



## SECTION III: STUDENT POLICIES 3310

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### Chronic Absenteeism Medical Exemption Policy

Oklahoma Virtual Charter Academy (“OVCA”) establishes this policy to provide that student absences which are due to a significant medical condition (a severe, chronic, or life-threatening physical or mental illness, injury, or trauma) are exempted from inclusion in the calculation of the chronic absenteeism indicator of OVCA upon determination of eligibility by a medical exemption review committee formed by OVCA.

**Definitions.** The following words and terms, when used in this Section, shall have the following meaning, unless the context clearly indicates otherwise:

- (1) **“Chronic absenteeism”** means absence from school at least ten percent (10%) of the time that school is in session and the student is included in membership, eighteen (18) or more days on a 180-day school calendar, or ten percent (10%) or more of school days on a 1,080-hour school calendar.
- (2) **“Significant medical condition”** means, for the purposes of this policy, a severe, chronic, or life-threatening physical or mental illness, infection, injury, disease, or emotional trauma that meets the following criteria:
  - (A) The condition affects the student so severely as to incapacitate the student from attending school for an identifiable time period or number of school days, or for which the student must receive regular medical care requiring absence from school;
  - (B) The student is unable to receive instruction through homebound education services for an identifiable time period or number of school days due to the medical condition or its treatment, or homebound education is not appropriate due to brief recurring absences for the purpose of receiving treatment;
  - (C) The school has been provided with written documentation of the condition that is verified in writing by a physician licensed to practice in the State of Oklahoma, or by a physician licensed in another state if the student has received related treatment out of state. A copy of the documentation verifying the student’s condition shall be filed in the student’s educational record. For qualifying circumstances, such as sexual assault or other events of a traumatic nature that may not include official documentation, a letter from a school counselor or administrator explaining the student’s qualifying circumstances may be accepted as documentation. The medical exemption review committee shall take care to respect and safeguard the privacy of students and others in its review of medical exemption requests.
  - (D) Examples of conditions that could be considered “significant medical conditions” for the purposes of this policy may include, but are not limited to:
    - i. The student has a terminal disease or degenerative illness, or the student has been placed in hospice care;
    - ii. The student is comatose;
    - iii. The student has a serious chronic medical condition (a condition lasting three months or more), and is absent for the purpose of receiving condition-related treatment, such as chemotherapy or dialysis;
    - iv. The death or life-threatening injury of an immediate family member of the student (student’s parent/guardian, sibling, child, or another member of the student’s own household); or
    - v. The student has sustained serious mental or physical injury as a result of a catastrophic event such as:
      - a) A natural disaster or other event;
      - b) An act of violence, including but not limited to: acts of physical assault, sexual assault, kidnapping, homicide, torture, or terrorism;



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- c) Drowning;
  - d) Poisoning, fall, or traumatic brain injury; or
  - e) Fire or explosion in the student's home.
- (E) The term “**significant medical condition**” shall **not** include:
- i. Minor illnesses or injuries that do not incapacitate the student or require recurring treatment;
  - ii. Short term illnesses or injuries resulting in absences of ten (10) or fewer consecutive instructional days, including those that require short term hospitalization of ten (10) or fewer consecutive instructional days;
  - iii. Pregnancy, unless complications of the pregnancy otherwise meet this policy's criteria for a significant medical condition; or
  - iv. Refusal of a parent/guardian to permit the student to attend school or receive homebound services due to the illness, injury, or trauma.
  - v. The occurrence of one of the conditions listed in (D) shall not disqualify a student who is eligible for a medical exemption on a different basis.

#### **Not All Excused Absences Qualify for Medical Exemption**

Certain student absences are classified as “excused” under state law and/or OVCA policies, meaning that a student is considered absent for a valid reason under law or policy and the absence may not be associated with any penalties to the student. Examples include medically documented absences, which are considered excused under 70 O.S. § 10-105(B), and absences related to the military deployment activities of a student's parent or guardian, which are excused under 70 O.S. § 510.1(V)(E). If a student is absent in relation to their own or their household's homeless status, such related absences should be excused pursuant to the federal McKinney-Vento Act so that the related absences do not serve as a barrier to enrollment or retention. These and other types of absences considered under law or policy as a valid basis to be absent from school should be indicated as “excused” in a school's student information system. However, the classification of an absence as “excused” such that no penalties accrue to a student in relation to the absence does not automatically qualify the absence for a medical exemption for purposes of the chronic absenteeism indicator. To be eligible for consideration under a chronic absenteeism medical exemption policy, an absence must fall under the definition of “significant medical condition” given in this policy.

#### **Absences from School that do not Accrue Toward Chronic Absentee Status**

A student with disabilities who is on an Individualized Education Program (IEP), or a student with a physical or mental impairment who is on a Section 504 Plan, is considered in attendance and does not accrue absences while receiving offsite services outlined in the IEP or Section 504 plan. A student who is receiving homebound education services from OVCA is considered in attendance and does not accrue absences while in homebound status.

#### **Effect of Exempt Absence**

If a student has been determined to have a significant medical condition under OVCA's chronic absenteeism medical exemption policy, only absences that are related to the student's identified condition(s) or qualifying circumstances may be exempted from inclusion in the calculation of the chronic absenteeism indicator. Absences that are not related to the student's qualifying condition(s) or circumstances, such as routine illnesses



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or medical appointments, are not eligible for exemption under OVCA's policy. The exempt absence(s) of a student who has been granted an exemption of one or more absences from school in accordance with the provisions of this policy shall not be included in the calculation of the chronic absenteeism indicator on OVCA's report card(s).

#### **Reporting Absences Determined Medically Exempt to the State Department of Education**

OVCA adopts a chronic absenteeism medical exemption policy and if determined under this policy that one or more student absences are medically exempt from inclusion in the chronic absenteeism indicator, OVCA shall report such absences determined medically exempt to the Oklahoma State Department of Education (OSDE) Office of Accountability. To ensure that an absence which has been determined eligible for a medical exemption by OVCA's medical exemption review committee is identified as exempt in sufficient time for the absence to be excluded from the chronic absenteeism calculation, OVCA shall inform the Office of Accountability within the time limits established for the reporting of such medically exempt absences. The reporting of absences identified under OVCA's policy as medically exempt may require the submission of the OVCA's chronic absenteeism medical exemption policy, and documentation of the medical exemption review committee's approval of the exempted absences. All documentation considered during the medical exemption review committee's consideration of potentially eligible absences shall be maintained by OVCA and shall be available to regional accreditation officers for auditing purposes.