

- 1. Is the Ministry able to provide direction regarding SAL renewals and demission's for June SAL meeting - We would like to retain all SAL students on SAL until September at which time they would be reviewed.**

SAL plans expire at the end of June, as per the regulation. If the board thinks it's in the student's best interest to continue, a board can choose to hold SAL committee meetings virtually in June.

If the board SAL committee decides to renew the student's SAL plan for the next school year, the student may begin the SAL in September and be entered on the register without needing to attend school.

- 2. I have a question. I just received an email from a teacher of a kindergarten student asking me to contact an outside agency as she has child welfare concerns, this is not an attendance referral student. As this student is not in the age of mandatory attendance should I encourage this teacher to make the call herself?**

Please refer the teacher to the [Ontario College of Teachers Duty to Report website](#) for further information. The following information has been taken from the college's website.

Professional advisories inform professional judgment and practice. The Council of the Ontario College of Teachers approved this advisory on June 4, 2015 to remind members that they have a duty to report abuse and/or neglect of children and youth. This may be read in conjunction with previous advisories such as Professional Misconduct Related to Sexual Abuse and Sexual Misconduct, and Safety in Learning Environments: A Shared Responsibility. This advisory was revised by Council on June 7, 2018 in order to reflect the introduction of the *Child, Youth and Family Services Act, 2017*.

As a professional educator working directly with students and supporting others who are, you have a legal and ethical duty to report to a children's aid society when you have reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is or may be in need of protection.

Ontario's *Child, Youth and Family Services Act, 2017* (CYFSA) requires those who perform professional or official duties with respect to children to report suspected child abuse where there are reasonable grounds. This requirement applies with respect to children who are under 16 . However, if you have reasonable grounds to suspect that a child who is 16 or 17 is in need of protection, a report may be made even though it is not required.

You don't have to be certain that a child may need protection. Suspicion on reasonable grounds – information that an average person, using normal and honest judgment would need to decide – is reason enough to report. You have to report to a children's aid society so that they can assess and determine what the child needs.

3. Will there be options now for students to utilize virtual learning via SAL with no cost?

Students enrolled in a school board should not be charged for taking e-learning courses. Boards could be charged approximately \$750 if they are receiving full time funding for the student and sending them to another school board for instruction. There are several scenarios where a part-time student could access online learning at other school boards at no cost to the student or the board. Some boards are part of an e-learning consortia, where course selection is free based on membership by the school boards, which pay annual membership fees. Contact the Technology Enabled Learning and Teaching (TELT) contact in your board for more information.

4. General question about how our role and expectations have changed given the school closures, I assume this will be addressed

Principals are not expected to make referrals to attendance counsellors or for the attendance counsellor to maintain two-way contact, as set out in the Enrolment Register, during the period of the school closure to keep the student on the register. School boards may wish to consult their board policies to determine ways to support students, including reviewing how attendance counsellors may be used to further support student attendance, engagement and well-being at this time. Boards may also wish to consult with their legal counsel. School board staff still have responsibilities under the *Child, Youth and Family Services Act* if they have reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is or may be in need of protection

5. In September if distance learning is still happening along with in class but parents chose to not send their children into the building, how will compulsory attendance be marked?

The Ministry of Education released its safety plan for the resumption of class for the 2020-21 school year, outlining scenarios for how students, teachers and staff can safely return to classrooms in September. The plan provides choice to parents and enhanced online learning. While the decision to return to the normal school day routine will continue to be based on medical advice, boards and schools are being asked to plan for alternative scenarios that may need to be

implemented in September depending on the province's COVID-19 situation. The ministry is working to provide further guidance on attendance and plans will be shared with boards as soon as possible.

6. Will our current prolonged absences continue into the new school year?

Currently the prolonged absence procedures state that if a student has an active file from the previous school year, the student's name can be entered on the enrolment register on the first day of school without having the student physically attend and the prolonged absence count resets every September.

What if parents don't want to send their kids to school in September due to the virus? How does this affect the prolonged absence and would the teacher have to do online learning with that student?

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7. Student who were prolonged before COVID, and does not return due to safety issues cited, how are we to code same with habitual absence prior to COVID.

All students should continue to be marked with at 'G' code for the school closure period.

A "G" day, an "N" day, or a "PA" (professional activity) day occurring within an otherwise unbroken series of 15 school days of absence does not break or add to the series.

If the student participates in remote learning for the 2020-21 school year, the student would be active and present. If the student does not participate in remote learning, then they should be removed from the register.

If the attendance counsellor confirms the file is not active the student's name should not go on the enrolment register until the student either physically attends school or participates in remote learning.

If the attendance counsellor confirms the file is active the student's name can be entered on the enrolment register.

School board staff still have responsibilities under the Child, Youth and Family Services Act if they have reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is or may be in need of protection.

- 8. Looking for some direction on SAL renewals at our June committee meeting. Is it acceptable to have an email from parent and student expressing their interest in SAL for the upcoming school year, and then have papers (hopefully) signed in September? Or is the recommendation just to wait to process any Sal applications in September?**

Whether for renewal or a first-time SAL application, the SAL committee can meet virtually. (See <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/policyfunding/alternative.html>, p. 15). The student and family could be invited to participate on the phone or through other virtual means they have access to.

There does need to be some evidence that the SAL plan was agreed to by the student, parent/ guardian and principal. Electronic records, such as emails, would be recommended if hard copy is not feasible at this time. Hard copies can be added to the file in Fall.

- 9. Will compulsory attendance apply in September? If parents are not comfortable sending their child to a public school, will the parent be required to sign a home schooling form? Or will the students remain on the school register instead?**

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- 10. If masks are made obligatory for students come September, and a parent doesn't want their child to wear one, and refuses to send their child at school, will there attendance be an absence?**

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implemented in September depending on the province's COVID-19 situation. The ministry is working to provide further guidance on attendance and plans will be shared with boards as soon as possible.

11. What will the role of Attendance Counsellor look like next year if children are not legally required to attend school?

Please refer to [Guide to reopening Ontario's schools](#). Please speak with your school board for more information on your board's plan.

12. SAL students whom turned 18 between March 13-June 30 would have their SAL application expire on their birthday, or extend until the end of the school year. However I understood that there were to be no students demitted during Covid. Seeking clarification if these students should be removed from the register still on the 18th birthday, or June 30th?

Although students in SAL are normally to be of compulsory school age, the SAL reg does make a deliberate exception that if a student already in SAL turns age 18 between Jan.1 - June 30 and wants to stay in SAL, they can finish out the program until the end of their plan in June.

During school closures by ministerial order, students should be marked with a 'G' code from March 23 through June 30. They can/should remain on the register until June 30.

13. Will school boards require to purchase mask with clear area around the mouth for hard of hearing and deaf students that lip read?

Please refer to [Guide to reopening Ontario's schools](#). Please speak with your school board for more information on your board's plan.

14. Some Boards practice home visits, some do not with regards to safety issues. Will the Ministry make any recommendations to this practice in the future?

Subsection 26 (1) of the *Education Act*, provides that where a school attendance counsellor has reasonable and probable grounds for believing that a child is illegally absent from school, he or she may, at the written request of the parent or guardian of the child or of the principal of the school that the child is required to attend, take the child to the child's parent or guardian or to the school from which the child is absent provided, that, if exception is taken to the school attendance counsellor entering a dwelling place, he or she shall not enter therein.

Some school boards may have established further policies and procedures in relation to this matter, which you may wish to review.

Regarding the 2020-21 school year, please refer to the [Guide to reopening Ontario's schools](#). You may wish to speak with your school board for specific information about the board's plan.

- 15. Returning to school for many will be difficult after 6 months of being away from school. These students will require additional attendance and mental health support. Will there be any additional funding to hire additional attendance counsellors/social worker to address the attendance and re-engagement concerns?**

Under the Pupil Foundation Grant, funding is provided for professionals and para-professionals that include salaries and benefits for staff who provide support services to students and teachers, such as attendance counsellors, lunchroom supervisors, hall monitors, social workers, child/youth workers, community workers, and computer technicians.

The ministry is investing \$22 million, funded through the Priorities and Partnership Fund (PPF), to provide supports to students with special education needs and mental health concerns over the summer. This will allow schools boards to offer voluntary summer employment to supporting staffing in the summer months. This funding will be allocated for regulated mental health professionals to provide direct supports to students on existing caseloads and to respond to crisis situations (\$8million).

Please refer to [Guide to reopening Ontario's schools](#) regarding additional supports being provided at this time. Please speak with your school board for more information on your board's plan.

- 16. I have had a question from a member asking about consistency of our role across the province (Ministry/PSAC and OACAS) in how boards utilize the attendance counsellor. In particular seeking clarification on whom can respond to a prolonged absence. The interpretation of the Register Rules is that it has to be the Attendance Counsellor. Can this be confirmed?**

The enrolment register instructions do not provide direction on the qualifications and/or who can be designated an attendance counselor. However, the legislation states the following:

- Subsection 25(1) of the Education Act sets out that “every board shall appoint one or more school attendance counsellors.” Notice of the appointment of a school attendance counsellor shall be given in writing by

the board to the provincial school attendance counsellor and to the supervisory officers concerned in accordance with subsection 24(4) of the Education Act. (See Appendix 1 for more details about the role and responsibilities of the attendance counsellor).

- If a board does not appoint a school attendance counsellor, the following action is required under subsection 28(2) of the Education Act: “Where a child of compulsory school age has not attended school as required and there is no school attendance counsellor, the appropriate supervisory officer shall notify the parent or guardian of the child of the requirements of section 21.”

17. Will attendance counsellors one day be included under the SMHO umbrella? Many of us are providing mental health services and many are regulated professionals.

Under the Pupil Foundation Grant, funding is provided for professionals and para-professionals that include salaries and benefits for staff who provide support services to students and teachers, such as attendance counsellors, lunchroom supervisors, hall monitors, social workers, child/youth workers, community workers, and computer technicians.

18. Will there an organized plan for the Ministry of Education for return to school for two scenarios: #1 physically back to school #2 not back to school physically just virtually

Please refer to [Guide to reopening Ontario's schools](#). Please speak with your school board for more information on your board's plan.

19. Another question I have: many parents will not be comfortable sending their elementary aged students to school in the fall. SAL is an option for secondary. What about options for elementary?? What about the increased demand for SAL next year? Will there will be extra funding for additional SAL teachers, for example?

SAL funding is based on enrolment. Boards receive funding for students in SAL to provide them with a SAL program. Boards receive 0.5 FTE funding for students enrolled in SAL with less than an average of 70 minutes a day of classroom instruction, and 1.0 FTE funding for students with at least an average of 70 minutes a day of classroom instruction.

The memo released on May 19, 2020, addressed some additional funding for special education and mental health. A supporting memo released on May 29, 2020 identifies funding allocated for regulated mental health professionals to provide direct supports to students on existing caseloads and to respond to crisis situations and funding for in person transition back to school programs and/or

supports in the two weeks prior to the start of the 2020-21 school year for students with special education needs and mental health concerns.

Please refer to [Guide to reopening Ontario's schools](#). Please speak with your school board for more information on your board's plan.

- 20. Can the Ministry comment on the new information regarding assessment and evaluation at Secondary - we are trying to continue to engage our at home learners it would be helpful to know if students will be granted credits even if they have not participated in at home learning or will the Incomplete on the report cards mean they will need to repeat the courses?**

The ministry has provided direction to boards regarding assessment and evaluation and reporting through memos. Please review information provided in the memos and if you have further questions, please speak with the superintendent responsible for curriculum and/or student learning in your board.

- 21. If distance learning continues in the fall- will there be additional tech available to families. Some have been sharing one device among many.**

Please refer to [Guide to reopening Ontario's schools](#). Please speak with your school board for more information on your board's plan.

- 22. Will the Ministry also consider funding specifically additional attendance counsellor which is quite a different role to the special education summer and transition role?**

Under the Pupil Foundation Grant, funding is provided for professionals and para-professionals that include salaries and benefits for staff who provide support services to students and teachers, such as attendance counsellors, lunchroom supervisors, hall monitors, social workers, child/youth workers, community workers, and computer technicians.

- 23. Are we (AC) not mandated?**

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If a board does not appoint a school attendance counsellor, the following action is required under subsection 28(2) of the Education Act: "Where a child of compulsory school age has not attended school as required and there is no school attendance counsellor, the appropriate supervisory officer shall notify the parent or guardian of the child of the requirements of section 21."

Attendance Counselling is a mandated function in the education act, however there is no funding line specifically for Attendance Counsellors? please confirm.

Attendance Counsellors are funded under the Paraprofessional benchmark in the Grants for Student Needs.

See link:

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/funding/1920/TechnicalPaper2019-20.pdf>

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/funding/2021/2020-21-technical-paper.pdf>

- 24. When could we expect a decision to be made about Sept? will it be August or before?**

Please refer to [Guide to reopening Ontario's schools](#). Please speak with your school board for more information on your board's plan.

- 25. Can you share what changes with attendance the Ministry is considering in view of COVID-19. We recognize much is still unknown, is there anything you can share with us today about current discussions or plans?**

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- 26. Can you kindly highlight all the specific changes when the new enrolment register is released. This is very very helpful!!**
They are no longer allowed to 'highlight' on the website or document. Not compliant with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act.

The ministry will consider providing a resource to highlight specific changes to the enrolment register. The use of highlighting in a document or posting on a government website is not compliant with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA).

27. **Once the ministry has given the new or revised expectations for September, will we have another zoom meeting to discuss?**

Please contact the Ontario Association for Counselling and Attendance Services regarding your next meeting.