




pennsylvania
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

TO: County Children and Youth Agencies
Private Children and Youth Social Service Agencies
Foster Care Agencies
Adoption Agencies
Child Residential and Day Treatment Facilities
Child Welfare Service Providers

FROM: Jonathan Rubin 
Deputy Secretary for Children, Youth and Families

RE: Guidance Regarding Change to Compulsory School Age
Beginning 2020-21 Academic Year

DATE: **August 3, 2020**

The Office of Children, Youth and Families (OCYF) is sharing this memorandum to provide information regarding recent changes to the compulsory school age in Pennsylvania. Act 16 of 2019 amended the Public School Code to update the definition of compulsory school age to “the period of a child’s life from the time the child’s parent elected to have the child enter school and which shall be no later than 6 years of age until the child reaches 18 years of age.” The term does not include a child who holds a certification of graduation from a regularly accredited, licensed, registered or approved high school” (24 P.S. §13-1326). The full updated text of the Public School Code can be found at <https://www.legis.state.pa.us/WU01/LI/LI/US/HTM/1949/0/0014..HTM>.

This update changes requirements for school attendance across the Commonwealth, although limited exceptions apply (24 P.S. §13-1330):

- As of the 2020-21 academic year, children must now be enrolled in school no later than age six (which had previously been age eight, except in Philadelphia).
- Children are now required to attend school until age 18, or graduation, whichever occurs first (this was previously age 17).

Subsequently, children who turn six **before September 1, 2020** that are not yet enrolled in school **must** enroll and attend school this school year (2020-21 academic year). Children who turn six **after September 1, 2020** that are not yet enrolled **must** enroll by the start of the following school year. Additionally as of July 1, 2020, children may no longer withdraw from school at age 17. Students under the age of 18 who previously withdrew from school or who have graduated from high school are not required to reenroll.

Additional information can be found in the Pennsylvania Department of Education's Basic Education Circular entitled Compulsory School Attendance, Unlawful Absences, and School Attendance Improvement Conferences which is available online at <https://www.education.pa.gov/Policy-Funding/BECS/Purdons/Pages/Truancy.aspx>.

If you have any questions or concerns related to the education of children served by OCYF, please contact Ms. Jillian Schreib, Human Services Program Specialist with OCYF's Division of Policy, at jschreib@pa.gov.

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