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Adopted/Ratified: 05/20

Revision Date: 06/23



## SAN DIEGO COOPERATIVE CHARTER SCHOOL

### ATTENDANCE POLICY: ABSENCES, TARDINESS AND EARLY DEPARTURES

At San Diego Cooperative Charter School (“SDCCS” or “Charter School”), attendance is a priority because it is crucial to your child’s academic success. SDCCS is a school of choice. Families who actively enroll their children in the SDCCS have opted for an educational program focusing on hands-on, project-based constructivist learning. This cannot be duplicated outside the classroom, making your child’s daily attendance even more critical for success.

Absence from school hurts not only the student but also the class. The success of the SDCCS environment relies partly upon the strength of the developed learning community. When the student is not in school, they are missing out on critical classroom experiences, and the student’s classmates are missing out on the student’s contributions to the classroom community.

***All portions of the school day are equally important to the student’s growth and mastery of learning.*** When students are late to school, they create classroom interruptions, resulting in an unsettling experience and loss of learning for the student and her/his classmates. Early departures can also adversely impact the student’s success and ability to contribute to the learning community.

Finally, California is a compulsory education state. State law requires parents/guardians of children ages 6 to 18 to send their children to school. Parents who fail to meet this obligation may cause their student to be classified as truant.

SDCCS acknowledges the need for family time and rest and rejuvenation. The administrative team has considered this in planning the school calendar and has included well-considered break times throughout the year. ***Please refer to the school calendar as a planning guide so that your child can be in school each day and receive the maximum benefits of regular participation in his/her classroom.***

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If a family circumstance arises that impacts your child's ability to be at school, please let your child's teacher or Principal know so we can work on a plan to support you and your child during this time.

Whether the absence is excused or unexcused, the state only provides daily funding to the school if a student is actually at school. Charter schools do have the option of using short-term independent study contracts (CIS), but in the interest of improving attendance, as well as student learning opportunities, SDCCS will not offer CIS, unless pre-approved.

### Reporting Absences:

- All absences and late arrivals must be verified by a parent/guardian within three **(3) school days** of the last day of the student's absence. Absences remaining unverified after three (3) school days will be recorded as unexcused.
- The following methods may be used to verify absences:
  - Phone
  - Written note from parent/guardian
  - Online submission via the school website: [www.sdccs.org](http://www.sdccs.org)
- The information below must be included during verification:
  - Notification date
  - Student's full name
  - Teacher's name and grade
  - Date(s) of absence
  - Reason for absence
  - Name and relationship of the person notifying the school.
- Each day, the Charter School will attempt to verify unresolved absences by using an automated calling system, to contact parents/guardians. The parents/guardians are responsible for contacting the school as outlined above.
- When arriving late or departing early, the parent/guardian must sign in through the school office and obtain a tardy slip to admit the child to class or an early release slip to indicate to the teacher that you have already signed the child out for the day. Once the child has been signed in, the child may proceed to class. Once a child has been signed out, an office staff member will send for your student to meet you at the office to limit classroom disruption.
  - Students *must* be signed out by a parent or guardian or by a responsible adult who has been pre-designated by the student's parent/guardian. SDCCS cannot allow children the liberty to leave campus during the instructional day without properly designated adult accompaniment, with the exception of an

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excused absences for students in grades 7-8 for confidential medical appointments

Please note that SDCCS maintains a closed campus. School gates are closed at 8:30 am when instruction begins. Gates are re-opened fifteen (15) minutes before school ends.

Healthcare provider verification:

- a. The statewide average absence rate for typical childhood illness is five (5) days per school year. **Anytime a child has a doctor's appointment and/or documentation that requires the child to stay home from school; documentation must be provided to the school office within three (3) school days.** These absences will be recorded as “excused” and will be taken into account when reviewing the child’s total attendance record.
- b. When excusing students for confidential medical services or verifying such appointments, Charter School staff shall not ask the purpose of such appointments but may contact a medical office to confirm the time of the appointment.
- c. A healthcare provider’s note of illness will be accepted for any reported absence. When a student has had fourteen (14) absences in the school year for illness verified by methods listed in #1-#3 above without a healthcare provider’s note, a healthcare provider must verify any further absences for illness.

Students who are ill in excess of school guidelines may be required to bring verification of illness from a medical professional on their return to school. If the child is under the regular care of a physician for a serious or chronic condition, or is directed to stay home by a medical professional, verification is to be provided to the school office at the time of the absence. Absences for excessive illnesses that are not verified with official documentation will be marked unexcused and may subject the student and/or parents to School Attendance Review Team (“SART”).

### **Absences**

Under California law, excused absences are only designated for:

- Student illness, including an absence for the benefit of the pupil’s mental or behavioral health : A child is too ill to attend school if the student has a contagious condition, a temperature of over 100, symptoms of vomiting or diarrhea, or written orders from a doctor to stay at home. If the child is ill 3 or more consecutive days, the school will require a note from a physician documenting the child's illness and the necessity of

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having the child stay home from school. Illness of *other* family members does not result in an excused absence for the student.

- Health/medical quarantine as may be designated by the school, county health department or medical professional.
- Medical appointments or services lasting all day.
- Failure to provide proof of immunization for school enrollment.
- Attending the funeral of an immediate family member to include the student's parent or legal guardian, sibling, grandparent, spouse, son/son-in-law, daughter/daughter-in-law, or any relative living in the student's household. In such circumstances, one (1) day is allowed; or three (3) days are allowed for travel outside of California. The Principal or designee may use their discretion to extend the length of an excused absence for bereavement.
- Upon request by the parent/guardian and the approval of the Principal or designee, justifiable personal reasons, including but not limited to:
  - appearance in court by a student
  - attendance at a funeral service
  - observation of a holiday or ceremony of his/her religion

Excused tardies are only designated for medical appointments that cannot be scheduled outside of school hours.

***All other absences or late arrivals are classified as unexcused, even if the parent notifies the school.***

Parents are encouraged to schedule medical/dental appointments and family business during school breaks, school holidays, and other non-school times whenever possible. In the event an absence from school cannot be avoided, the best course of action is to stay in close communication with your child's teachers, and provide an opportunity for the child to make up any missed assignments.

#### Other Excused Absences: Contracts - Independent Study (CIS)

Independent study contracts may be completed if the student will miss a minimum of two (2) school days. Requests to accommodate CIS are approved on an individual basis by the Principal or designee.

**Extended educational experiences:** To ensure that the student receives attendance and academic credit, the parent/guardian must confer with the student's teacher to receive the work assigned at least one week prior.

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· **Serious injury or illness:** The Principal or designee may request verification of students' condition by a physician. Students with mental health conditions must present verification from a physician *and* a treatment plan from their therapist. In such cases of medically related extended absence, the Principal or designee may meet with the parent(s)/guardian(s) to determine the appropriateness of long-term individualized assignments.

Short-term independent study contracts are no longer an option for replacing a student's attendance and participation at school unless otherwise approved by the Principal or designee. SDCCS has determined that a packet of measurable work does not adequately replicate the classroom experience. Instead, the administration and teaching staff wish to emphasize to our students and parents the importance of being at school every day.

### Chronic Illness

Personal illness which reoccurs on a frequent basis will require a doctor's certification.

If your child has a diagnosed chronic illness, you must provide a physician's authorization in order for these recurrent absences to be excused. Such authorization requires the treating physician to verify the diagnosis and list symptoms that would require the child to stay home from school but not necessitate an office visit. With this authorization, the parent may send a note when the child returns to school listing one or more of the symptoms identified by the physician's report. These absences will be considered excused. Please contact the Charter Schools office for additional assistance. We encourage families to communicate chronic illness to the school as soon as possible, as a Health Plan or Section 504 Plan may be appropriate to ensure that the student is able to access their education successfully.

### Unexcused Absences/Truancy for Classroom Based Attendance

The Executive Director, or designee, shall implement positive steps to reduce truancy, including working with the family in an attempt to resolve the attendance problem. A student's progress and learning may be affected by excessive unexcused absences. In addition, the Charter School is fiscally dependent on student attendance and is negatively impacted by excessive unexcused absences. If all attempts to resolve the student's attendance problem are unsuccessful, the Charter School will implement the processes described below.

### Process for Addressing Truancy:

· If a student incurs three (3) unexcused absences the parent/guardian may receive a letter documenting the child's attendance. An appointment or other form of contact may

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be made with the child's teacher to identify the cause of such absences and to discuss how the school can work with the family to support the child's success in school, including regular attendance.

- Upon incurring the fifth (5<sup>th</sup>) unexcused absence or tardy in excess of thirty (30) minutes, the parent/guardian will receive a second letter documenting the child's attendance and an appointment with SART will be scheduled to discuss the child's continued absence and develop an attendance improvement plan for the student.

- Upon incurring the seventh (7<sup>th</sup>) unexcused absence the parent/guardian may receive a phone call setting up a follow-up meeting with SART. A third letter documenting the child's attendance will also be provided to the parent/guardian. The attendance improvement plan may be discussed and revised as needed.

- If the conditions of the SART contract are not met, the student may incur additional administrative action up to and including disenrollment from the Charter School, consistent with the Involuntary Removal Process described below. If the student is disenrolled after the Involuntary Removal Process has been followed, notification will be sent within thirty (30) days to the student's last known school district of residence.

- For all communications set forth in this process, the Charter School will use the contact information provided by the parent/guardian in the registration packet. It is the parent's or guardian's responsibility to update the Charter School with any new contact information.

- If a student is absent ten (10) or more consecutive school days without valid excuse and the student's parent/guardian cannot be reached at the number or address provided in the registration packet and does not otherwise respond to the Charter School's communication attempts, as set forth above, the student will be in violation of the SART contract, and the SART panel will recommend that the student be disenrolled in compliance with the Involuntary Removal Process described below. The Involuntary Removal Process can be started immediately upon the Charter School receiving documentation of the student's enrollment and attendance at another public or private school (i.e., a CALPADS report).

### **Process for Addressing Tardies (Excessive Late Arrivals or Early Departures)**

As indicated throughout this document, attendance is an issue SDCCS takes very seriously. Students who are regularly arriving late to school or leaving early are also at risk of poor academic performance. For students who are habitually missing a portion of the instructional day, notification letters will be sent as outlined above, following the thresholds outlined below:

- Students incurring six (6) tardies will receive an attendance update letter.

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- Students incurring nine (9) tardies will receive a letter requesting a meeting with the child's teacher. An attendance improvement plan will be discussed.
- Students incurring the 12<sup>th</sup> tardy will generate the need for a review of parents' attempts to implement the attendance improvement plan as agreed by parents, teacher and Principal. Upon recommendation of the Principal, SDCCS' SART will become involved in the review of student attendance, which may include a meeting with the student's parents/guardians.
- Subsequent attendance issues may be referred to SDCCS' SART.

Families are also reminded that the SDCCS curriculum embraces a wide variety of integral subject matter and teachers spend a significant amount of time to ensure that *all portions* of the school day are equally important to the student's growth and mastery of learning. When a student leaves early, the student is missing out on integral learning experiences which adversely impact the student's success and her/his ability to be a contributing member of the learning community.

Accordingly, if a student develops patterns of early departure, parents will be scheduled to meet with the teacher, Principal, and the SART to develop an attendance improvement plan.

Again, our goal is to have your child in school for each full day of instruction.

### **Process for Students Who Are Not in Attendance at the Beginning of the School Year**

When a student is not in attendance on the first five (5) days of the school year, the Charter School will attempt to reach the student's parent/guardian on a daily basis for each of the first five (5) days to determine whether the student has an excused absence, consistent with the process outlined in this policy. If the student has a basis for an excused absence, the student's parent/guardian must notify the Charter School of the absence and provide documentation consistent with this policy. However, consistent with process below, students who are not in attendance by the sixth (6<sup>th</sup>) day of the school year due to an unexcused absence will be disenrolled from the Charter School roster after following the Involuntary Removal Process described below, as it will be assumed that the student has chosen another school option.

1. Students who are absent on the first (1<sup>st</sup>) day of the school year will be contacted by phone to ensure their intent to enroll in the Charter School.
2. Students who have indicated their intent to enroll but have not attended by the third (3<sup>rd</sup>) day of the school year and do not have an excused absence will receive a letter indicating the student's risk of disenrollment.

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3. Students who have indicated their intent to enroll but have not attended by the fifth (5<sup>th</sup>) day of the school year and do not have an excused absence will receive a phone call reiterating the content of the letter.
4. Students who are not in attendance by the sixth (6<sup>th</sup>) day of the school year and do not have an excused absence will receive an Involuntary Removal Notice and the CDE Enrollment Complaint Notice and Form. The Charter School will follow the Involuntary Removal Process described below, which includes an additional five (5) schooldays for the parent/guardian to respond to the Charter School and request a hearing before disenrollment.
5. The Involuntary Removal Process can be started immediately upon the Charter School receiving documentation of the student's enrollment and attendance at another public or private school (i.e., a CALPADS report).
6. The Charter School will use the contact information the parent/guardian provided in the registration packet.
7. Within thirty (30) calendar days of disenrollment, the Charter School will send the student's last known school district of residence a letter notifying it of the student's failure to attend the Charter School.

### **Involuntary Removal Process**

The parent or guardian of the student shall be provided written notice of the Charter School's intent to remove the student ("Involuntary Removal Notice"). The Involuntary Removal Notice must be provided to the parent or guardian no less than five (5) schooldays before the effective date of the proposed disenrollment date.

The written notice shall be in the native language of the student or the student's parent or guardian or, if the student is a foster child or youth or a homeless child or youth, the student's educational rights holder. The Involuntary Removal Notice shall include:

1. The charges against the student
2. An explanation of the student's basic rights including the right to request a hearing before the effective date of the action
3. The CDE Enrollment Complaint Notice and Form



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The hearing shall be consistent with the Charter School's expulsion procedures. If the student's parent, guardian, or educational rights holder requests a hearing, the student shall remain enrolled and not be removed until the Charter School makes a final decision. As used herein, "involuntarily removed" includes disenrolled, dismissed, transferred, or terminated, but does not include suspensions or expulsions pursuant to the Charter School's suspension and expulsion policy.

Upon a parent's or guardian's request for a hearing, the Charter School will provide a fair opportunity to present testimony, evidence, and witnesses and confront and cross-examine adverse witnesses, and at which the student has the right to bring legal counsel or an advocate. The notice of hearing shall be in the native language of the student or the student's parent or guardian or, if the student is a foster child or youth or a homeless child or youth, the student's educational rights holder and shall include a copy of the Charter School's expulsion hearing process.

If the parent/guardian is nonresponsive to the Involuntary Removal Notice, the student will be disenrolled as of the effective date set forth in the Involuntary Removal Notice. If parent/guardian requests a hearing and does not attend on the date scheduled for the hearing, the student will be disenrolled effective the date of the hearing.

If as a result of the hearing the student is disenrolled, notice will be sent to the student's last known school district of residence within thirty (30) calendar days.

A hearing decision not to disenroll the student does not prevent the Charter School from making a similar recommendation in the future should student truancy continue or re-occur.

### **Referral to Appropriate Agencies or County District Attorney**

It is the Charter School's intent to identify and remove all barriers to the student's success, and the Charter School will explore every possible option to address student attendance issues with the family. The Charter School may refer the family to appropriate school-based and/or social service agencies for any unexcused absence.

If a student's attendance does not improve after a SART contract has been developed according to the procedures above, or if the parents/guardians fail to attend a required SART meeting, the Charter School may notify the County District Attorney's office, which then may refer the matter for prosecution through the court system. Students twelve (12) years of age and older may be referred to the juvenile court for adjudication.

### **Non-Discrimination**

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These policies will be enforced fairly, uniformly, and consistently without regard to the characteristics listed in Education Code section 220 (actual or perceived disability, gender, gender identity, gender expression, nationality, race or ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, or any other characteristic that is contained in the definition of hate crimes set forth in Penal Code section 422.55, including immigration status, pregnancy, or association with an individual who has any of the aforementioned characteristics).

### **Reports**

The Executive Director, or designee, shall gather and report to the Board the number of absences both excused and unexcused as well as students who are truant, and the steps taken to remedy the problem.

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