



ASD STUDENT ADVISORY BOARD

Uniting Schools and Empowering Student Voice

**Resolution 2023-01:
Implementing a Mental Health Day Policy in ASD**
*Drafted by Eagle River High School
(Allison VanHoozer, Akela Wakinekona, Lilli Hunter, Emma Meadows)
Adopted January 17, 2023*

Be it resolved by the Anchorage School District Student Advisory Board that the wording in the elementary, middle, and high school student handbooks shall be changed to include “mental health” as a reason for excused absences, in order to allow students in the Anchorage School District five days off from school for short-term mental health reasons per school year.

1. Whereas, currently the following conditions may result in an excused absence from school:

- a. illness
- b. death or serious illness in the immediate family
- c. participation in a school function
- d. extenuating circumstances approved by the principal, and
- e. attendance at religious services;

2. Whereas, mental illness are health conditions involving changes in behavior, emotions and thinking,

3. Whereas, there would be a revision to the ASD handbook’s absence conditions that adds mental or physical illness;

4. Whereas, a mental absence does not count towards the 10 allowed absences before attendance probation is required;

- 5. Whereas**, in the O’Fallon High School handbook, it states “a mental absence does not count towards a student's absence total, nor does it require a medical note,” ;
- 6. Whereas**, to regulate usage of mental health days, students must be contacted by counselor for discussion after second usage;
- 7. Whereas**, the following states have implemented mental health days for students in their schools: Arizona, California, Connecticut, Colorado, Illinois, Kentucky, Maine, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, Virginia, and Washington;
- 8. Whereas**, according to the Child Mind Institute “a mental health day is a day off from school to rest and recharge.”;
- 9. Whereas**, families can interpret the term “mental health day,” as they deem appropriate;
- 10. Whereas**, according to the Association for Children's Mental Health (ACMH), “only 40 percent of students with emotional, behavioral and mental health disorders graduate from high school, compared to the national average of 76 percent,”;
- 11. Whereas**, the ACMH states “Over 50% of students with emotional and behavioral disabilities ages 14 and older, dropout of high school. This is the highest dropout rate of any disability group,”;
- 12. Whereas**, the ACMH states, “One in five children and youth have a diagnosable emotional, behavioral or mental health disorder and one in ten young people have a mental health challenge that is severe enough to impair how they function at home, school or in the community.” ;
- 13. Whereas**, according to the ACMH, “mental illness affects so many of our kids aged 6-17 at least one-half and many estimate as 80% of them do not receive the mental health care they need.”;
- 13. Whereas**, the O’Fallon High School Handbook states “ Students may utilize five mental health days per school year and should be utilized as such when reporting the absence to the attendance office”;

14. Whereas, as of July 2022, the ASD created a new department called Mental Health and Student Supports.

15. Whereas, The mission of this department is to work collaboratively with students, educators, administrators, families, and community partners to support the academic success and social-emotional well-being of students through a multi-tiered system of support;

Action Statement: This resolution, if passed by the Anchorage School District Student Advisory Board and the general assembly of 2022 fall AASG will be taken to the Anchorage School District Board for implementation.

Bibliography:

<https://www.oths.us/domain/9144>

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<https://www.acmh-mi.org/get-help/navigating/problems-at-school/>

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<https://www.cnbc.com/2022/08/23/12-states-that-allow-mental-health-days-for-kids-in-schools.html#:~:text=States%20like%20Washington%20and%20California.%2C%20Maryland%2C%20Massachusetts%20and%20Pennsylvania.>