recordings containing identifiable students (PII) must be stored on district-approved cloud storage, such as Google Drive for Education, Microsoft OneDrive, and other district-approved platforms.
- b. **Prohibited Storage:** Staff are prohibited from storing student recordings on personal hard drives, unencrypted USB sticks, or personal cloud accounts.
- c. **Retention:** Recordings used for instructional coaching or teacher evaluation must be deleted once the specified objective is met, unless otherwise required by state record retention schedules.

C. Use of Personal Devices

- a. Staff are required to use district-issued devices for all recordings.
- b. In the event a personal device is used for a time-sensitive educational purpose, the file must be transferred to a district server and permanently deleted from the personal device within 24 hours.

D. Social Media and Public Posting

- a. No recording of a student may be posted to a public media account under any circumstances without verifying that a public Media Release is on file.
- b. Recordings of a student receiving special education services or in “protected” settings, such as counseling offices, shall never be posted to social media, regardless of consent.

E. Surveillance Footage

Requests to view security/CCTV footage are governed by FERPA. Parents may only view footage if their child is the subject; if other students are visible, the footage shall be redacted or blurred so that it is unrecognizable, or a court order must be presented.

District Name
Media Consent & Release Form

Student Name: _____ Grade: _____ School: _____

The (District Name) Public Schools uses digital media to document student learning and celebrate achievements. Please indicate your preference below:

1. General Educational Use (Internal)

I grant permission for my child to be recorded for internal classroom purposes, including teacher-to-student feedback, student projects, and staff professional development.

Yes No

2. Public Media & Social Media (External)

I grant permission for the District to use my child's image, voice, or video in public-facing materials, including the school website, district social media accounts, and local news press releases.

Yes No

3. Specific Acknowledgment (Exceptional Status)

If applicable: I understand that if my child is recorded in a special education or 504 setting, their status as a student receiving specialized services may be inherently disclosed in the context of the recording. I provide specific consent for this purpose.

Yes No

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____

Name Printed: _____

Date: _____

(Rationale for review purposes only – NOT FOR USE IN FORM)

- The Collective List*** ensures the main office maintains an updated "Do Not Record" list in a central location for staff access.
- Tiered Consent*** provides parents an opportunity to select among a range of options/scenarios when and where their children can be recorded.
- Security Compliance*** ensures appropriate restrictions on personal technology device use for recording and storing student images.)

Teacher Guide for Recording in the Classroom

1. **Always Check the Master Media List:** Before recording in the classroom, verify that every student in the frame has a signed Media Release on file in the main office.
2. **Use Approved Technology Only:**
 - a. **District Devices:** Use school-issued iPads, cameras, or laptops.
 - b. **Personal Phones:** If you must use your phone for a “teachable moment,” transfer the file to your school Google Drive/OneDrive immediately and delete it from your phone’s “Recently Deleted” folder within 24 hours.
 - c. **AI Assistants:** Only use AI transcription/notetakers that have been vetted and approved by the District.
3. **Special Education (IEP/504) Privacy:**
 - a. **Context Matters:** A video of a student in a “Resource Room” or “Learning Center” effectively identifies them as qualifying for special education services/having an identified disability. Never post these images/videos to social media or any publicly accessible website, even if a general media release is signed.
 - b. **AI in PPTs:** If a parent brings an AI recording “bot” to a PPT/IEP meeting, notify administration immediately to verify the tool is secure and that we have a duplicate district recording.
4. **Storage & Sharing:**
 - a. **Internal Only:** Recordings used for student feedback or teacher coaching remain on the District Cloud.
 - b. **Public Sharing:** If you wish to post a school-related recording on the school’s social media page, you must have consent for every identifiable student.
 - c. **Transcripts:** Any AI-generated summaries of class discussions must include this disclaimer: “*AI-generated draft. Not an official record.*”
5. **When NOT to Record:**
 - a. **Private or “Special” Places:** Never record in bathrooms, locker rooms, nurse’s offices, or other areas considered private and require confidentiality.
 - b. **Peer Conflicts:** Do not record student-to-student disciplinary issues unless directed by administration for security purposes.

Administrative Checklist for Implementing the Policy

1. Update Master Media List Monthly (Office Support Personnel)
2. Perform Vendor Privacy Audit Annually (IT/Data Privacy Officer)
3. Regularly Provide Staff Training on AI Tools (Qualified Internal Staff/Tech Coaches/Trainers)
4. Purge Old Recordings at the End of the School Year (All Staff)

A sample policy to consider.

Community Relations

Public Complaints

General Complaint Procedure

The _____ Board of Education understands that, on occasion, a member of the public will wish to lodge a complaint. Such complaints shall be addressed and resolved as close to their origin of concern as possible.

While members of the community have a right to petition the Board of Education for redress of a grievance, complaints will be referred through the appropriate administrative channels for resolution. Exceptions will be made when the complaint directly concerns Board actions or operations.

The proper channel for complaints related to discipline, instruction, or instructional materials is the teacher. If the complaint is not resolved at that level, it can proceed to the department supervisor, the Principal, the Superintendent, and finally to the full Board.

- (cf. 1220 – Citizens’ Advisory Committees)
- (cf. 1312.3 – Library Material Review and Consideration)
- (cf. 5145.2 - Freedom of Speech/Expression)
- (cf. 6144 - Controversial Issues)
- (cf. 6161 - Equipment, Books, Materials: Provision/Selection)

Legal Reference: *Keyishian v. Board of Regents* 385 U.S. 589, 603 (1967)
 President's Council, District 25 v. Community School Board No. 25 457 F.2d
 289 (1972), cert. denied 409 U.S. 998 (1976)
 Minarcini v. Strongsville City School District, 541 F. 2d 577 (6th Cir. 1976).
 Board of Education, Island Trees Union Free School District No. 26 v. Pico,
 457 U.S. 853 (1982).
 Academic Freedom Policy (adopted by Connecticut State Board of Education,
 9/9/81).
 Connecticut General Statutes
 10-238 Petition for hearing by board of education.

Policy adopted:

rev. 1/24
rev 3/24
rev 6/25

(Name of District)

Public Complaint Form

*This form is designed to align with **CABE Model Policy 1312**, ensuring that concerns are addressed systematically through the appropriate administrative channels.*

Instructions: Please complete this form to initiate a formal review of your concern. Per Board Policy, complaints should be resolved as close to the point of origin as possible. Before filling out this form, please ensure you have attempted to resolve the matter with the staff member most directly involved (e.g., the teacher for matters of instruction or discipline).

Section 1: Contact Information

- Full Name: _____
- Address: _____
- Phone Number: _____ Email: _____
- Date of Submission: _____

Section 2: Nature of Complaint

Please indicate the primary area of concern:

- Instruction / Curriculum
- Discipline / Student Behavior
- Instructional Materials
- Board Operations / Policy
- Other: _____

Section 3: Details of the Concern

Description: Please provide a concise statement of the facts. Include dates, specific incidents, and names of individuals involved where applicable.

Section 4: Resolution History

To adhere to the "Proper Channels" requirement of Policy 1312, please indicate who you have already spoken with regarding this matter:

1. **Teacher / Staff Member:** Yes No Date: _____
2. **Department Supervisor:** Yes No Date: _____
3. **Building Principal:** Yes No Date: _____

What was the outcome of these previous discussions?

Section 5: Requested Remedy

What specific action or resolution are you seeking?

Administrative Routing (For Office Use Only)

Current Level of Review:

- Level 1: Teacher/Staff Member
- Level 2: Department Supervisor/Principal
- Level 3: Superintendent
- Level 4: Board of Education (Final Appeal)

Date Received: _____ **Received By:** _____

Important Note on Procedure

Except for complaints directly concerning Board actions, all grievances must follow the chain of command:

Teacher  **Supervisor/Principal**  **Superintendent**  **Board of Education**

*This model policy (P3542) aligns with 2024–2026 legislative shifts in Connecticut and Federal law. Key areas of revision include **unpaid meal debt protections (Public Act 21-46 and 23-101)**, updated **USDA nutrition standards**, and expanded **non-discrimination categories**.*

Summary of Significant Changes Made:

- ***Stigmatization Ban:*** Explicitly added language from PA 23-101 prohibiting the "shaming" of students with lunch debt.
- ***Civil Rights:*** Expanded the non-discrimination clause to match current USDA and State requirements regarding gender identity and expression.
- ***Nutrition Standards:*** Updated references to include the most recent USDA Final Rules, which impact sodium and sugar limits in school meals through 2026.
- ***Administrative Flow:*** Streamlined the "Aims" section to prioritize student access over administrative convenience.

Below is a model policy with the necessary legal updates.

Business/Non-Instructional Operations

Food Service

School Lunch Service

Statement of Policy

The Board of Education (Board) recognizes that students require adequate, nourishing food and beverages to grow, learn, and maintain good health. It is the intent of the Board that District schools make a proactive effort to encourage students to make nutritious food choices. The Board directs that students shall be provided with adequate space and a lunch period of not less than 20 minutes for full-day students to eat meals.

The District shall offer nutritious meals to all students without regard to race, color, age, creed, religion, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, ancestry, national origin, marital status, pregnancy, disability, or any other basis prohibited by Connecticut or Federal law. The District shall ensure full accessibility to the school lunch program among children and families with limited English proficiency (LEP) by providing applications for free/reduced meals in the household's primary language. The District shall make substitutions for students with disabilities who have a signed medical statement from a state-licensed healthcare professional, in accordance with 7 CFR Part 15b.

This service shall be under the supervision of the *Food Service Director*, who shall be responsible to the *Business Manager*. The Food Service Director shall be hired in accordance with specific job specifications and be approved by the Board of Education.

Per this policy, the Superintendent shall develop and oversee the implementation of a **FOOD SERVICE PROCUREMENT PLAN & PROCEDURES**. This plan and procedures shall be included in the policy's administrative regulations.

Program Participation

The District shall participate in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), the School Breakfast Program (SBP), and the Special Milk Program (SMP). These programs will operate in accordance with the **Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act**, the **USDA's 2024 Final Rule on Child Nutrition Programs**, and applicable state laws. The District's NSLP, SBP, and SMP will operate in accordance with all applicable state laws and regulations to meet dietary specifications.

Business/Non-Instructional Operations

Food Service

School Lunch Service (continued)

Student Privacy and Unpaid Meal Debt

In accordance with C.G.S. 10-215 and Public Act 23-101, as applies to all students:

- 1) The District shall ensure that any student with a negative balance is treated with the same dignity as a student with a positive balance. Under no circumstances shall a student be required to perform chores to pay for a meal, nor shall they be denied participation in any school-sponsored activity or graduation solely due to unpaid meal debt. No student shall be publicly identified, shamed, or stigmatized for having unpaid meal charges (e.g., via wristbands, hand stamps, or alternative meals).
- 2) The District shall strictly maintain the confidentiality of students receiving free or reduced-price meals.
- 3) Communications regarding unpaid meal debt shall be directed to the parent or guardian, not the student.
 - a) Parents/Guardians shall be notified once the debt reaches the amount of (add the threshold number).
 - b) When the threshold has been reached, parents/guardians shall be notified by (identify the method of communication).
- 4) The District shall provide a federally reimbursable meal to any student who requests one, regardless of their ability to pay or status of debt, to prevent “empty tray” incidents.
- 5) Debt collection efforts shall not involve any collection agencies that use “litigious or aggressive” tactics against families.

Aims & Facilities

Policies governing the operation of the school lunch program shall be as follows:

1. All food sold or served shall meet or exceed the updated USDA standards regarding sodium reduction, whole grains, and limited added sugars.
2. The District shall provide lunches free or at reduced rates to children who qualify under federal income guidelines. The application process shall be proactive and accessible.
3. Cafeteria facilities shall be well-ventilated, attractive, and equipped with modern storage to ensure food safety and minimize waste.

Facilities

Cafeteria facilities, wherever possible, shall include the following:

1. Attractive, well-ventilated dining rooms.
2. A carefully planned, well-equipped kitchen adjacent to each dining area.
3. Adequate storage space so that food and supplies may be purchased in sufficient quantity to take advantage of favorable market conditions.
4. Maintenance, inspection, and repair of equipment so that maximum use is obtained and the danger of accidents to personnel is minimized.

Business/Non-Instructional Operations

Food Service

School Lunch Service (continued)

Maintenance of Sanitary Conditions and Financing

Sanitary conditions in all phases of food preparation and serving shall be rigidly maintained at all times. The District shall maintain proper sanitation and health standards in food storage, preparation, and service, in accordance with all applicable state and federal laws, regulations, and requirements.

1. The food service fund shall be a non-profit entity used solely for the improvement or maintenance of the food service program, and financed accordingly:
 - a. Prices of school lunches shall be determined by the Superintendent in accordance with all prevailing costs of food, supplies, supervision costs, and wages of hourly employees.
 - b. Costs of food, supplies, salaries and wages of all employees, and other expenses directly incurred in the school lunch program shall be paid out of a separate fund, which shall be maintained under the control of the *Business Manager* or his/her designee and into which all receipts from sales and federal cash grants shall be paid. This fund shall be subject to annual audit by the District/Town auditor. In compliance with federal law, the District's NSLP (and SBP) shall be non-profit.
 - c. Office facilities, equipment, heat, light, and power shall be paid out of funds appropriated by the Board of Education.
 - d. Although the Board believes that the District's nutrition and food services operation should be financially self-supporting, it recognizes, however, that the nutrition program is an essential educational and support activity. Therefore, budget neutrality or profit generation must not take precedence over students' nutritional needs.
2. The *Food Service Director* shall ensure all "Certified Food Protection Managers (CFPM)" meet Connecticut Department of Public Health requirements and provide training for all food handlers in personal hygiene and sanitation techniques.
3. Cafeteria workers shall meet all state-mandated health and immunization requirements for food handlers.

School Food Safety Inspections/School Food Safety Program

1. The District shall comply with state and federal requirements for conducting cafeteria health and safety inspections and ensuring employee participation in appropriate inspection services and training programs.

Business/Non-Instructional Operations

Food Service

School Lunch Service

School Food Safety Inspections/School Food Safety Program (continued)

2. The District shall obtain two (2) safety inspections per year in accordance with all local, state, and federal laws and regulations and shall post the most recent inspection report and release a copy of the report to members of the public upon request.
3. The District shall comply with federal regulations in developing a food safety program that enables District schools to take systematic action to prevent or minimize the risk of foodborne illness among students.

Farm to School Program & Local Purchasing

The Board shall give preference to "Connecticut-grown" farm products in accordance with **C.G.S. 22-38d**.

1. Any bid submitted by a service manager company in response for proposal (RFP) or bid solicitation by the Board that is posted to the State Portal and that relates to the Board's school nutrition program shall include information detailing the consistency of such bid with the State's Farm to School Program and the ways in which such bid facilitates the purchase of products from local farmers by the Board. All other factors being equal, the Board shall give preference to the RFP or bid that promotes the purchase of local farm products.
2. Any bidder for food service management must detail how their bid facilitates the purchase of local products.
3. Proof of origin (name and address of the Connecticut farm) is required for any product sold as "Connecticut-grown."

Eligibility & Free Meal Access/Universal Access

The Board complies with all requirements related to its responsibilities to provide free breakfast and lunch to all eligible students and shall use the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) to the maximum extent possible under law.

Nutritional Standards (USDA Final Rule 2024-2026)

As a participant in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) or School Breakfast Program (SBP), the Board of Education shall comply with all federal requirements of the **USDA Final Rule 2024-2026** (*Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent With the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans*) and its implementation phases.

1. The District is committed to ensuring limiting added sugars to less than 10% of calories across the week. (effective July 1, 2027)
2. The District shall implement a phased reduction of sodium levels targeting the most current USDA Sodium Targets as they are phased in through 2027, targeting "Sodium Target 1 (current baseline)" and "Target 1A (a further 10% reduction for lunch)" as applicable.

Business/Non-Instructional Operations

Food Service

School Lunch Service (continued)

Procurement & "Buy American" Updates (Continue to Monitor for Updates)

The Board directs the Superintendent or his/her designee to monitor and follow all procurement procedures, including, but not limited to:

1. **Non-Domestic Cap** limiting non-domestic food purchases to a percentage cap of total commercial food costs.
2. **Local Incentive (CT), allowing access to the CT Local Food for Schools Incentive Program, which** provides matching state funds for purchasing locally grown or raised products. Administrative regulations should prioritize CT-grown produce to trigger these reimbursements.
3. **Protein Innovation** complying with Federal rules, which now allow nuts and seeds to be credited for the full meat/meat alternate component (removing the previous 50% limit), making vegetarian and plant-based menu planning simpler.

The District shall apply the 5% Threshold, which limits non-domestic food purchases to 5% of total commercial food costs.

The Food Service Director shall provide an annual "Local Procurement Report" to the Board of Education to track the efficacy of C.G.S. 22-38d compliance.

Financial & Administrative Management

The Board directs the Superintendent or his/her designee to monitor and follow all financial and administrative management procedures, including, but not limited to:

1. **Paid Lunch Equity (PLE)**, where districts with a positive or zero balance in their nonprofit school food service account as of June 30, 2024, are exempt from federal PLE pricing requirements.
2. **Net Cash Resources**, per federal law, requires the school food service fund not to exceed a three-month average of operating expenditures. If the net cash resources exceed such a limit, the Food Service Director shall be required to submit to the Superintendent a "Plan for Improvement" (e.g., equipment upgrades or improvements in food quality). The Superintendent shall make this plan available to the Board of Education.
3. **Indirect Costs**, charged by the Board of Education to the Food Service Fund shall be documented and consistent with the state-approved indirect cost rate.
4. **Unpaid Debt**, which strictly prohibits "lunch shaming" and specifies that no child can be publicly identified, shamed, or denied a meal due to unpaid charges.

Business/Non-Instructional Operations

Food Service

School Lunch Service

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes

10-215: Lunches, breakfasts, and other feeding programs (As amended by PA 21-46 and PA 23-101 regarding meal debt).

10-215a Nonpublic school and nonprofit agency participation in feeding programs.

10-215b Duties of State Board of Education re feeding programs.

10-215d Regulations re nutrition standards for school breakfasts and lunches. (as amended by PA 16-37)

10-216 Payment of expenses.

State Board of Education Regulations

10-215b-1 School lunch and nutrition programs.

10-215b-11 Requirement for meals.

10-215b-12 Reimbursement payments. (including free and reduced price meals)

10-215d Regulations re nutrition standards for school breakfasts and lunches. (as amended by PA 16-37)

10-221o Lunch periods. Recess. Board to adopt policies addressing limitation of physical exercise

22-38d Farm to school program. (as amended by PA 16-37 and PA 18-73)

Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004, 42 U.S.C. Section 1751.

School Lunch and Breakfast Programs 42 U.S.C. Section 1751 et seq.

National Food Service Programs, Title 7 Code of Federal Regulations, 7 CFR Part 210, Part 220, Part 215, Part 245.

42 U.S.C. Sec. 1758(h)/7 CFR Sect 210.13, 220.7 (School Food Safety Inspections).

Federal Register (74 Fed. Reg. 66213) amending federal regulations (7CFR Part 210 and 220).

P.L. 111-296 Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 (HHFKA), 42 U.S.C. 1751

Business/Non-Instructional Operations

Food Service

School Lunch Service

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes (continued)

7 CFR Parts 210 & 220 – Nutrition Standards in the National School Lunch & School Breakfast Programs.

Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Handicap in Programs or Activities Receiving Federal Assistance, 7 C.F.R. Part 15b (2001)

Federal Law:

7 CFR Parts 210 and 220, the “Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans” final rule. (89 FR 31962) and 225, and 226: (Updated USDA Nutrition Standards for 2024-2025).

42 U.S.C. 1751 et seq.: Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act.

USDA Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) Policy Memo (May 2022): Clarifying prohibitions against discrimination based on gender identity and sexual orientation.

Policy adopted:

rev 6/18

rev 12/21

rev 4/26

*This new CABE model Food Service Procurement Plan aims to satisfy a USDA Administrative Review or a CT State Department of Education (CSDE) audit by providing **specific operational procedures**, including "The Five Pillars": **Methods, Competition, Buy American, MWBE Outreach, and Protests.***

Business/Non-Instructional Operations

Food Service

School Lunch Service

Responsibilities and Duties

The lunch program shall be under the direction of the Food Services Director, who will report to the Business Manager/Director of Finance/Chief Finance-Operations Officer. The Food Services Director shall cooperate with building principals in matters essential to the proper functioning of the lunch program and the cafeterias.

Students

Students shall be permitted to bring their own lunches and to purchase beverages and incidental food items. The responsibility for managing student use of the cafeteria shall rest with the building principal.

Nutrition Guidelines and Food Operation

I. Meal Charge & Debt Management Procedures

To ensure compliance with PA 23-101, the following steps shall be taken to manage unpaid meal charges while maintaining student dignity:

1. Notification Thresholds:

- **Level 1 (\$10.00 debt):** An automated email or text message shall be sent to the parent/guardian indicating the negative balance.
- **Level 2 (\$25.00 debt):** The Food Service Director or designee shall call the parent/guardian to discuss the balance and offer assistance with the Free/Reduced Meal Application.
- **Level 3 (\$50.00 debt):** A formal letter shall be mailed to the home. The Building Principal or Social Worker may be notified to determine if the family is experiencing a hardship requiring additional district support.

2. Prohibited Actions: Staff are strictly prohibited from:

- Taking a meal away from a student once it has been served.
- Discussing debt in the presence of other students.
- Using stamps, stickers, or "alternative meals" (e.g., a cold cheese sandwich) to identify debt.

3. Communication: All debt-related communication shall be with the adult household member. If a student asks about their balance, staff shall provide the information discreetly but shall not initiate the conversation.

Business/Non-Instructional Operations

Food Service

School Lunch Service (continued)

II. Financial Oversight & "Net Cash Resources"

The Business Manager shall monitor the **Non-Profit School Food Service Account (NSFSA)** to ensure it remains a self-sustaining but non-profit entity.

- At the close of each fiscal quarter, the Business Manager shall calculate the "Three-Month Operating Average."
- If the fund balance exceeds this average, the Food Service Director shall submit a written "Plan for Improvement" to the Superintendent within 30 days. This plan may include, but not be limited to:
 - Purchasing high-efficiency kitchen equipment (steamers, refrigeration).
 - Increasing the frequency of "Connecticut-Grown" fresh produce.
 - Funding professional development for cafeteria staff.
- Any indirect costs charged to the food service fund must not exceed the **Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE)** approved rate for the current fiscal year.

III. Nutritional Standards & Phase-In (2024–2027)

The Food Service Director shall maintain menus that meet the phased-in **USDA Final Rule** requirements:

Component	Operational Standard
Added Sugars	Limit to < 10% of weekly calories (Targeting full implementation by 2027).
Sodium	Adherence to USDA Target 1 (current) and 1A (effective 2027).
Milk	Only fat-free or 1% milk served; flavored milk must meet sugar limits.
Local Products	A minimum of 10% of total produce spend should target "CT-Grown" to trigger state incentives.

IV. Procurement & the "5% Non-Domestic Cap"

The District shall prioritize the **"Buy American"** provision as updated in 2024.

1. The Food Service Director shall maintain a "Non-Domestic Food Purchase Log" for any items not grown or processed in the U.S.
2. The total value of these non-domestic items (e.g., bananas, certain spices, or out-of-season fruit) shall not exceed **5%** of the total commercial food cost.
3. All RFPs for food service management shall award "bonus points" (not to exceed 10% of the total score) to vendors with a proven track record of sourcing from Connecticut farms.

Business/Non-Instructional Operations

Food Service

School Lunch Service (continued)

V. Civil Rights & Accessibility

- The "Parent Letter" and "Free/Reduced Price Meal Application" shall be made available on the district website in English, Spanish, and [Insert Top 3 Local Languages].
- The Food Service Director shall maintain a confidential file of all students requiring dietary substitutions. No substitution shall be made without a **Medical Statement** signed by a state-licensed healthcare professional.
- The USDA "And Justice for All" poster must be displayed in a prominent location in every cafeteria.

VI. Reporting & Audit

The Food Service Director shall provide the Board of Education with an **Annual Nutrition & Finance Report** each September. This report shall include:

1. Percentage of students participating in NSLP/SBP.
2. Total "CT-Grown" expenditure.
3. Total unpaid meal debt and a summary of collection efforts.
4. Confirmation of two (2) successful health inspections per site.

VII. Food Services Procurement Plan and Procedures

1. Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this plan is to provide a framework for ensuring that all procurement for the _____ Public Schools Child Nutrition Programs is conducted in accordance with 2 CFR Part 200 and 7 CFR Parts 210, 220, and 250. This document serves as the district's official written procurement procedures.

2. General Procurement Standards

- **Full and Open Competition:** All procurement transactions will be conducted in a manner that maximizes full and open competition. No restrictive requirements (such as unreasonable bonding or unnecessary experience) shall be used to limit bidding.
- **Responsibility:** The Director of Food Services is responsible for the oversight of all procurement activities and ensures that contractors perform in accordance with the terms of their contracts.
- **Code of Conduct:** No employee, officer, or agent of the District shall participate in the selection, award, or administration of a contract if a real or apparent conflict of interest exists. Officers/employees are prohibited from soliciting or accepting gratuities or favors from contractors.

Business/Non-Instructional Operations

Food Service

School Lunch Service

VII. Food Services Procurement Plan and Procedures (continued)

3. Procurement Methods and Thresholds

The district will use the following methods based on the aggregate cost of the goods/services.

A. Micro-Purchases (Up to \$15,000)

- **Procedure:** Purchases may be awarded without soliciting competitive quotes if the price is considered reasonable.
- **Requirement:** To the extent practicable, the district will distribute micro-purchases equitably among qualified suppliers.
- **Documentation:** Purchase orders and invoices will be maintained to show price reasonableness and equitable distribution.

B. Small Purchase Procedures (\$15,001 to \$350,000)

- **Procedure:** Informal "Small Purchase" procedures will be used.
- **Requirement:** The Director of Food Services **shall** obtain a minimum of **three (3) written or verbal price/rate quotations** from qualified sources.
- **Documentation:** A **Quote Tabulation Sheet** will be maintained for every purchase, documenting the vendor name, date, price quoted, and the name of the person providing the quote.

C. Formal Procurement (Above \$350,000)

- **Procedure:** Formal advertising via **Invitation for Bids (IFB)** or **Request for Proposals (RFP)**.
- **Requirement:** *Solicitations must be publicly advertised for at least 14 days.
- **Price as the Primary Factor:** In all RFP evaluations, **price must be the primary factor** and must be assigned the highest possible weight in the scoring matrix.
- **Award:** IFBs will be awarded to the lowest responsive and responsible bidder. RFPs will be awarded to the most advantageous proposal, price being the primary factor.

D. Noncompetitive Proposals (Sole Source)

- **Procedure:** Used only when competition is inadequate, in a public emergency, or with express written authorization from the CSDE.
- **Documentation:** A written justification for the sole source must be maintained and approved by the Business Manager.

Business/Non-Instructional Operations

Food Service

School Lunch Service

VII. Food Services Procurement Plan and Procedures (continued)

4. Buy American Provision

The District will purchase, to the maximum extent practicable, domestic agricultural commodities or products (over 51% domestic content).

- **Monitoring:** The Director of Food Services will review product labels upon delivery.
- **Exceptions:** Limited to instances where a product is not produced in the U.S. in sufficient quantities or where costs are significantly higher.
- **Documentation:** An **Exception Log** will be maintained for all non-domestic items (e.g., bananas, pineapples) explaining the reason for the exception.

5. Affirmative Steps for Minority & Women's Businesses (MWBE)

In accordance with **2 CFR 200.321**, the District will take all necessary affirmative steps to assure that minority businesses, women's business enterprises, and labor surplus area firms are used when possible, including:

1. Placing qualified MWBE firms on solicitation lists.
2. Assuring that MWBE firms are solicited whenever they are potential sources.
3. Dividing total requirements, when economically feasible, into smaller tasks or quantities to permit maximum participation.
4. Establishing delivery schedules that encourage participation by MWBE firms.

6. Bid Protest Procedures

Any party with a direct financial interest who is aggrieved in connection with the solicitation or award of a contract may file a protest.

1. **Filing:** Protests must be filed in writing to the District Business Manager within five (5) business days of the notice of intent to award.
2. **Review:** The Business Manager will review the protest and issue a written decision within ten (10) business days.
3. **Appraisal:** The decision of the Business Manager is final. Documentation of the protest and its resolution will be shared with the CSDE upon request.

7. Contract Oversight & Records

- **Retention:** All procurement records (solicitations, quotes, scoring sheets, contracts) must be retained for **three (3) years plus the current year**.
- **Prohibited Contracts:** The District strictly prohibits the use of "cost-plus-a-percentage-of-cost" or "cost-plus-a-percentage-of-income" contracts.
- **Cooperative Purchasing:** If using a GPO or State Contract (DAS), the District will verify that the original solicitation included all federal clauses and was conducted via full and open competition.

Business/Non-Instructional Operations

Food Service

School Lunch Service (continued)

General Conditions

I. Food Pricing

Food prices set by the District are communicated to students and parents. District pricing strategies will encourage students to purchase full meals and nutritious items.

II. Communication

Procedures shall be in place to provide families, upon request, with information about the ingredients and nutritional value of the foods served.

III. Modified Meals

The District shall provide substitute foods to students with special dietary requirements upon written parental permission and a medical statement by a certified health professional that identifies the student's special dietary needs. The medical statement shall state the medical condition or special dietary need that restricts the student's diet and provide a list of food(s) that may be substituted in place of the lunch or breakfast menu being served.

IV. Cafeteria Environment

Students are provided with adequate time (a minimum of 20 minutes) and space to eat meals in a pleasant and safe environment. School dining areas will be reviewed to ensure:

- A. Tables and chairs are the appropriate size for students.
- B. Seating is not overcrowded.
- C. Students have a relaxed environment.
- D. Noise is kept from becoming excessive.
- E. Rules for safe behavior are consistently enforced.
- F. Tables and floors are cleaned between meal periods.
- G. The physical structure of the eating area is in good condition.
- H. Appropriate supervision is provided.

V. Resources

The Connecticut State Department of Education's (CSDE) Meal Patterns Web Page shall be consulted regarding meal patterns for NSLP and SBP consistent with the nutrition standards to fulfill the requirements of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Act of 2010 and all subsequent state and federal updates.

Business/Non-Instructional Operations

Food Service

School Lunch Service

General Conditions (continued)

VI. Other Foods Offered or Sold

The District recognizes that federal government standards requiring NSLP and SBP meals to be consistent with the applicable Dietary Guidelines for Americans do not apply to competitive foods sold or served outside the food service areas as defined in this regulation. Foods offered in classrooms or during school-sponsored activities, and food and beverages sold as part of approved school fund-raising events, shall meet minimum requirements unless otherwise exempt by law.

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes

10-215: Lunches, breakfasts, and other feeding programs (As amended by PA 21-46 and PA 23-101 regarding meal debt).

10-215a Nonpublic school and nonprofit agency participation in feeding programs.

10-215b Duties of State Board of Education re feeding programs.

10-215d Regulations re nutrition standards for school breakfasts and lunches. (as amended by PA 16-37)

10-216 Payment of expenses.

State Board of Education Regulations

10-215b-1 School lunch and nutrition programs.

10-215b-11 Requirement for meals.

10-215b-12 Reimbursement payments. (including free and reduced price meals)

10-215d Regulations re nutrition standards for school breakfasts and lunches. (as amended by PA 16-37)

10-221o Lunch periods. Recess. Board to adopt policies addressing limitation of physical exercise

22-38d Farm to school program. (as amended by PA 16-37 and PA 18-73)

Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004, 42 U.S.C. Section 1751.

School Lunch and Breakfast Programs 42 U.S.C. Section 1751 et seq.

National Food Service Programs, Title 7 Code of Federal Regulations, 7 CFR Part 210, Part 220, Part 215, Part 245.

Business/Non-Instructional Operations

Food Service

School Lunch Service

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes (continued)

42 U.S.C. Sec. 1758(h)/7 CFR Sect 210.13, 220.7 (School Food Safety Inspections).

Federal Register (74 Fed. Reg. 66213) amending federal regulations (7CFR Part 210 and 220).

P.L. 111-296 Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 (HHFKA), 42 U.S.C. 1751

7 CFR Parts 210 & 220 – Nutrition Standards in the National School Lunch & School Breakfast Programs.

Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Handicap in Programs or Activities Receiving Federal Assistance, 7 C.F.R. Part 15b (2001)

Federal Law:

7 CFR Parts 210 and 220, the “Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans” final rule. (89 FR 31962) and 225, and 226: (Updated USDA Nutrition Standards for 2024-2025).

42 U.S.C. 1751 et seq.: Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act.

USDA Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) Policy Memo (May 2022): Clarifying prohibitions against discrimination based on gender identity and sexual orientation.

Regulation approved:

cps 4/26

A mandated policy.

Students

Ages of Attendance/Admissions/Placement

In accordance with Connecticut General Statute 10-186, the Board of Education shall provide education for all persons, residing in the District, five years of age and over, who reach age five on or before the first day of September of any school year, and under twenty-one (age twenty-two for special education students) who is not a graduate of a high school or vocational school, except as provided in Connecticut General Statutes 10-233c and 10-233d.

A child under five may be admitted to kindergarten if the parent or guardian makes a written request to the school principal, and the principal and an appropriate staff person conduct an assessment that determines the child is developmentally ready for kindergarten. The chosen assessment shall be administered universally in all district schools. The assessment tool shall produce results that are valid and reliable and shall holistically assess a number of areas, including cognitive, social-emotional, physical development, and health and shall be culturally and linguistically appropriate. The assessment shall also include information from the child's parent or guardian and preschool teacher or early care provider.

Parent requests for a waiver must be sent to the school principal by *(add date and other relevant information regarding logistics related to waiver requests, such as email address and parent or guardian contact information)*. Assessments will be administered the week of *(add date, times, and locations)*.

Boards of Education that choose to allow waivers for the 2026-2027 school year are required to have a policy allowing such waivers. (Policy 5112.01)

Transitional Waiver (2026-2027)

The District recognizes that the shift in the state-mandated cutoff date (from January 1 to September 1) may place a hardship on families. Therefore, for the 2026-2027 school year, the District shall provide a waiver process for children who turn five between September 2, 2026, and December 31, 2026.

Sunset of "Transitional" Waiver

- **Effective Dates:** This policy applies to the 2026-2027 enrollment cycle.
- **Expiration:** The "transitional" waiver option described herein shall expire on (Insert Date, e.g., June 30, 2027). Future enrollment cycles shall be governed by the standing Board Policy on kindergarten admissions, which may be more restrictive as the state's transition period concludes.

For children requiring special education services with an Individualized Education Program (IEP), the assessment process shall be aligned with the child's IEP accommodations or a Section 504 accommodation plan and individualized to align with their plan.

Students

Ages of Attendance/Admissions/Placement (continued)

A child determined to be developmentally ready for kindergarten may be admitted without a vote of the board of education at a duly called meeting.

Additionally, according to Connecticut General Statute 10-76d (b2), special education will be provided for children who have attained the age of three and who have been identified as being in need of special education, and whose educational potential will be irreparably diminished without special education. If a special education student is being considered for an exception, the Planning and Placement Team (PPT) will make a recommendation to the administrator in charge of special education.

In order to determine a child's eligibility for ELL programs, parents/guardians of all new students enrolling for the first time and all re-enrolling students who have not previously attended a Connecticut public school must complete a Home Language Survey (HLS) at the time of enrollment. A student may also take a screening exam. The student must be enrolled first before the administration of the assessment. Neither the survey nor the exam are conditions of enrollment.

Note: *When a student is enrolling in a new school district or new state charter school, written notification of such enrollment shall be provided to the previous school district or charter school not later than two business days after the student enrolls.*

Children who apply for initial admission to the District's schools by transfer from nonpublic schools or from schools outside the District will be placed at the grade they would have reached elsewhere pending observation and evaluation by classroom teachers, guidance personnel, and the school Principal. After such observations and evaluations have been completed, the Principal will determine the final grade placement of the children.

Parents and those who have the control of children five years of age and under eighteen years of age, are obligated by Connecticut law to require their children to attend public day school or its equivalent in the District in which such child resides, unless such child is a high school graduate or the parent or person having control of such child is able to show that the child is elsewhere receiving equivalent instruction in the studies taught in the public schools. Students under age eighteen are subject to mandatory attendance laws unless they are at least seventeen and their parent/guardian, or other person having control of the child, consents to such child's removal from school. The parent or person shall exercise this option by personally appearing at the school district office to sign a withdrawal form.

Such withdrawal form shall include an attestation from a guidance counselor, school counselor or school administrator of the school that this District has provided the parent or person with information on the educational opportunities options available in the school system and in the community, and the parent or guardian that the child will be enrolled in an adult education program upon the child's withdrawal from school.

Students

Ages of Attendance/Admissions/Placement (continued)

Enrollment

The enrollment process shall be focused on obtaining only the information deemed necessary to establish residency and age. The District shall not request other information as a condition of enrollment or state in its policies or on its websites or otherwise, that other information is required to enroll children. The District shall immediately enroll a homeless child and allow such student to attend school even if the student is unable to produce records normally required for enrollment. Additional data collection may occur, but it must be completed in such a manner that does not interfere with the enrollment of a child in school.

Each child entering the District schools for the first time must present a birth certificate or offer legal evidence of birth data, as well as proof of a recent physical examination and required immunizations. Other documents that may be accepted as proof of a child's age include, but are not limited to, a photocopy of a birth certificate, earlier school records, state-issued identification document, driver's license or passport, parent's affidavit or unsworn statement as to a child's age, physician's certificate verifying a child's age, or immunization records.

If the parents or guardians of any children are unable to pay for such immunizations and/or physicals, the expense of such immunizations and/or physicals shall on the recommendation of the Board, be paid by the Town. Proof of domicile may also be requested by the Building Principal.

The parent or person having control of a child five years of age shall have the option of not sending the child to school until the child is six years of age by December 31st of any school year. The parent or person having control of a child six years of age shall have the option of not sending the child to school until the child is seven years of age by December 31st of any school year.

Any child entering or returning to the District from placement in a juvenile detention school, the Connecticut Juvenile Training School, or any other residential placement, shall have the educational records of such child provided to the Superintendent of Schools by the Department of Children and Families (DCF) and the Judicial Department. Such information will be shared with the Principal of the school to which the student is assigned. The Principal can disclose them to the staff who teach or care for the child.

The District will immediately enroll any student who transfers from Unified District No. 1 or Unified District No 2. A student transferring from the Unified School Districts who had previously attended school in the local District shall be enrolled in the school such student previously attended, provided such school has the appropriate grade level for the student.

Residency

The District, when determining residency, shall not request documentation of citizenship or immigration status of a child or the child's parents/guardians. The Board believes such documentation is not relevant to establishing residency.

Students

Ages of Attendance/Admissions/Placement

Residency (continued)

In the establishment of residency, the Board will accept such documentation as, but not limited to, a lease agreement, mortgage document, property tax record, rent receipt, home owners insurance, current utility bill, current proof of government benefits, CT driver's license, automobile registration or insurance. An Affidavit of Residence, properly executed, shall also be acceptable.

For purposes of establishing the residency of a child of a member of the armed forces, as defined in C.G.S. 27-103, and who is seeking enrollment in a district school, in which such child is not yet a resident, the Board shall accept the military orders directing such member to Connecticut or any other documents from the armed forces indicating the transfer of such member to Connecticut as proof of residency in the District.

The above requirements are not to serve as barriers to immediate enrollment of students, designated as homeless or foster children as required by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and the McKinney-Vento Act as amended by the ESSA. The District shall work with the local child welfare agency, the school last attended, or other relevant agencies to obtain necessary enrollment documentation. The District shall immediately enroll a homeless student and allow such student to attend school even if the student is unable to produce records normally required for enrollment.

The parent/guardian of any child who is denied admission to the District's schools, or an unaccompanied minor, a student eighteen years of age or older, a homeless child or youth or an unaccompanied youth who is denied schooling on the basis of residency, or an agent or officer charged with the enforcement of the laws concerning attendance at school may request, in writing, a hearing by the Board of Education.

The parent or person shall exercise such option by personally appearing at the school district office and signing an option form. The District shall provide the parent or person with information on the educational opportunities available in the school system.

A child who has attained the age of seventeen and who has voluntarily terminated enrollment with parental consent in the District's schools and subsequently seeks readmission may be denied readmission for up to ninety school days from the date of such termination unless such child seeks readmission to the District not later than ten (10) school days after such termination in which case the Board shall provide school accommodations to such child not later than three school days after such child seeks readmission.

Students

Ages of Attendance/Admissions/Placement (continued)

In Summary:

- ❖ A parent with a child 5 and **under 18** is obligated to have that child attend school.
 - Unless the child graduated High School
 - Unless the parent demonstrates the child is receiving equivalent instruction elsewhere.
- ❖ Students **under 18** are subject to mandatory attendance laws
 - Unless they are at least 17 and the parent consents to the child's removal from school having demonstrated the child is receiving equivalent instruction elsewhere.
- ❖ The parent must personally appear at the school district office, and sign a withdrawal form. **(18 year old)**
 - The form must include an attestation from a guidance counselor, school counselor, or school administrator
 - The attestation must indicate that the parent or student received information regarding educational programs or options available in the school or community.
- ❖ The parent must personally appear at the school district office, and sign a withdrawal form. **(17 year old)**
 - The form must include an attestation from a guidance counselor, school counselor, or school administrator
 - The attestation must indicate that the parent or student received information regarding educational programs or options available in the school or community.
 - The parent or guardian must attest that the 17 year old withdrawing student has enrolled in an adult education program
- ❖ The parent with a five year old has the option of not sending a child until 6.
- ❖ The parent with a six year old has the option of not sending a child until 7.

A child who has attained the age of nineteen or older may be placed in an alternative school program or other suitable educational program if he/she cannot acquire a sufficient number of credits for graduation by age twenty-one.

Students

Ages of Attendance/Admissions/Placement (continued)

(cf. 5118.1 - Homeless Students)
(cf. 5118.3 - Children in Foster Care)
(cf. 6146 - Graduation Requirements)

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes
4-176e to 4-180a Agency hearings.
4-181a Contested cases. Reconsideration. Modifications.
10-15 Towns to maintain schools.
10-15c Discrimination in public schools prohibited. School attendance by five-year-olds.
10-76a - 10-76g re special education.
10-184 Duties of parents (re mandatory schooling for children ages five to sixteen, inclusive) as amended by PA-98-243, PA 00-157, PA 09-6 (September Special Session) and PA 18-15
10-186 Duties of local and regional boards of education re school attendance. Hearings. (as amended by P.A. 19-179)
P.A. 19-179 An Act Concerning Homeless Students; Access to education Appeals to State Board. Establishment of hearing board.
10-233a - 10-233f Inclusive; re: suspend, expel, removal of pupils.
10-233c Suspension of pupils.
10-233d Expulsion of pupils.
State Board of Education Regulations.
10-76a-1 General definitions (c) (d) (q) (t).
P.A. 19-179 An Act Concerning Homeless Students' Access to Education. "Guidance for Connecticut School Districts: Enrollment Process and Practice," State Department of Education, December 2019.
P.A. 21-86 An Act Concerning the Enrollment of Children of Members of the Armed Forces in Public Schools and the Establishment of a Purple Star School Program.
P.A. 23-208 An Act Making Certain Revisions to the Education Statutes. McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (PL 107-110 Sec. 1032) 42 U.S.C. §11431-11435, as amended by the ESSA, P.L. 114-95.
Federal Register: McKinney-Vento Education for Homeless Children & Youths Program, Vol. 81 No. 52, 3/17/2016.

Policy adopted:

rev 7/23
rev 2/24
rev 5/25
rev 3/26

PUBLIC SCHOOLS
_____, Connecticut

Request for a Waiver

**To Request an Exemption to Public Act 23-208
Establishing an Age 5 Kindergarten Cutoff Date of September 1**

Pursuant to Public Act 23-208 of the Connecticut General Statutes,

I, _____, of _____
Name of Parent or Guardian *Address*

the parent, guardian, or other person charged with the care of the following child,

_____, of _____ who was born
Name of Child *Address*

on _____ request that my child attend kindergarten prior to reaching five
Date of Birth

(5) years of age on September 1st. I understand that my child will be subject to an assessment by the principal and a certified staff member, who will determine whether admitting my child is “developmentally appropriate.”

Acknowledged by:

Signature of Parent or Guardian

Date

Boards of Education that choose to allow waivers for the 2026-2027 school year are required to have a policy allowing such waivers. (Policy 5112.01)

Sunset of “Transitional” Waiver

- **Effective Dates:** This policy applies to the 2026-2027 enrollment cycle.
- **Expiration:** The “transitional” waiver option described herein shall expire on (Insert Date, e.g., June 30, 2027). Future enrollment cycles shall be governed by the standing Board Policy on kindergarten admissions, which may be more restrictive as the state’s transition period concludes.

This model “transition” policy is designed to reflect the requirements of Public Act 23-208, as amended, and the transition for the 2026-2027 school year. It balances the state’s mandatory age cutoff with the district’s discretionary authority to provide a waiver through the required assessment process. Boards of Education that choose to allow waivers for the 2026-2027 school year are required to have a policy allowing such waivers.

Students

Kindergarten Enrollment and Early Entry Waiver (2026-2027)

I. Purpose

In accordance with the Connecticut General Assembly’s **March 2026 Emergency Legislation, §§26-27** and **Public Act 23-208**, this policy establishes the age requirements for enrollment in kindergarten and the specific, time-bound “transitional” waiver process available to families for the 2026-2027 academic school year.

The _____ Board of Education adopts the following procedures for the 2026-2027 school year.

II. Eligibility for “Automatic” Enrollment

To be eligible for kindergarten, a child must have reached the age of five (5) on or before September 1.

Transitional Waiver (2026-2027)

The District recognizes that the shift in the state-mandated cutoff date (from January 1 to September 1) may place a hardship on families. Therefore, for the 2026-2027 school year, the District shall provide a waiver process for children who turn five between September 2, 2026, and December 31, 2026.

Note: A waiver is not a guarantee of enrollment; it is a request for an exception based on a determination of developmental readiness. However, students transferring to the District from other Connecticut districts and have been assessed in accordance with state requirements and subsequently granted a waiver for the 2026-2027 school year, shall be granted a waiver for the same academic year.

Waiver Application Requirements

To apply for a waiver, parents or guardians must complete the following steps:

1. **Written Request:** Submit a formal “Request for Kindergarten Waiver” to the Principal of the child’s assigned school. This request must be submitted no later than (insert District Deadline, e.g., May 1, 2026).
2. **Parental Questionnaire:** Complete a developmental history and social-emotional snapshot of the child to provide context for the school’s assessment.
3. **Mandatory Assessment:** Under state law, once a written request is received, the District shall conduct an assessment of the child. The child will be invited to a school-based screening where a certified staff member (e.g., kindergarten teacher, school psychologist, or early childhood specialist) will evaluate:
 - a. Social and emotional maturity
 - b. Communication and language skills
 - c. Physical and cognitive development

Students

Kindergarten Enrollment and Early Entry Waiver (2026-2027)

Waiver Application Requirements (continued)

Determination

The Principal, in consultation with the assessment team, shall issue a written decision to the family. The decision of the Principal and the certified staff regarding whether early entry is “developmentally appropriate” is final and not subject to further appeal to the Board of Education.

Sunset of “Transitional” Waiver

- **Effective Dates:** This policy applies to the 2026-2027 enrollment cycle.
- **Expiration:** The “transitional” waiver option described herein shall expire on (Insert Date, e.g., June 30, 2027). Future enrollment cycles shall be governed by the standing Board Policy on kindergarten admissions, which may be more restrictive as the state’s transition period concludes.

Legal References: Connecticut General Statutes
10-15c
Public Act 23-208 An Act Making Certain Revisions to the Education Statutes
2026 Emergency Legislation (SB 298), §§ 26 &27 – Kindergarten Waivers

REPORTING OF CHILD ABUSE, NEGLECT AND SEXUAL ASSAULT: AN UPDATE

PAGE 1

(Background Information for Policy Review Committee)

In December 2019, the Department of Children and Families (DCF) put in place new procedures for mandated reporters. DCF Policy 22-1-3 was revised to clarify that school district mandated reporters could now report electronically when they reasonably suspect that a child has been abused, neglected, or placed at risk of imminent harm in a “non-emergent” situation without risk that they will be subject to a failure-to-report finding.

Public Act 18-67, “An Act Concerning Minor Revisions to the Statutes of the Department of Children and Families and Establishing a Pilot Program to Permit Electronic Reporting by Mandated Reporters,” made several changes in laws related to DCF. The legislation allowed DCF to establish a pilot program that permitted certain mandated reporters to submit reports of suspected child abuse and neglect electronically, and, beginning on October 1, 2019, allows all mandated reporters and other individuals to file such reports electronically (§§4-7, 12).

Specifically, existing law prior to this legislation required mandated reporters of child abuse or neglect to submit their initial report orally by telephone or in person to the DCF Commissioner or law enforcement within 12 hours of suspecting child abuse or neglect, and to submit a written report within 48 hours of submitting an oral report. The Act permitted DCF to establish, within existing appropriations, a pilot program that allows certain mandated reporters of child abuse and neglect to submit reports electronically, as prescribed by the Commissioner. Any such program had to begin on or after July 1, 2018, and end by September 30, 2019. The Act gives the DCF Commissioner the discretion to choose which categories of mandated reporters may participate in the pilot program.

Beginning October 1, 2019, the Act allows all mandated reporters of child abuse and neglect to file their reports electronically, as the Commissioner prescribes. All electronic reports must include the same information currently required for oral and written reports. A reporter who electronically files an initial report must respond to further inquiries DCF makes within 24 hours of receiving the report. In addition to required reporting, existing law allows mandated reporters acting outside of their professional capacity, or anyone else with reasonable cause to suspect child abuse or neglect, to make oral or written reports to DCF or law enforcement. Starting October 1, 2019, the act allows such reports to also be made electronically, in a manner the Commissioner prescribes.

DCF did implement the pilot program in 2019. Attorneys Natalia Sieira-Millan and Thomas B. Mooney reported in Shipman & Goodwin’s publication of *School Law-Emerging School Law Issues*, “Online reporting was not used extensively through this pilot program, however, because school mandated reporters were cautioned that a decision to report an ‘emergent’ situation online could be considered a failure to report, subjecting the reporter to the risk of penalties, which could even include criminal prosecution.”

The online reporting program is no longer a pilot. Therefore, school employees may file reports online. DCF revised its policy 22-1-3, “Mandated Reporter’s Failure to Report,” to provide “Online reports may be made to the Careline by mandated reporters if the report is of a non-emergent nature. A 'non-emergent' situation is one in which a report is mandated, but the child is not in immediate risk. Moreover, it will not be considered a failure to report if an online report is submitted and later determined to have concerned an emergent situation. The reporter may be referred for further training regarding the appropriate use of online reporting.”

~~To the above change, DCF created two new special units dedicated exclusively to investigating allegations of abuse or neglect against school employees. Five social workers are assigned to each of these new units. This reorganization is expected to provide greater statewide uniformity in addressing issues in the school setting.~~

In addition, the Connecticut General Assembly has subsequently passed several significant pieces of legislation that directly affect mandated reporting requirements and school board policies. The most critical updates come from **Public Acts 24-41 and 24-118**, as well as the broader requirements of **Public Act 23-160**.

1. Mandated Report Preliminary Inquiries (P.A. 24-41)

Effective July 1, 2024, this act clarifies the boundaries of what a school employee can do before filing a report.

- a. Preliminary Inquiry:** The law now explicitly states that mandated reporters may conduct a “preliminary inquiry” to determine if there is reasonable cause to suspect abuse or neglect.
- b. Distinction from Investigation: Your policy should distinguish these inquiries from formal investigations.** DCF is required to update its training to help reporters ensure their inquiries are limited to establishing reasonable cause and do not interfere with a potential DCF investigation.
- c. Good Faith Immunity:** The act restores the “good faith exception,” providing **immunity from civil or criminal liability for reporters who, in good faith, do not report an allegation because their inquiry did not find reasonable cause.**

2. Terminology: “Child Sexual Abuse Material” (P.A. 24-118)

- a. Updated Definitions:** Effective October 1, 2024, the term “child pornography” has been replaced with “child sexual abuse material” throughout the Connecticut statutes.
- b. Action Item:** Review your policy’s definitions section to ensure this updated terminology is reflected, as it now aligns with criminal and reporting statutes.

3. Expanded Mandated Reporter Definitions (P.A. 23-160)

- a. Contractors:** The definition of “school employee” now explicitly includes any person who has a contract with the school, has regular contact with K-12 students, and provides services to or on behalf of students.
- b. Coaches:** It clarifies that this includes all coaches, whether they are intramural, interscholastic, or otherwise employed by the district.

4. Notification and Hiring Protocols (HB 05327/2026 Session)

- a. Investigation Disclosure:** Be aware of shifting requirements regarding the disclosure of “open or pending investigations” during the hiring process. Recent legislative trends (and proposed 2026 bills) emphasize that former employers are authorized – and sometimes required – to disclose pending investigations of abuse or sexual misconduct to a hiring district.

Implementation Checklist for Board Policies

Policy Area	Required Update
Definitions	Replace "child pornography" with " child sexual abuse material. "
Reporting Process	Include the allowance for preliminary inquiries to establish reasonable cause.
Electronic Reporting	Explicitly mention the DCF Online Reporting Portal for non-emergent reports (emergent reports still require a call to the Careline).
Scope of Staff	Ensure contractors with regular student contact are listed as mandated reporters.
Records & Hiring	Update "Section 10-222c" (Sexting/Bulleting/Abuse) cross-references to ensure pending investigations are disclosed during background checks.

Policy Implications

Policy #5141.4, “Reporting of Child Abuse, Neglect and Sexual Assault,” pertains to this topic. These actions by DCF were viewed as an appropriate opportunity to update CAFE’s existing model sample policies. The updated models follow. This is a mandated policy to be included in a district’s policy manual. There are many Appendices to these policies which did not require updating and are available upon request.

A sample of this mandated policy to consider with update reflecting PA 22-87.

Students

Reporting of Child Abuse, Neglect, and Sexual Assault

The Board of Education (Board) recognizes its legal and ethical obligations in the reporting of suspected child abuse, neglect, and sexual assault. Any person applying for employment with the Board shall submit to a record check of the Department of Children and Families Child Abuse and Neglect Registry before the person may be hired. Mandated reporters include all school employees, specifically Superintendent, administrators, teachers, substitute teachers, guidance counselors, school counselors, paraprofessionals, coaches of intramural and interscholastic athletics, as well as licensed nurses, physicians, psychologists and social workers and licensed behavior analysts either employed by the Board or working in one of the District schools, or any other person who, in the performance of his or her duties, has regular contact with students and who provides services to or on behalf of students enrolled in District schools. Such individual(s) who have reasonable cause to suspect or believe that a child has been abused, neglected, placed in imminent risk of serious harm, or sexually assaulted by a school employee are required to report such abuse, neglect, or risk and/or sexual assault.

The Board shall annually distribute the mandated reporter policy electronically to all school employees **and contractors employed by the Board of Education in regular contact with children.** The Board shall annually distribute electronically to all school employees **and relevant contractors.** Board members, parents, and guardians of enrolled students, (1) guidelines on identifying and reporting child sexual abuse, starting in the 2022-23 school year, and (2) information on DCF's sexual abuse and assault awareness and prevention program.

A mandated reporter's suspicions may be based on factors including, but not limited to, observations, allegations, facts by a child, victim, or third party. Suspicion or belief does not require certainty or probable cause.

~~**Alternate Language:** In furtherance of CGS 17a-101 et. seq., and its purpose, it is the policy of the Board of Education to require ALL EMPLOYEES of the Board of Education to report suspected abuse and/or neglect, or imminent risk of serious harm, in accordance with the procedures set forth in this policy.~~

~~Furthermore, the Board of Education requires all personnel who have reasonable cause to suspect or believe that a child, under the age of eighteen (18), except in the case of sexual assault by a school employee, has been abused, neglected, has had non-accidental physical injury, or injury which is at variance with the history given of such injury, is placed in imminent danger of serious harm or has been sexually abused by a school employee to report such cases in accordance with the law, Board policy and administrative regulations. The mandatory reporting requirement regarding the sexual assault of a student by a school employee applies based on the person's status as a student, rather than his or her age.~~

A mandated reporter shall make an oral report, by telephone or in person, to the Commissioner of Children and Families or a law enforcement agency as soon as possible, but not later than twelve (12) hours after the mandated reporter has reasonable cause to suspect or believe that a child has been abused, neglected, or placed in imminent risk of serious harm.

Students

Reporting of Child Abuse, Neglect, and Sexual Assault (continued)

In addition, the mandated reporter shall inform the building principal or his/her designee that he/she will be making such a report. Not later than forty-eight hours after making the oral report, the mandated reporter shall file a written or electronic report with the Commissioner of Children and Families or his/her designee. (The Department of Children and Families has established a 24-hour Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline, "Careline" at 1-800-842-2288 for the purpose of making such oral reports.)

A mandated reporter may make the required oral report electronically in the manner prescribed by the Commissioner of Children and Families. An employee making an electronic report shall respond to any further inquiries from the Commissioner of Children and Families or a designee within twenty-four hours. Such employee shall inform the Superintendent or his/her designee as soon as possible as to the nature of further communication with the Commissioner or designee.

Online reports may be made to the Careline by mandated reporters if the report is non-emergent. A non-emergent situation is one in which a report is mandated, but the child is not at immediate risk. *(Note: Mandated reporters reporting electronically when they reasonably suspect that a child has been abused, neglected, or placed at risk of imminent harm in a "non-emergent" situation can do so without risk that they will be subject to a failure to report finding and subsequent penalties.)*

The oral and written reports shall include, if known: (1) the names and addresses of the child and his/her parents/guardians or other persons responsible for his/her care; (2) the child's age; (3) the child's gender; (4) the nature and extent of the child's injury or injuries, maltreatment or neglect; (5) the approximate date and time the injury or injuries, maltreatment or neglect occurred; (6) information concerning any previous injury or injuries to, or maltreatment or neglect of, the child or his/her siblings; (7) the circumstances in which the injury or injuries, maltreatment or neglect came to be known to the reporter; (8) the name of the person(s) suspected to be responsible for causing such injury or injuries, maltreatment or neglect; (9) the reasons such person or persons are suspected of causing such injury or injuries, maltreatment or neglect; (10) any information concerning any prior cases in which such person or persons have been suspected of causing an injury, maltreatment or neglect of a child; and (11) whatever action, if any, was taken to treat, provide shelter or otherwise assist the child. (For purposes of this section pertaining to the required reporting, a child includes any victim under eighteen years of age educated in a technical high school or District school. Any person who intentionally and unreasonably interferes with or prevents the making of the required report or attempts to conspire to do so shall be guilty of a class D felony, unless such individual is under eighteen years of age or educated in the technical high school system or in a District school, other than part of an adult education program.)

If the report of abuse, neglect, or sexual assault involves an employee of the District as the perpetrator, the District may conduct its own investigation into the allegation, provided that such investigation shall not interfere with or impede any investigation conducted by the Department of Children and Families or by a law enforcement agency.

Students

Reporting of Child Abuse, Neglect, and Sexual Assault (continued)

The Board recognizes that the Department of Children and Families is required to disclose records to the Superintendent of Schools in response to a mandated reporter's written or oral report of abuse or neglect, or if the Commissioner of Children and Families has a reasonable belief that a school employee abused or neglected a student. Not later than five (5) working days after an investigation of child abuse or neglect by a school employee has been completed, DCF is required to notify the school employee, the Superintendent, and the Commissioner of Education of the investigation's results. If DCF has reasonable cause and recommends that the employee be placed on DCF's Child Abuse and Neglect Registry, the Superintendent shall suspend such employee.

The Board, recognizing its responsibilities to protect children and in compliance with its statutory obligations, shall provide to each employee in-service training regarding the requirements and obligations of mandated reporters. District employees shall also participate in training offered by the Department of Children and Families. Each school employee is required to complete a refresher training program not later than three (3) years after completing the initial training program and shall thereafter retake such refresher training course at least once every three years.

The Principal of each school in the district shall annually certify to the Superintendent that each school employee working at such school has completed the required initial training and the refresher training.

State law prohibits retaliation against a mandated reporter for fulfilling his/her obligations to report suspected child abuse or neglect. The Board shall not retaliate against any mandated reporter for his/her compliance with the law and Board policy pertaining to the reporting of suspected child abuse and neglect.

~~*(This paragraph is optional)* Policy and procedure development must include three major components: Education, Intervention, and Evaluation. The Education component requires that school personnel be provided with ongoing education (staff development) related to the recognition and reporting of suspected child abuse, neglect, and sexual assault. Intervention requires that "at risk" students be identified and that suspected child abuse, neglect, and sexual assault be reported. Evaluation is essential to determine whether policies and procedures are effective and appropriately updated to incorporate changes in knowledge, personnel, student and family needs, community resources, and the law. Such evaluation should take place annually, or more frequently as needed.~~

In accordance with the mandates of the law and consistent with its philosophy, the Board, in establishing this policy, directs the Superintendent of Schools to develop and formalize the necessary rules and regulations to comply fully with the intent of the law.

Students

Reporting of Child Abuse, Neglect, and Sexual Assault (continued)

This policy will be distributed annually to all employees. Documentation shall be maintained that all employees have, in fact, received the written policy and completed the required initial and refresher training related to mandated reporting of child abuse and neglect as required by law.

The Board of Education will post the telephone number of the Department of Children and Families' child abuse hotline, Careline, and the Internet web address that provides information about the Careline in each District school in a conspicuous location frequented by students. Such posting shall be in various languages, most appropriate for the students enrolled in the school.

Mandated Report Preliminary Inquiries

- **Preliminary Inquiry (School Level):** The school administration shall conduct a Preliminary Inquiry immediately upon receipt of a report or suspicion of abuse or neglect. The sole purpose of this inquiry is to gather enough information to determine if there is "reasonable cause to suspect" that a child has been abused or neglected, thereby triggering the mandatory reporting obligation.
 - **Scope:** Limited to identifying the parties involved, confirming the timeline of the alleged incident, and ensuring the immediate safety of the student.
 - **Actions:** May include a brief conversation with the student or the reporting staff member.
 - **Limitation:** The Preliminary Inquiry shall not include a detailed forensic interview of the child, nor shall it be used to determine the ultimate truth of the allegations. Administrators must not "investigate" the incident in a way that could interfere with a future criminal or Department of Children and Families (DCF) investigation.

Formal Investigation

- A Formal Investigation is the comprehensive process conducted by DCF and/or Law Enforcement once a report has been filed.
 - **Scope:** A systematic evaluation of the child's safety, the family environment, and the validity of the allegations.
 - **Actions:** Forensic interviews, home visits, medical examinations, and the collection of physical evidence.
 - **School Role:** The Board of Education and its employees shall cooperate fully with the formal investigation but shall not conduct a parallel investigation unless specifically authorized by DCF or as part of a separate Title IX or personnel disciplinary process.

If the Preliminary Inquiry provides reasonable cause, the report must be made within 12 hours. The Preliminary Inquiry must never delay the report. If an administrator is unsure whether they have enough information, they are to make a report out of an abundance of caution.

Students

Reporting of Child Abuse, Neglect, and Sexual Assault (continued)

Establishment of the Confidential Rapid Response Team

The Board of Education shall establish a confidential rapid response team to coordinate with DCF to (1) ensure prompt reporting of suspected child abuse or neglect; or 1st, 2nd, 3rd, or 4th degree sexual assault; 1st degree aggravated sexual assault; or 3rd degree sexual assault with a firearm of a student not enrolled in adult education by a school employee and (2) provide immediate access to information and individuals relevant to DCF's investigation of such cases.

The confidential rapid response team shall consist of (1) a local teacher and the Superintendent, (2) a local police officer, and (3) any other person the Board of Education deems appropriate.

DCF, along with a multidisciplinary team, is required to take immediate action to investigate and address each report of child abuse, neglect, or sexual abuse in any school.

Hiring Prohibitions

The Board of Education will not employ anyone who was terminated or resigned after a suspension based on DCF's investigation, if he or she has been convicted of (1) child abuse or neglect or (2) 1st, 2nd, 3rd, or 4th degree sexual assault; 1st degree aggravated sexual assault; or 3rd degree sexual assault with a firearm of a student who is not enrolled in adult education.

The Board of Education will not employ an individual who was terminated or resigned, if he or she (1) failed to report the suspicion of such crimes when required to do so or (2) intentionally and unreasonably interfered with or prevented a mandated reporter from carrying out this obligation or conspired or attempted to do so. This applies regardless of whether an allegation of abuse, neglect, or sexual assault has been substantiated.

(cf. 4112.6/4212.6 – Personnel Records)

(cf. 5145.511 – Sexual Abuse Prevention and Education Program)

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes
10-220a Inservice training. Professional development committees. Institutes for educators. Cooperating teacher program, regulations.
10-221d Criminal history records check of school personnel. Fingerprinting. Termination or dismissal.
10-221s Investigations of child abuse and neglect. Disciplinary action.
17a-28 Definitions. Confidentiality of and access to records; exceptions. Procedure for aggrieved persons. Regulations.
17a-101 Protection of children from abuse. Mandated reporters. Educational and training program. Model mandated reporting policy.
17a-101a Report of abuse, neglect by or injury of child or imminent risk of serious harm to the child. Penalty for failure to report. Notification of Chief State's Attorney.

Students

Reporting of Child Abuse, Neglect, and Sexual Assault

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes (continued)

17a-101b Report by mandated reporters. Notification of law enforcement agency when allegation of sexual abuse or serious physical abuse. Notification of person in charge of institution, facility or school when a staff member suspected of abuse or neglect.

17a-101c Written or electronic report by mandated reporter.

17a-101d Contents of reports.

17a-101e Employer prohibited from discriminating or retaliating against employee who makes a good faith report or testifies re child abuse or neglect. Immunity from civil or criminal liability. False report of child abuse. Referral to Office of the Chief State's Attorney. Penalty.

17a-101g Classification and evaluation of reports. Determination of abuse or neglect of child. Investigation. Notice, entry of recommended finding. Referral to local law enforcement authority. Home visit. Removal of child in imminent risk of harm. Family assessment response program. Development of service plans and plans of care. Monitoring. Disclosure of information to community providers. Annual report.

17a-101i Abuse or neglect by school employees or staff member of public or private institution or facility providing care for children. Notice. Adoption of policy. Employee training program.

17a-101o School employee failure or delay in reporting child abuse or neglect. Policy re delayed report by mandated reporters.

17a-106 Cooperation in relation to prevention, identification and treatment of child abuse/neglect.

10-151 Teacher Tenure Act.

DCF Policy 22-1-3 Mandated Reporter's Failure to Report.

PA 22-87 An Act Concerning the Identification and Prevention of a Response to Adult Sexual Misconduct Against Children

Public Act 23-160 An Act Concerning Education Mandate Relief and Other Technical and Assorted Revisions to the Education and Early Childhood Education Statutes

Public Act 24-41 An Act Concerning the Expansion of the State's Paid Family and Medical Leave Program

Public Act 24-118 An Act Concerning the Protection of Consumers from Unfair Trade Practices and Regulation of Certain Consumer Protections

Policy adopted:
rev 7/22
rev 3/26

A sample regulation to consider.

Students

Reporting of Child Abuse/Neglect or Sexual Assault

a. What Must be Reported

A report must be made when any mandated reporter of the Board of Education, in his/her professional capacity, has reasonable cause to suspect or to believe that a child under the age of eighteen: *(Mandated reporters include all school employees and those contracted by board and have regular contact with children, the Superintendent, administrators, teachers, substitute teachers, guidance counselors, school counselors, licensed behavior analysts, school paraprofessionals, coaches of intramural and interscholastic athletics, as well as licensed nurses, physicians, psychologists and social workers either employed by the Board or working in one of the District schools, or any other person who, in the performance of his or her duties, has regular contact with students and who provides services to or on behalf of students enrolled in District schools.)*

1. Is in danger of being or has been abused;
2. Has had non-accidental physical injuries or physical injuries which are at variance with the history given for them, inflicted by a person responsible for the child's health, welfare or care, or by a person given access to such child by a responsible person;
3. Has been neglected;
4. Has been sexually assaulted by a school employee; or
5. Has been placed in imminent risk of serious harm.

A mandated reporter's suspicions may be based on such factors, including but not limited to, as observations, allegations, and facts by a child, victim or third party. Suspicion or belief does not require certainty or probable cause.

Definitions

"Abused" means that a child (a) has had physical injury or injuries inflicted upon him or her other than by accidental means, or (b) has injuries which are at variance with the history given of them, or (c) is in a condition which is the result of maltreatment, such as, but not limited to, malnutrition, sexual molestation or exploitation, deprivation of necessities, emotional maltreatment or cruel punishment.

"Neglected" means that a child (a) has been abandoned, or (b) is being denied proper care and attention, physically, educationally, emotionally or morally, or (c) is being permitted to live under conditions, circumstances or associations injurious to his well-being, or (d) has been abused.

"School employee" (a) a teacher, substitute teacher, school administrator, school superintendent, guidance counselor, psychologist, social worker, nurse, physician, school paraprofessional or coach employed by the Board or who is working in an elementary, middle or high school; or (b) any other person who, in the performance of his or her duties, has regular contact with students and who provides services to or on behalf of students enrolled in the _____ Public Schools, pursuant to a contract with the Board.

Students

Reporting of Child Abuse/Neglect or Sexual Assault

Definitions (continued)

“Contractor” includes anyone contracted by the board to perform a service who has regular contact with children.

“Sexual assault” means for the purposes of mandatory reporting laws and this policy; a violation of Sections 53a-70a, 53a-71, 53a-72a, 53a-72b or 53a-73a of the Connecticut General Statutes.

“Statutory mandated reporter” means an individual by CGS Sec. 17a-101 to report suspected abuse and/or neglect of children or sexual assault by a school employee. The term, “statutory mandated reporter” includes all school employees, as defined above.

“Child Sexual Abuse Material” replaces “Child Pornography” throughout the Connecticut Statues (P.A. 24-118)

b. Reporting Procedures for Statutory Mandated Reporters

The following procedures apply only to statutory mandated reporters, as defined above.

1. When an employee of the Board of Education suspects or believes that a child has been abused, neglected, has been placed in imminent risk of serious harm, or sexually assaulted by a school employee, the following steps shall be taken:

- (a) The employee shall immediately, upon having reasonable cause to suspect or believe that a child has been abused, neglected, or placed in imminent danger of serious harm, or has had non-accidental physical injury or injury which is at variance with the history or such injury, or sexually assaulted by a school employee and not later than twelve (12) hours after having such a suspicion or belief, make an oral report by telephone or in person to the Commissioner of Children and Families or his/her designee or the local law enforcement agency. The Department of Children and Families has established a 24-hour Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline (Careline) at 1-800-842-2288 to accept such oral reports.

Online reports may be made to the Careline by mandated reporters if the report is non-emergent. A non-emergent situation is one in which a report is mandated, but the child is not at immediate risk. *(Note: Mandated reporters reporting electronically when they reasonably suspect that a child has been abused, neglected, or placed at risk of imminent harm in a “non-emergent” situation can do so without risk that they will be subject to a failure to report finding and subsequent penalties.)*

Students

Reporting of Child Abuse/Neglect or Sexual Assault

b. Reporting Procedures for Statutory Mandated Reporters (continued)

- (b) The employee shall also immediately make an oral report to the Building Principal or his/her designee and/or the Superintendent or his/her designee. If the building principal is the alleged perpetrator of the abuse/neglect, then the employee shall notify the Superintendent or his/her designee directly.
- (c) If a report prepared in accordance with Section (a) above concerns suspected abuse, neglect, or sexual assault by a school employee, the Superintendent or his/her designee shall immediately notify the child's parent or guardian that such a report has been made.
- (d) Not later than 48 hours after making an oral report, the employee shall submit a written report to the Commissioner of Children and Families, or his/her representative, containing all the required information. The written reports should be submitted on the DCF-136 form or any other form designated for that purpose.
- (e) The employee shall immediately submit a copy of the written report to the Principal and/or Superintendent or the Superintendent's designee.
- (f) If a report prepared in accordance with Section (c) above concerns suspected abuse, neglect or sexual assault by a school employee who possesses a certificate, permit or authorization issued by the State Board of Education, the Superintendent shall submit a copy of the written report to the Commissioner of Education, or his/her representative.

c. Mandated Report Preliminary Inquiries

- **Preliminary Inquiry (School Level):** The school administration shall conduct a Preliminary Inquiry immediately upon receipt of a report or suspicion of abuse or neglect. The sole purpose of this inquiry is to gather enough information to determine if there is "reasonable cause to suspect" that a child has been abused or neglected, thereby triggering the mandatory reporting obligation.
 - **Scope:** Limited to identifying the parties involved, confirming the timeline of the alleged incident, and ensuring the immediate safety of the student.
 - **Actions:** May include a brief conversation with the student or the reporting staff member.
 - **Limitation:** The Preliminary Inquiry shall not include a detailed forensic interview of the child, nor shall it be used to determine the ultimate truth of the allegations. Administrators must not "investigate" the incident in a way that could interfere with a future criminal or Department of Children and Families (DCF) investigation.

Students

Reporting of Child Abuse/Neglect or Sexual Assault

c. **Mandated Report Preliminary Inquiries (continued)**

Formal Investigation

- A Formal Investigation is the comprehensive process conducted by DCF and/or Law Enforcement once a report has been filed.
 - **Scope:** A systematic evaluation of the child's safety, the family environment, and the validity of the allegations.
 - **Actions:** Forensic interviews, home visits, medical examinations, and the collection of physical evidence.
 - **School Role:** The Board of Education and its employees shall cooperate fully with the formal investigation but shall not conduct a parallel investigation unless specifically authorized by DCF or as part of a separate Title IX or personnel disciplinary process.

If the Preliminary Inquiry provides reasonable cause, the report must be made within 12 hours. The Preliminary Inquiry must never delay the report. If an administrator is unsure whether they have enough information, they are to make a report out of an abundance of caution.

d. **Contents of Reports**

Any report made pursuant to this policy shall contain the following information, if known:

1. The names and addresses of the child and his/her parents or other persons responsible for his/her care;
2. The age of the child;
3. The gender of the child;
4. The nature and the extent of the child's injury or injuries, maltreatment, or neglect;
5. The approximate date and time the injury or injuries, maltreatment, or neglect occurred;
6. Information concerning any previous injury or injuries to, or maltreatment or neglect of, the child or his/her siblings;
7. The circumstances in which the injury or injuries, maltreatment, or neglect came to be known to the reporter;
8. The name of the person or persons suspected to be responsible for causing such injury or injuries, maltreatment, or neglect;
9. The reasons such person or persons are suspected of causing such injury or injuries, maltreatment, or neglect;
10. Any information concerning any prior cases in which such person or persons have been suspected of causing an injury, maltreatment, or neglect of a child; and
11. Whatever action, if any, was taken to treat, provide shelter, or otherwise assist the child.

Students

Reporting of Child Abuse/Neglect or Sexual Assault

d. Contents of Reports (continued)

For purposes of this section pertaining to the required reporting, a child includes any victim under eighteen years of age educated in a technical high school or District school. Any person who intentionally and unreasonably interferes with or prevents the making of the required report or attempts to conspire to do so shall be guilty of a class D felony, unless such individual is under eighteen years of age or educated in the technical high school system or in a District school, other than part of an adult education program. The mandatory reporting requirement regarding the sexual assault of a student by a school employee applies based on the person's status as a student, rather than his or her age.

e. Investigation of the Report

If the suspected abuser is a school employee, the Superintendent or his/her designee shall thoroughly investigate the report, provided that such investigation does not interfere with or impede the investigation by the Department of Children and Families or by a law enforcement agency. In all other cases, DCF shall be responsible for conducting the investigation, with the Board's cooperation and collaboration, as appropriate. To the extent feasible, this investigation shall be coordinated with the Commissioner of Children and Families or the police to minimize the number of interviews of any child and to share information with other persons authorized to conduct investigations of child abuse and neglect. When investigating a report, the Superintendent or his/her designee shall endeavor to obtain, when possible, the consent of parents or guardians or other persons responsible for the care of the child, to interview the child, except in those cases in which there is reason to believe that the parents or guardians or other persons responsible for the care of such child are the perpetrators or the alleged abusers.

The investigation shall include an opportunity for the suspected abuser to be heard regarding the allegations contained in the report. During an investigation of suspected abuse by a school employee, the Superintendent may suspend the employee with pay or place the employee on administrative leave with pay pending the outcome of the investigation.

A person reporting child abuse, neglect, or sexual assault shall provide any person authorized to conduct an investigation into such claim with all information related to the investigation that is in the possession or control of the person reporting child abuse, neglect, or sexual assault, except as expressly prohibited by state or federal law.

Students

Reporting of Child Abuse/Neglect or Sexual Assault

e. Investigation of the Report (continued)

1. **Evidence of Abuse by Certain School Employees.** After an investigation has been completed, if the Commissioner of Children and Families, based upon the results of such investigation, has reasonable cause to believe that a child has been abused, neglected or sexually assaulted by an employee who has been entrusted with the care of a child or has recommended that such employee be placed on the Department of Children and Families abuse and neglect registry, the Commissioner shall notify within five (5) working days after the completion of the investigation into child abuse, neglect or sexual assault by a school employee, the Superintendent, the school employee, and the Commissioner of Education of such finding and shall provide records, whether or not created by the Department of Children and Families, concerning such investigation to the Superintendent and the Commissioner of Education. The Superintendent shall suspend the employee, if not previously suspended, with pay and without diminution or termination of benefits, if DCF has reasonable cause that the employee abused or neglected a child and recommends the employee be placed on the DCF child abuse and neglect registry. Not later than 72 hours after such suspension, the Superintendent shall notify the Board of Education and the Commissioner of Education, or his/her representative, of the reasons for the conditions of suspension. The Superintendent shall disclose records received from the Department of Children and Families to the Commissioner of Education and the Board of Education, or its attorney, for the purposes of review of employment status, certification, permit or authorization. Any decision of the Superintendent concerning such suspension shall remain in effect until the Board of Education Acts, pursuant to the provisions of Connecticut General Statutes. The Commissioner of Education shall also be notified if such certified person resigns from his/her employment in the District. Regardless of the outcome of any investigation by DCF and/or the police, the Superintendent and/or the Board, as appropriate, may take disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment in accordance with the provisions of any applicable statute, if the Superintendent's investigation produces evidence that a child has been abused by a certified, permit or authorized school staff member.

If the contract of employment of a certified school employee holding a certificate, permit, or authorization issued by the State Board of Education is terminated as a result of an investigation into reports of child abuse and neglect, the Superintendent shall notify the Commissioner of Education, or his/her representative, within 72 hours of such termination.

Students

Reporting of Child Abuse/Neglect or Sexual Assault

e. Investigation of the Report (continued)

2. **Evidence of Abuse by Other School Staff.** If the investigation by the Superintendent and/or Commissioner of Children and Families did produce evidence that a child has been abused by a non-certified school staff member the Superintendent and/or the Board, as appropriate, may take disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.
3. The District shall maintain records of allegations, investigations and reports that a child has been abused or neglected by a school employee. Such records will be maintained in the District's Central Office. The records shall include any reports made to the Department of Children and Families. The State Department of Education is to have access to all such records.
4. The Board shall provide to the Commissioner of Children and Families, upon request for the purposes of an investigation by the Commissioner of Children and Families of suspected child abuse or neglect by a teacher employed by the Board, any records maintained or kept in District files. Such records shall include, but not be limited to, supervisory records, reports of competence, personal character and efficiency maintained in such teacher's personnel file with reference to evaluation of performance as a professional employee of such board of education, and records of the personal misconduct of such teacher. (*"Teacher" includes each certified professional employee below the rank of Superintendent employed by a Board of Education in a position requiring a certificate issued by the State Board of Education.*)
5. The Board of Education shall permit and give priority to any investigation conducted by the Commissioner of Children and Families or the appropriate local law enforcement agency, if a child has been abused or neglected. The Board shall conduct its own investigation and take any disciplinary action, in accordance with the provisions of section 17a-101i of the general statutes, as amended, upon notice from the Commissioner or the appropriate local law enforcement agency that the Board's investigation will not interfere with the investigation of the Commissioner or such local law enforcement agency.
6. The Department of Children and Families will review, at least annually, with the State Department of Education all records and information relating to reports and investigations that a child has been abused and neglected by a school employee, in the Department of Children and Families' possession, to ensure that records and information are being shared properly.

f. Delegation of Authority by Superintendent

The Superintendent may appoint a designee for the purposes of receiving and making reports, notifying and receiving notification, or investigating reports pursuant to this policy.

Students

Reporting of Child Abuse/Neglect or Sexual Assault (continued)

g. **Special Reporting Procedures Concerning Suspected Abuse or Neglect of Intellectually Disabled Persons**

In addition to the reporting procedures set forth above, Connecticut General Statutes require that certain school personnel, including teachers, licensed nurses, psychologists, and social workers, report any suspected abuse or neglect of intellectually disabled persons over the age of 18. It is the policy of the Board of Education to require ALL EMPLOYEES of the Board of Education to comply with the following procedures in connection with the suspected abuse or neglect, as defined below, of any intellectually disabled person over the age of 18.

1. **Definitions.** For the purposes of this policy:

“**Abuse**” means the willful infliction of physical pain or injury or willful deprivation by a caretaker of services which are necessary to the person’s health or safety.

“**Neglect**” means a situation where an intellectually disabled person either is living alone or is not able to provide for him/herself the services which are necessary to maintain his/her physical and mental health, or is not receiving such necessary services from the caretaker.

2. **Reporting Procedures.** If an “employee” has reasonable cause to suspect that an intellectually disabled person has been abused or neglected, he/she shall, within five calendar days, make an oral report to the Director of the Office of Protection and Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities, to be followed by a written report within five additional calendar days, or shall immediately notify the Superintendent in order for the Superintendent to make such oral and written reports to the Office of Protection and Advocacy. If an employee reports to the Office of Protection and Advocacy, the employee shall immediately notify the Superintendent.

3. **Contents of Report:** Any such report shall contain the following information:

- (a) The name and address of the allegedly abused or neglected person;
- (b) A statement from the reporter indicating a belief that the person is intellectually disabled, together with information indicating that the person is unable to protect himself or herself from abuse or neglect;
- (c) Information concerning the nature and extent of the abuse or neglect; and
- (d) Any additional information that the reporter believes would be helpful in investigating the report or in protecting the intellectually disabled person.

Students

Reporting of Child Abuse/Neglect or Sexual Assault

g. Special Reporting Procedures Concerning Suspected Abuse or Neglect of Intellectually Disabled Persons (continued)

4. **Investigation of Report.** If the suspected abuser is a school employee, the Superintendent shall thoroughly investigate the report following the procedures regarding the investigation of reports of child abuse set forth in paragraph e above. If the investigation by the Superintendent and/or the Office of Protection and Advocacy produces evidence that an intellectually disabled person has been abused by a school employee, the Superintendent and/or the Board, as appropriate, may take disciplinary Action, up to and including termination of employment.

h. Disciplinary Action for Failure to Follow Policy

Any employee who fails to comply with this policy's requirements shall be subject to discipline, up to and including termination of employment.

i. Non-Discrimination Policy

The Board of Education shall not discharge or in any manner discriminate or retaliate against any employee who, in good faith, makes a report pursuant to this policy or testifies or is about to testify in any proceeding involving abuse or neglect.

j. Training

All District employees are required to complete a training program pertaining to the accurate and prompt reporting of abuse and neglect, made available by the Commissioner of Children and Families. In addition, all employees must complete a refresher program at least once every three years. ~~Employees hired before July 1, 2011 must complete the refresher training program by July 1, 2012 and must retake it once every three years thereafter.~~

The School Principal shall annually certify to the Superintendent that each school employee working at his/her school has completed the required initial training and the refresher training.

k. Foster Care

Upon the Board of Education's request, the Department of Children and Families shall provide the name, date of birth, and school of origin for each child in its custody who has been placed in foster care and is attending a District school.

Students

Reporting of Child Abuse/Neglect or Sexual Assault (continued)

Confidential Rapid Response Team

The District will establish, a confidential rapid response team to coordinate with DCF to (1) ensure prompt reporting of suspected child abuse or neglect; or 1st, 2nd, 3rd, or 4th degree sexual assault; 1st degree aggravated sexual assault; or 3rd degree sexual assault with a firearm of a student not enrolled in adult education by a school employee; and (2) provide immediate access to information and individuals relevant to DCF's investigation of such cases.

The confidential rapid response team consists of a local teacher, the Superintendent, a local police officer, and any other person the Board of Education deems appropriate.

DCF, along with a multidisciplinary team, is required to take immediate action to investigate and address each report of child abuse, neglect, or sexual abuse in any school.

Hiring Prohibitions

The Board of Education will not employ anyone who was terminated or resigned after a suspension based on DCF's investigation, if he or she has been convicted of (1) child abuse or neglect; or (2) 1st, 2nd, 3rd, or 4th degree sexual assault; 1st degree aggravated sexual assault; or 3rd degree sexual assault with a firearm of a student who is not enrolled in adult education.

The Board of Education will not employ an individual who was terminated or resigned, if he or she (1) failed to report the suspicion of such crimes when required to do so; or (2) intentionally and unreasonably interfered with or prevented a mandated reporter from carrying out this obligation or conspired or attempted to do so. This applies regardless of whether an allegation of abuse, neglect, or sexual assault has been substantiated.

Posting of DCF's "Careline"

The Board of Education will post the telephone number of the Department of Children and Families' child abuse hotline, Careline, and the Internet web address that provides information about the Careline in each District school in a conspicuous location frequented by students. Such posting shall be in various languages, most appropriate for the students enrolled in the school.

(cf. 4112.5/4212.6 – Personnel Records)

(cf. 5145.511 – Sexual Abuse Prevention and Education Program)

Students

Reporting of Child Abuse/Neglect or Sexual Assault

- Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes
- 10-220a Inservice training. Professional development committees. Institutes for educators. Cooperating teacher program, regulations (as amended by PA 11-93)
 - 10-221d Criminal history records check of school personnel. Fingerprinting. Termination or dismissal (as amended by PA 11-93)
 - 10-221s Investigations of child abuse and neglect. Disciplinary action. (as amended by PA 16-188)
 - 17a-28 Definitions. Confidentiality of and access to records; exceptions. Procedure for aggrieved persons. Regulations (as amended by PA 11-93 and PA 14-186)
 - 17a-101 Protection of children from abuse. Mandated reporters. Educational and training program. Model mandated reporting policy. (as amended by PA 96-246, PA 00-220, PA 02-106, PA 03-168, PA 09-242, PA 11-93, PA 15-205, PA 18-15 and PA 18-17)
 - 17a-101a Report of abuse, neglect by or injury of child or imminent risk of serious harm to the child. Penalty for failure to report. Notification of Chief State's Attorney. (as amended by PA 02-106, PA 11-93, and PA 15-205, PA 18-15 and PA 18-17)
 - 17a-101b Report by mandated reporters. Notification of law enforcement agency when allegation of sexual abuse or serious physical abuse. Notification of person in charge of institution, facility or school when a staff member suspected of abuse or neglect.
 - 17a-101c Written or electronic report by mandated reporter.
 - 17a-101d Contents of reports
 - 17a-101e Employer prohibited from discriminating or retaliating against employee who makes a good faith report or testifies re child abuse or neglect. Immunity from civil or criminal liability. False report of child abuse. Referral to Office of the Chief State's Attorney. Penalty.
 - 17a-101g Classification and evaluation of reports. Determination of abuse or neglect of child. Investigation. Notice, entry of recommended finding. Referral to local law enforcement authority. Home visit. Removal of child in imminent risk of harm. Family assessment response program. Development of service plans and plans of care. Monitoring. Disclosure of information to community providers. Annual report.

Students

Reporting of Child Abuse/Neglect or Sexual Assault

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes (continued)

17a-101i Abuse or neglect by school employees or staff member of public or private institution or facility providing care for children. Notice. Adoption of policy. Employee training program.

17a-101o School employee failure or delay in reporting child abuse or neglect. Policy re delayed report by mandated reporters.

17a-106 Cooperation in relation to prevention, identification and treatment of child abuse/neglect.

10-151 Teacher Tenure Act.

DCF Policy 22-1-3 Mandated Reporter's Failure to Report

Public Act 23-160 An Act Concerning Education Mandate Relief and Other Technical and Assorted Revisions to the Education and Early Childhood Education Statutes

Public Act 24-41 An Act Concerning the Expansion of the State's Paid Family and Medical Leave Program

Public Act 24-118 An Act Concerning the Protection of Consumers from Unfair Trade Practices and Regulation of Certain Consumer Protections

Regulation approved:

rev 4/20
rev 3/26

An optional policy to consider. This updated model policy incorporates the 2025 updated statutes and anticipates the need to Transition to Phone-Free Schools and stricter age verification requirements.

Instruction

Internet/Computer Networks Use

Online Social Networking

I. Philosophy and Purpose

The Internet and electronic communications have vast potential to support curriculum and student learning, and prepare students to become responsible digital citizens. The Board of Education (Board) believes that they should be used in schools as a learning resource, both to develop student skills and to provide ongoing professional development for staff.

The _____ Board of Education recognizes that while social media can enhance learning, its unregulated use contributes to social media addiction, mental health risks, and significant instructional distraction. The District shall provide access to digital resources primarily for instructional purposes – defined as activities directly aligned with curriculum, research, or career development.

II. Restriction on Personal Devices (Anticipating Adoption of Statewide Ban)

To ensure a distraction-free learning environment and curb social media addiction, the following restrictions apply during the school day:

- **Access Restriction:** Students are prohibited from accessing personal social media accounts via District-provided internet or personal “wireless communication devices” during instructional time.
- **Storage Mandate:** All personal wireless devices must be powered off and stored in a (locker/designated classroom area) during the school day, unless explicitly authorized for a specific instructional activity or required by a student’s IEP or Section 504 plan.
- **Emergency Protocol:** The District shall maintain a secondary communication protocol for parents to contact students in the event of an emergency, bypassing the need for personal social media or cell phone access.

III. Privacy and Mental Health Protections

In accordance with Connecticut’s 2025-26 digital safety standards, all platforms and “social” tools utilized by the District shall meet the following requirements:

- **Default Privacy Standards:** Any platform approved for student use must default to the highest privacy settings, specifically disabling unsolicited direct messaging from non-commercial adults.
- **Prohibition of Addictive Design:** The District shall not require or encourage the use of any social media platform that utilizes “addictive features” – such as infinite scrolls or engagement-based recommendation algorithms – without a prior Data Protection Assessment and explicit parental consent.

Instruction

Internet/Computer Networks Use

Online Social Networking

III. Privacy and Mental Health Protections (continued)

- Educational LMS Exemption: Secure Learning Management Systems (e.g., Google Classroom, Canvas) are exempt from these prohibitions provided they are managed by District personnel and do not contain public-facing social networking features.

IV. Data Privacy and Third-Party Tools

Any third-party social or digital tool that captures student-generated content must be vetted through the Connecticut Educational Software Hub. Providers must sign the Connecticut Student Privacy Pledge and confirm that no student data will be used for targeted advertising or to build “behavioral profiles” for non-educational purposes.

V. Reporting and “Online Safety Centers”

The District shall provide annual training to students and staff on utilizing platform-specific Online Safety Centers to report:

- Cyberbullying and harassment
- Unauthorized disclosure of personal information
- Attempts by “unconnected” adults to initiate contact

Among the uses that are considered irresponsible, and which constitute a violation of this policy, include but are not limited to the following:

1. Uses that violate the law or encourage others to violate the law. This includes the transmittal of offensive or harassing messages; offering for sale or use any substance the possession or use of which is prohibited by District policy; viewing, transmitting, or downloading pornographic materials or materials that encourage others to violate the law; intruding into the networks or computers of others; and downloading or transmitting confidential, trade secret information, or copyrighted materials.
2. Uses that cause harm or threaten to cause harm to others or damage to their property. This includes defamation (harming another’s reputation by lies); employment of another’s password or some other user identifier that misleads message recipients into believing that someone else is communicating or otherwise using his/her access to the network or the Internet; uploading a worm, virus, “trojan horse,” “time bomb” or other harmful form of programming or vandalism; participation in “hacking” activities or any form of unauthorized access to other computers, networks, or information systems.
3. Uses that jeopardize the security of student access and of the computer network or other networks on the Internet. For example, disclosing or sharing personal passwords with others, or impersonating another user.
4. Uses that are commercial transactions. Students and other users are not permitted to sell or buy anything over the Internet. Private information shall not be shared.

Instruction

Internet/Computer Networks Use

Online Social Networking (continued)

The District shall not be responsible for information/comments posted by students on social media websites when the student is not engaged in District activities and not using District equipment.

The District reserves the right to monitor, inspect, copy, review, and store, at any time and without prior notice, all usage of the computer network and Internet access, as well as all information transmitted or received in connection with such usage. All such information files shall be and remain the property of the School District, and no user shall have any expectation of privacy regarding such materials.

(cf. 6141.321 – Computer Responsible Use Policy)

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes
1-19(b)(11) Access to public records. Exempt records.
10-15b Access of parent or guardians to student's records.
10-234-aa to 10-234dd Definitions. Duties re unauthorized or acquisition of student data.
11-8a Retention, destruction and transfer of documents
11-8b Transfer or disposal of public records. State Library Board to adopt regulations.
46b-56 (e) Access to Records of Minors.
Federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (section 438 of the General Education Provisions Act, as amended, added by section 513 of PL 93-568, codified at 20 U.S.C. 1232g.).
Dept. of Education. 34 CFR. Part 99 (May 9, 1980 45 FR 30802) regs. implementing FERPA enacted as part of 438 of General Education Provisions Act (20 U.S.C. 1232g)-parent and student privacy and other rights with respect to educational records, as amended 11/21/96.
Children's Internet Protection Act of 2000 (HR 4577, P.L.106-554)
Communications Act of 1934, as amended (47 U.S.C. 254[h],[I])
Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (20 U.S.C. 6801 et seq., Part F)
Public Law 94-553, The Copyright Act of 1976, 17 U.S.C. 101 et. seq.
Reno v. ACLU, 521 U.S. 844 (1997)
Ginsberg v. New York, 390 U.S. 629, at 642, n.10 (1968)
Board of Education v. Pico, 457 U.S. 868 (1988)
Hazelwood School District v. Kuhlmeier, 484 U.S. 620, 267 (1988)
Public Act 24-141, An Act Concerning Social Media Platforms and Minors

Policy adopted:

rev 9/25

rev 4/26

This model administrative regulation provides the procedural framework to implement the 2026 updated board policy 6141.326.

Instruction

Internet/Computer Networks Use

Online Social Networking

I. Instructional Purpose and Vetting: To ensure that all social media use is “primarily for instructional purposes,” the following vetting process is established:

- Prior to utilizing any third-party digital tool or social platform with students, staff must verify its status on the Connecticut Educational Software Hub.
- If a tool is not on the Hub, the District Technology Coordinator must obtain a signed Connecticut Student Data Privacy Pledge from the provider, ensuring compliance with C.G.S. §§ 10-234aa to 10-234dd.
- Teachers must include the specific learning objective (e.g., “collaborative research,” “digital citizenship”) in their lessons when a social networking component is required.

II. Device Management and Storage: (In anticipation of HB 5035-2026’s legislative session mandates, schools will implement the following personal device restriction procedures:

- **The “School Day” Window:** Defined as the period from the first bell to the final dismissal bell.
- **Storage Protocols (Middle School/High School):** Devices must be stored in lockers or (secure classroom pouches).
 - **Elementary Schools:** Devices must remain in backpacks and powered off.
- **Authorized Use Exception:** A teacher may authorize a “one-time instructional bypass” for a specific activity requiring the use of a personal electronic device. In such cases, devices are returned to storage immediately upon completion of the learning activity.
- **IEP/504 Carve Out:** Students with documented medical or educational needs (e.g., glucose monitoring, assistive communication) are exempt from storage mandates as outlined in their specific approved plan.

III. Emergency Communication Protocol: To bypass student reliance on personal devices during emergencies:

- **Centralized Messaging:** Parents shall be directed to use the (District Notification System, e.g., ParentSquare) for all urgent updates.
- **Classroom Access:** Every instructional space must maintain a functioning landline or internal VOIP system for immediate administrative contact.
- (Other considerations should be determined by the District’s School Security and Safety Committees and included in the School Security and Safety Plans)

Instruction

Internet/Computer Networks Use

Online Social Networking (continued)

IV. Digital Safety and “Addictive Feature” Compliance: Administrators or their designees shall conduct an annual audit of District-sanctioned platforms to ensure:

- Settings are verified to “Private” by default. Unsolicited direct messaging from non-connected accounts must be blocked.
- For any platform using a recommendation algorithm (e.g., YouTube for Schools), the District shall provide parents with a Digital Disclosure Notice at the start of the year, allowing for an “Opt-Out” of algorithmic content.
- Building administrators will ensure that “public-facing” features, such as public comments or open profile discovery, are disabled within the District’s Google Classroom/Canvas environment.

V. Annual Training and Incident Reporting:

- The “Online Safety Center” training shall be integrated into the Grade 6-12 Health or Advisory curriculum.
- Violations, including but not limited to Cyberbullying and Harassment, must be reported via the District’s Title IX/Bullying Reporting Portal.
- Staff are required to assist students in utilizing the “Report” function within specific social media platforms when “unconnected adults” attempt contact.

VI. Enforcement and Sanctions: Violations of this regulation, including “hacking,” unauthorized device use, or bypassing district filters, will result in disciplinary action as outlined in the Student Code of Conduct, which may include:

- Temporary confiscation of the device (returned only to a parent/guardian).
- Revocation of District network privileges.
- Suspension/expulsion for severe infractions (e.g., uploading viruses or cyberbullying).

VII. General Expectations: The use of permitted social networking sites by students on District computers shall conform to the following guidelines:

- The search for illegal, crude, crass, and inappropriate things is not acceptable and should be avoided.
- Computers and accessing social media sites should be used for research and school projects or to connect with other students in a responsible manner.
- Social networking sites should not be used to harass other students.

Instruction

Internet/Computer Networks Use

Online Social Networking

VII. General Expectations: The use of permitted social networking sites by students on District computers shall conform to the following guidelines: (continued)

- Be mindful of copyright infringement, plagiarism, illegal downloading, and AI-generated content.
- Utilize teachers and administrators to determine if the site to be used is appropriate.
- Leave an inappropriate site immediately and notify available staff.
- Assignments involving the use of social networking tools on the Internet are like any other school assignment, subject to the policies and procedures in the student handbook.
- Online social networking and the frequent use of Internet sites that contain personal information also increase the opportunity for unwelcome and unsolicited written material, pictures, or videos. Harassment in any form, including electronically posted comments, is unacceptable.

Suggested bylaw to consider.

Bylaws of the Board

Time, Place, and Notification of Meetings

Regular Meetings

The Board of Education shall file with the Town Clerk, not later than January 31st of each year, the schedule of the regular meetings of the Board of Education and shall post the schedule on the District's Internet website. No meeting shall be held sooner than thirty days after such filing.

Special Meetings

Notice of each special meeting of the Board of Education shall be filed not less than twenty-four hours in advance of the meeting with the Town Clerk and be posted in the Office of the Clerk, giving the time and place of the special meeting and the business to be transacted. The special meeting shall also be posted on the District's Internet Website. No other business shall be considered by the Board at that special meeting. Each member of the Board of Education shall be notified by the Superintendent or the Clerk not less than 24 hours prior to the time of the special meeting and shall be advised of the time, place, and business to be transacted, although any Board member may waive the 24-hour notification by a written waiver of notice or a telegram to the purpose.

Notice of Meetings

Notice of meetings will be mailed to persons filing a written request, renewable in January of each year. The Board of Education will charge a fee for these notices based upon the cost of the service, as provided by law.

Electronic Participation (*Optional*)

Recognizing the inherent responsibilities and statutory duties of Board of Education members, the Board of Education (Board) strongly encourages Board members to attend and participate in Board meetings. Though great importance is given to the physical presence of Board members at meetings, the attendance and participation of members by electronic equipment is authorized whenever physical presence is not practicable. All votes at a meeting in which members are attending by teleconference shall be taken by roll call.

Whenever possible, meeting agendas and supporting materials shall be available at all teleconference facilities used for the Board meeting.

The Board of Education recognizes that technological advances allow for broader participation in public meetings. In accordance with Connecticut General Statutes, the Board authorizes the use of electronic equipment to allow Board members to participate in meetings and to provide public access to such meetings.

Bylaws of the Board

Time, Place, and Notification of Meetings

Electronic Participation (continued)

Any member of the Board shall be permitted to participate in a regular or special meeting of the Board by means of electronic equipment, such as telephone, video conferencing, or other technology.

Members who wish to participate in a meeting electronically shall notify the Board Chairperson and Superintendent as early as possible. The Superintendent will arrange for the meeting to take place at a location with the appropriate equipment so that Board members participating electronically may interact, and the public may observe or hear the comments. ~~(Each part of the telephone conference call meeting shall be audible to the public at the location specified in the notice for the meeting. The location designated in the notice as the location of the meeting shall provide two-way communication during the entire telephone conference call and the identification of each party to the telephone conference call shall be clearly stated prior to the meeting.)~~ The Superintendent will take measures to verify the identity of any remotely located participants.

A member participating remotely shall be considered “present for the purposes of a quorum and shall have the same rights to discuss and vote on matters as those members physically present, provided that:

- The member is able to hear and be heard by all other members in attendance.
- The member is able to hear and be heard by any members of the public in attendance.

Any member participating by electronic equipment shall make a good faith effort to state their name and title at the outset of each occasion that such member participates in oral deliberations. The Board may, at its discretion, hold meetings in any of the following formats:

- **In-Person:** Conducted at a physical location with members physically present.
- **Fully Remote:** Conducted solely by means of electronic equipment.
- **Hybrid:** Conducted both in person at a physical location and via electronic equipment.

For any “regular” meeting held remotely or in a hybrid format, the Board shall provide the public with the ability to view or listen to the meeting in real-time, and the recording or transcript of such meeting shall be posted on the Board’s website within seven (7) days.

For any “regular” meeting held remotely or as hybrid, the Board shall provide at least forty-eight hours’ notice to each Board member and the public. The meeting agenda shall include clear instructions on how the public may access the meeting via electronic equipment. If the meeting is hybrid, the agenda shall state the physical location where the public may attend to observe the meeting or use equipment to participate.

Bylaws of the Board

Time, Place, and Notification of Meetings

Electronic Participation (continued)

In any meeting where at least one member participates by electronic means, all votes shall be taken by roll call, unless the vote is unanimous. The minutes shall reflect which members were physically present and which participated via electronic means.

If a member participating remotely is necessary to maintain a quorum and that member's connection is lost, the Board shall:

- Suspend the meeting for a period of no less than thirty (30) minutes and no more than two (2) hours to allow the member to reconnect.
- If a quorum cannot be restored after this period, the meeting shall be adjourned or postponed.
- Any such interruption or adjournment shall be noted in the meeting minutes.

~~The Board of Education allows electronic participation whenever there is communication by or to a quorum of the Board, whether the communication is in person or by means of electronic equipment. Meetings in which some Board members participate electronically are subject to the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act.~~

~~The Board may allow members to participate in meetings by telephone or other electronic means. Board members may not simply vote electronically, but must be connected with the meeting throughout the discussion of business. If a Board member electronically joins the meeting after an item of business has been opened, the remotely located member shall not participate until the next item of business is opened.~~

~~When a Board member participates electronically, the member will be considered present and will have his or her actual physical presence excused. The member shall be counted present for purposes of convening a quorum. The Board Secretary will document it in the Minutes when members participate in the meeting electronically.~~

~~Any Board member wishing to participate in a meeting electronically will notify the Board Chairperson and Superintendent as early as possible. The Superintendent will arrange for the meeting to take place in a location with the appropriate equipment so that Board members participating in the meeting electronically may interact and the public may observe or hear the comments made. (Each part of the telephone conference call meeting shall be audible to the public at the location specified in the notice for the meeting. The location designated in the notice as the location of the meeting shall provide two-way communication during the entire telephone conference call and the identification of each party to the telephone conference call shall be clearly stated prior to the meeting.) The Superintendent will take measures to verify the identity of any remotely located participants.~~

Bylaws of the Board

Time, Place, and Notification of Meetings

Electronic Participation (continued)

~~Electronic Participation (Alternate Version #1)~~

~~Recognizing the inherent responsibility and statutory duties of Board of Education members, the Board of Education (Board) strongly encourages Board members to attend and participate at meetings of the Board. Though great importance is given to the physical presence of Board members at meetings, the attendance and participation of members by teleconference is authorized whenever physical presence is not practicable. All votes at a meeting in which members are attending by teleconference shall be taken by roll call.~~

~~Whenever possible, meeting agendas and supporting materials shall be available at all teleconference facilities used for the Board meeting.~~

~~Electronic Participation (Alternate Version #2)~~

~~The Board of Education authorizes that the Board Chairperson or presiding officer may allow Board members to participate electronically in a Board meeting if there is good cause why the Board members cannot attend in person and the request is received sufficiently in advance to allow a good quality electronic connection to be set up. Members who participate in a Board meeting through electronic means may be counted in the quorum. The location of the meeting must be in the normal location at _____ to allow the public to adequately monitor the meeting. Due to security concerns, electronic participation in closed executive sessions will not be permitted.~~

(cf. 9327 – Electronic Mail Communications)

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes
 1-200 (2) Definitions. “Meeting”
 1-206 Denial of access to public records or meetings.
 1-225 Meetings of government agencies to be public, as amended by June 11
 Special Session, PA 08-3
 1-225a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)
 1-227 Mailing of notice of meetings to persons filing written request.
 1-228 Adjournment of meetings. Notice.
 1-229 Continued hearings. Notice.
 1-230 Regular meetings to be held pursuant to regulation, ordinance or
 resolution.
 10-218 Officers. Meetings

Bylaw adopted by the Board:

rev 3/26



POLICY UPDATE SUMMARY

PAGE 1

UPDATE #3

APRIL 29, 2026

The following chart has been developed and summarized for your convenience. Please note that this does not represent all of what is required in your policy manual, and although some sections in this update may not require policy language, they may be procedural and/or recommended.

Update Section	Subject/Policy Topic	Policy Number(s) Impacted	Is Policy Language Required?
A.	Digital Recording of Students and Staff	1112.6	No. CABE's recommended sample policy and regulation provided.
B.	Public Complaints (Form)	1312	No. CABE's optional sample policy and form is provided.
C.	School Lunch Services	3542	No. CABE's optional sample policy and regulation is provided.
D.	Attendance (Transitional Waiver) Kindergarten Enrollment and Early Entry Waiver (2026-2027)	5112 5112.01	YES. CABE's mandated sample policy and regulation is provided. (Policy 5112.01 mandated for the districts choosing the waiver option)
E.	Child Abuse and Neglect	5141.4	YES. CABE's mandated sample policy and regulation is provided.
F.	Online Social Networking (Anticipates Phone Free Requirement)	6141.326	No. CABE's optional sample policy and regulation is provided.
G.	Time, Place and Notice of Meeting	9321	No. CABE's recommended sample bylaw provided.