

GUIDELINES

ATTENDANCE – RECORDING AND REPORTING

Responsibility of: School Support Services
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Target Audience: Staff/Parents/Community

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This document should be read in conjunction with the following documents:

- Attendance and Participation policy
- Attendance – Compliance guidelines
- Attendance – Exemption from Attendance and Participation guidelines
- Attendance – Lesson Attendance Codes and Descriptions

1. INTRODUCTION

These guidelines outline how all Northern Territory government school staff must record student attendance. Pursuant to section 45 of the Northern Territory [Education Act](#) (the Act), principals must ensure an attendance register is maintained each school day that instruction is provided to students.

Schools and the department use attendance data for a number of reasons including:

- ensuring the safety and wellbeing of students, including in emergency situations
- determining global school budget allocations
- monitoring individual students and initiating the department's enforcement processes
- providing an evidence base for planning, developing and monitoring attendance strategies targeting improved attendance
- providing evidence for enforcement under the Act and the [Social Security \(Administration\) Act](#).

2. DEFINITIONS

Authorised persons are police officers and all staff employed in the Enrolment and Attendance unit, Regional Attendance and Truancy Managers, and Senior Attendance and Truancy Officers (SATO) who are granted legal powers and functions under the Act when they are appointed by the Chief Executive Northern Territory Department of Education. In addition, some authorised persons exercise delegated legislative powers and functions by the Chief Executive.

Early Childhood Program Attendance System (ECPAS) is a system used to record the attendance of students and their families at programs such as Mobile Early Childhood Education and Families as First Teachers.

Former roll is a roll in SAMS to which a student's name is moved when the student is no longer enrolled at the school. As such the former roll acts as a record for all students previously enrolled in the school.

Parent signifies a child's father, mother or any other person who has parental responsibility for the child, including a person who is regarded as a parent of the child under Aboriginal customary law or Aboriginal tradition.

Parental responsibility of a person signifies that the person:

- a) has daily care and control of the child or
- b) is entitled to exercise all the powers and rights in relation to, and has full responsibility for all aspects of, the long-term care and development of the child or
- c) has daily care and control of the child, and the entitlement and responsibilities mentioned at (b); including a person who has been given those entitlements or responsibilities under another state or territory law.

Passive form is a form in SAMS to which a student's name is transferred when the student has recorded 20 consecutive school days of un-notified absence (marked 'U' – Un-notified Absence code) and/or unacceptable reason (marked 'X' – Unacceptable Reason code) and the school has not received notification that the child is enrolled in another school.

Student Administration and Management System (SAMS G2 and SAMS Classic, hereafter referred to as SAMS) is the standard student administration system used in all NT government schools to manage student enrolment and attendance.

Senior Attendance and Truancy Officers (SATO) is a term which, for the purpose of this document, includes Attendance and Truancy Officers. SATOs work under the Act and the *Social Security (Administration) Act* to reduce non-attendance by administering legislative powers. Such powers include, but are not limited to, the following:

- issuing notices
- conducting compulsory conferences
- referring student files for prosecution
- recommending suspension of Category H Centrelink payments.

Student living independently is a child who is of or above the age of 14 years and not living with a parent. A child who is living with a parent is also considered to be independent if the parent is unable to control the child's behaviour in relation to enrolment, attendance and participation.

Student Master Index is a central register of all students under the age of 25 years who have been enrolled in an NT Government school.

Student Record Folder (SRF) is a hard copy folder that contains all records pertaining to a student's enrolment, health and wellbeing, attendance etc. Where a student transfers to another government school the student's SRF should be transferred with the student.

3. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Regional Directors will:

- manage schools' compliance with legislative requirements and departmental guidelines in regard to attendance data and records.

Regional Attendance and Truancy Managers will:

- provide advice to principals and school staff regarding the appropriate use of attendance codes in SAMS.

Senior Attendance and Truancy Officers (SATO) will:

- provide advice to principals and school staff regarding the appropriate use of attendance codes in SAMS
- liaise with school staff in collating information in relation to the enforcement process under the Act
- work with schools to ensure the timely creation and maintenance of records which could potentially be used in court proceedings relating to non-attendance
- work with school staff in reviewing and monitoring the passive form
- liaise with principals and school staff in relation to students currently engaged.

Student Administration Systems (SAS) Team will:

- manage the SAMS environment and the [Student Master Index](#)
- provide training, support and advice to schools in relation to the department's student administration systems
- investigate student record issues within SAMS and work with schools to resolve.

Performance and Data Management (PaDM) will:

- collate the department's official enrolment and attendance data in week four and week eight of each term
- provide direction and support to schools to validate enrolment and attendance data, and encourage and facilitate good data quality.

Principals will:

- ensure timely and accurate attendance records are maintained in accordance with legislation and departmental policy and guidelines
- actively ensure that school staff understand departmental policy and guidelines, school processes, and their individual roles and responsibilities
- ensure staff are trained in local and departmental systems relating to recording student attendance (including SAMS training)
- ensure all correspondence with parents and all other relevant documentation is filed in the Student Record Folder (SRF).

Teachers and school staff will:

- on a daily basis, accurately record student attendance and related records in accordance with this guideline, Lesson Attendance Codes and Descriptions, and local school processes
- ensure all correspondence with parents and all other relevant documentation is filed in the Student Record Folder (SRF).

4. GUIDELINES

4.1 Marking student attendance

Student attendance must be recorded and entered into SAMS daily. Students attending Families as First Teachers or Mobile Early Childhood Education programs must have their attendance recorded in the Early Childhood Program Attendance System (ECPAS).

A teacher must record attendance at the following times during the school day:

- **Preschool** – each half-day session (am or pm), within 30 minutes of the start of each session
- **Primary school** – twice a day, within 30 minutes of the start of each session
- **Middle and senior school** – at schools where students' attendance is recorded for each lesson, within 15 minutes of the start of each lesson; and at schools where attendance is recorded twice a day (am and pm), within 30 minutes of the start of each session.

Step 1 Lesson attendance records generated on the class roll

Lesson attendance records are generated for all students on the current roll. In SAMS G2, all students' attendance will be generated as Not Yet Marked ('*' code). In SAMS Classic, all students' attendance will be generated as 'Present' ('/' code). If the student has been suspended, their attendance is recorded in future attendance records by the suspended code being automatically generated for the duration of the approved period.

Step 2 Teacher marks the roll

The class teacher must mark attendance for all students in the active form. All students present in class will be marked as Present ('/' code). Absences should be marked as Un-notified Absence ('U' code) until a reason is provided. If a student arrives late to class, the un-notified absence must be changed to Late ('L' code) in accordance with school processes and the Lesson Attendance Codes and Descriptions.

If marking on a paper roll, schools must have local processes in place to ensure this information is added to SAMS prior to the commencement of the next school day. In a homeland school or school with a teaching principal, the week's attendance **must** be entered into SAMS by no later than close of business on the Friday of that week.

If there are exceptional circumstances where marking attendance has occurred or will occur outside of this timeframe, the principal should contact the SAS Team for advice and provide notification to the Regional Attendance and Truancy Manager.

Step 3 Updating attendance codes

The principal must have local processes in place to resolve all absences marked Un-notified Absence ('U' code).

An attendance code in regard to a student's absence can be updated only when school staff receive notification from a parent, student living independently or authorised person. A case note must be added in SAMS stating the reason why a code was updated and by whom.

If the notification is received by email or hand written note, this must be filed in the Student Record Folder.

Step 4 Unmarked attendances

If using SAMS G2, school staff must generate the unmarked registers report on a weekly basis to identify students categorised as 'not yet marked'. This is to ensure that attendance is recorded for all students.

Step 5 Monitoring

Schools will undergo regular data validation processes as directed by Performance and Data Management (refer to [Business Intelligence Centre \(BIC\) SharePoint site](#)).

4.2 Attendance codes

Principals are responsible for ensuring that all staff, current and new, are trained in the use of the Lesson Attendance Codes and Descriptions and act in accordance with departmental policy and guidelines. The [Lesson Attendance Codes and Descriptions](#) demonstrate the different codes used in SAMS to record students' reasons for non-attendance.

4.2.1 Recording non-attendance

Principals will have detailed local school processes in place to follow up on un-notified student absences with parents. Local processes must include the requirement that school staff will endeavour to contact a parent within the first day of an absence where no notification has been received. Parents must be notified that where a child is absent from school for a period exceeding three days, a medical certificate must be provided.

Attempts to contact a parent or student living independently must be recorded in the notes field in SAMS as they occur.

Although parents may not provide schools with reasons for student absences in a timely manner, school staff are required to consider and record reasons for absences when they are provided. If it has been two weeks since the absence and no evidence is provided, the decision as to whether the SAMS code will be updated in accordance with the reason provided is at the discretion of the principal. Any decisions about student absences must be recorded in the notes field in SAMS.

Notifications for absences must come directly from the parent, student living independently or authorised person. Advice from a third party will not be considered as a notification unless this is approved by the principal. Third parties include, but are not limited to, school bus driver, relatives, other students, siblings, Remote School Attendance Strategy staff or members of the community.

4.3 Students on the passive form

Where the student has recorded 20 consecutive school days of Un-notified Absence (marked as 'U' code) and/or Unacceptable Reason (marked as 'X' code) and the school has not received notification that the child is enrolled in another school, the student's name must be moved to the passive form. Students can only be transferred from an active form to the passive form in SAMS if the student has met this threshold of 20 consecutive school days. Under no other circumstance should a student be moved to the passive form.

The principal will have local processes for moving students to and from the passive form and ensuring the passive form is marked daily. Students' attendance in the passive form will be generated as '*' code – Not Yet Marked, where each student must be marked as 'U' code – Un-notified Absence, or 'X' code – Unacceptable Reason. Principals must ensure prompt follow-up of an Un-notified Absence ('U' code) and that all actions are recorded in the notes field in SAMS. If the student re-attends school, the student must be moved from the passive form back to an active form. A student cannot then be returned to the passive form until the above threshold is again met.

Students in the passive form are not counted as enrolments and their attendance is disregarded when calculating school attendance. Students aged 17 years or over who have not attended for eight school weeks and no notification has been received that the student is enrolled elsewhere can be moved to the **Former roll** as they are no longer of compulsory school age.

4.4 Providing attendance reports to parents and external agencies

School and departmental staff must follow the Attendance Reports for External Agencies Procedure when responding to requests for student attendance data from a parent or agencies external to Department of Education.

4.4.1 Parents

A parent can request their child’s attendance data from a school at which their child is currently, or has been previously, enrolled. Attendance data can be released only to a parent identified in SAMS as one of the primary caregivers. Some parents may request attendance reports as evidence of eligibility for exemption from, or access to, other government programs or grants. A parent is not required to inform the school of their reasons for requesting attendance data. If a parent identifies errors in attendance data and has reasonable evidence to support that claim, the matter will be resolved at the discretion of the principal.

4.4.2 External agencies

An agency external to the Department of Education may request individual student attendance data. When considering requests, school and departmental staff must comply with the Northern Territory [Information Act](#) and [data access policy](#).

For example, Northern Territory Government officers from Territory Families, or the Northern Territory Police, can request information under the Northern Territory [Care and Protection of Children Act](#).

For further information, please contact the following areas:

Business Unit	Phone	Email
Performance and Data Management (PaDM)	8901 1388	stats.det@nt.gov.au
Student Administration Systems (SAS) team	1800 446 961	sams.det@ntschoools.net sams.det@nt.gov.au
Enrolment and Attendance unit Attendance & Truancy Hotline (North) Attendance & Truancy Hotline (South)	8944 9273 1800 070 493 1800 206 317	sat.det@nt.gov.au
Early Childhood Program Attendance System (ECPAS)	8999 3550	earlychild.det@nt.gov.au

5. RELATED POLICY, LEGISLATION AND DOCUMENTS

Department of Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enrolment policy and guidelines • Data access policy
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Northern Territory	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Education Act• Care and Protection of Children Act• Information Act
National	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• School Enrolment and Attendance Measure (SEAM)• Social Security (Administration) Act
Documents / Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• SAMS G2 Administration Manager Training Notes (staff access only)• Business Intelligence Centre (BIC) SharePoint site (Staff access only)