

Exemptions from attendance – procedures

Policy statement

All children and young people of compulsory school age must attend the school each school day, or each part of a school day, on which the school is open for instruction.

Short term absences from school, such as illness or a short family holiday, are managed through school's absence notification process.

Where there are special circumstances which mean that students cannot attend school for a longer period, and flexible education is unsuitable, parents of children or children living independently may apply for formal exemptions from school attendance or from participation in an eligible option. One example of special circumstances is infectious disease.

Procedures

Parents of children and children living independently

Parents of children and children living independently must:

1. explore all available options with the school principal prior to making a formal request for exemption from attendance
2. write to the school principal, six weeks prior to the anticipated exemption period, to request an exemption. Northern Territory (NT) Government school principals have the discretion to consider and approve a request when a request for exemption is not foreseeable. The request must include supporting documentation to explain:
 - the reason why an exemption is sought
 - relevant special circumstance
 - the anticipated period of exemption
3. advise the principal if the special circumstance changes. Any requests to vary an application will be processed as a new request
4. notify the principal when the child or young person intends to return to school.

Parents of children and children living independently can make a complaint if unsatisfied with any decision relating to a request for exemption. For information on how to make a complaint, refer to the NT Government's [Make a complaint about a school webpage](#).

Principals

Principals must:

1. work with the child or young person and their parent to explore alternative options other than exemption
2. ensure the child or young person and their parent fully understand the consequences of exemption
3. prepare a memorandum with supporting evidence for the Senior Director Education's consideration. The memorandum should include:
 - how the school has worked to engage the child or young person
 - how the school has concluded that there is no alternative option for the child or young person
 - the principal's assessment of the special circumstance on which the application relies
 - the child or young person's flexible education arrangement if there is one in place
 - if the exemption is sought for a specific period, how the school will facilitate the child or young person's re-engagement with the school
 - additional information such as supporting documentation from a potential employer and or a medical assessment
 - a written request from the parent of a child or a child living independently
 - whether the principal endorses the request
 - how contact with the child or young person will be maintained, regardless of the outcome of the request
4. ensure that a student who is exempt is marked as Attendance Not Required in the Department of Education's mandated student administration system or compliant third-party program
5. where a child or young person is exempt, maintain regular communication with the child or young person or their parent, to ensure that the exemption is still in the child or young person's best interests and that any specified conditions continue to be met.

School staff

School staff must:

1. assist the principal with any enquiries relating to assessment of an application for exemption.

Senior Directors Education

Senior Directors Education will:

1. consider all alternative options, based on the evidence presented by the principal
2. consider whether to endorse an application for exemption, based on the evidence presented by the principal
3. prepare a memorandum seeking the Chief Executive's approval on whether a child or young person should be exempt from school attendance or from participation in an eligible option

- where an application is not approved by the Chief Executive, notify the principal and the parent of a child or a child living independently in writing of the outcome, including the reasons for the application not being approved.

Chief Executive

Chief Executive will:

- approve an application, where appropriate, for a child or young person to be exempt for a specified period
- notify the principal and the parent of a child or a child living independently in writing of the outcome.

Related legislation, policy and resources

- Education Act 2015* – <https://legislation.nt.gov.au/Legislation/EDUCATION-ACT-2015>
- Make a complaint about a school – <https://nt.gov.au/learning/primary-and-secondary-students/make-a-complaint-about-a-school>

Acronyms	Full form
NT	Northern Territory

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