

Guidance on Student Attendance Fields

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During school year 2020-2021, the New Jersey Department of Education (Department) undertook efforts to align its student information system to the Common Education Data Standards (CEDS). Additionally, efforts were made to align the attendance fields more closely to regulations in Chapter 32. These efforts resulted in minor modifications to the attendance data fields in the NJSMART SID Management data collection. The five attendance fields now in use are described below and appear in the updated [SID Management Student Data Handbook](#).

Attendance Fields Used to Calculate Chronic Absenteeism

In previous years, the Department collected the attendance data used to calculate chronic absenteeism through two fields: Cumulative Days in Membership (M) and Cumulative Days Present (P). Cumulative Days Absent (A) was calculated by subtracting Cumulative Days Present from Cumulative Days in Membership, or $A = M - P$. Starting in SY 2021-2022, The Department will use the following two fields to calculate chronic absenteeism: **Number of Days Present** (P) and **Number of Days Absent** (A). The Department will now calculate Cumulative Days in Membership by adding the Number of Days Present to the Number of Days Absent, or $M = P + A$. Note: To align the attendance fields more closely to regulations in Chapter 32, the Department added an additional field, **Number of State Excused Absences** (X), to capture the number of days students are absent for a state-excused reason. As the equation above indicates, state-excused absences continue to be excluded from days in membership.

Number of Days Present is interchangeable with the previous data field, Cumulative Days Present. Only the name of the field changed. Thus, the guidance for this field remains the same as it appears in the [Guidance for Reporting Student Absences and Calculative Chronic Absenteeism](#). Some of the larger points are reproduced below:

- This field represents the number of school days in session from July 1 through June 30 that a student is recorded as under the guidance and direction of a teacher in the teaching process. (Summer school days in session should only be included if summer school attendance is required of all students.)
- This field must include all days that students are recorded as present, regardless of student learning environment.
- A student who misses school due to illness may not be marked as present unless home instruction has been approved by the district board of education and is being provided to the student per *N.J.A.C. 6A:16-10.2*.
- In accordance with *N.J.A.C. 6A:16-10.1*, a student temporarily removed from the classroom to in-school suspension is considered present, provided the student is afforded the opportunity to continue to:
 - Appropriately participate in the general education program; and
 - For students with disabilities, receive the services specified in their IEPs, and participate with nondisabled students to the extent they would have in their current placement.
- A student on out-of-school suspension cannot be marked as present unless the student is receiving educational services per *N.J.A.C. 6A:16-10.2*.

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Number of State Excused Absences is the number of school days in session a student misses for a State-excused reason. The following are the five allowable reasons for a state-excused absence:

- [Religious observance](#) (*N.J.A.C. 6A:32-8.3(h)*);
- A college visit (up to 3 days per school year for students in grades 11 and 12);
- “Take Our Children to Work Day” or other rule issued by the Commissioner;
- Participation in observance of Veterans Day (*N.J.S.A. 18A:36-13.2*) or district board of election membership activities (*N.J.S.A. 18A:36-33*); or
- The closure of a busing district that prevents a student from having transportation to the receiving school.

Number of Days Absent captures the number of school days in session from July 1 through June 30 that a student is absent from school, i.e., is not under the guidance and direction of a teaching engaged in the teaching process for any reason other than a state-excused absence. While district boards of education may adopt policies that establish locally approved absences consistent with *N.J.A.C. 6A:16-7.6*, an absence designated as excused by the district board of education must be recorded as an absence in NJSMART. This field should include all days students are marked as absent, irrespective of student learning environment.

Student Attendance in Remote Learning Environments

In school year 2020-2021, the Department added data fields to collect student attendance in remote learning environments. The Department will continue to collect this information. For school year 2021-2022, the two data fields the Department is using to collect student attendance in remote learning environments are: **Remote Days Present** and **Remote Days Absent**. These fields must be used when virtual or remote instruction is provided to students because one or more schools in a school district are required to close for in-person instruction due to the reasons outlined in *N.J.S.A. 18A:7F-9*. Similarly, these fields must be used whenever the school district provides virtual or remote instruction to an individual student, a group of students, or an entire class of students who are excluded from school due to meeting the New Jersey Department of Health’s COVID-19 exclusion criteria.

Remote Days Present and **Remote Days Absent** must not be used when students are receiving home instruction due to temporary illness, discipline or other reasons. Attendance during periods of home instruction should continue to be tracked in the Number of Days Present and Number of Days Absent data fields only.

Additionally, in the event that virtual or remote instruction is provided to students because one or more schools in a school district are required to close for in-person instruction due to the reasons outlined in *N.J.S.A. 18A:7F-9* or the school district provides virtual or remote instruction to an individual student, a group of students, or an entire class of students who are excluded from school due to meeting the New Jersey Department of Health’s COVID-19 exclusion criteria, the **Student Learning Environment** field should be updated to Hybrid (to reflect the fact that the student participated in school physically and for a time from a remote learning environment).

The **Student Internet Connectivity**, **Student Device Owner**, and **Student Device Type** fields that are related to device and connectivity should reflect what the district knows to be true about the student. These fields should reflect what the district provided to the student, or what the district learned from the student (and his/her/their) family.