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# **Hermosa Montessori Charter School Chronic Illness Policy**

## **Purpose**

This policy is established in accordance with Arizona Revised Statutes (A.R.S.) § 15-346 to support pupils with chronic health problems, ensuring they receive continuing education during absences and are integrated into the regular education program as much as possible. The policy was developed in consultation with parents, teachers, and health professionals. It applies to all students enrolled at Hermosa Montessori Charter School and recognizes that chronic health problems may include mental health conditions that cause intermittent or long-term absences.

## **Definition of Pupils with Chronic Health Problems**

As defined in A.R.S. § 15-346(C), "pupils with chronic health problems" means:

1. Pupils who are not homebound, but who are unable to attend regular classes for intermittent periods of one or more consecutive days because of illness, disease, pregnancy complications or accident as certified by a health professional as cited below.\*
2. Pupils who suffer from a condition requiring management on a long-term basis as certified by a health professional as cited below.\*
3. Pupils who have an infant with a severe health problem as certified by a health professional as cited below.\*

\*A certified health professional who is licensed pursuant to title 32, chapter 7, 8, 13, 14, 17 or 25 or a registered nurse practitioner who is licensed pursuant to title 32, chapter 15.

These definitions encompass both physical and mental health conditions. Mental health issues are treated similarly to physical illnesses under Arizona law, provided they are certified by a qualified health professional. Certification must come from licensed professionals under A.R.S. Title 32, including:

- Chapter 7: Podiatry
- Chapter 8: Chiropractic
- Chapter 13: Medicine, Surgery, Psychiatry (e.g., MDs)
- Chapter 14: Naturopathic Medicine
- Chapter 15: Nursing (including Licensed Nurse Practitioners)
- Chapter 17: Osteopathic Physicians and Surgeons (e.g., DOs)
- Chapter 19.1: Psychologist
- Chapter 25: Physician Assistants

For mental health conditions, certification is typically provided by professionals qualified in mental health care, such as psychiatrists (MDs or DOs), psychiatric nurse practitioners, or physician assistants specializing in mental health, though the law allows certification from any of the listed chapters where applicable.

A licensed psychologist in Arizona can **diagnose chronic mental health issues** as part of their scope of practice under [ARS Title 32, Chapter 19.1](#).

Arizona law defines the "practice of psychology" as including the psychological assessment, diagnosis, treatment, or correction of mental, emotional, behavioral, or psychological abilities, illnesses, or disorders. This authority is not limited to acute conditions, and psychologists in Arizona are recognized as qualified, independent providers for a wide range of mental health services, including long-term diagnosis and therapy for chronic conditions.

## Examples of Mental Health Conditions

Mental health conditions that may qualify as chronic health problems under this policy include those causing intermittent or long-term absences and requiring professional management. Examples include:

This is not an exhaustive list. Qualification depends on certification by a licensed health professional indicating that the condition causes absences or requires long-term management.

# Procedures for Students with Chronic Health Problems

To support students with chronic health problems, Hermosa Montessori Charter School implements the following procedures:

1. **Certification Process:** Parents/guardians must provide written certification from a qualified health professional (as defined above) describing the student's chronic health problem, including the general medical condition (e.g., illness, disease, or chronic condition). The certification should indicate how the condition affects school attendance, such as causing intermittent absences or requiring long-term management. Submit this to the school principal or designee. The school will review and maintain the documentation confidentially in the student's records.
2. **Homework and Assignments:** Teachers will provide homework and assignments to students with chronic health problems during absences to help them keep up with coursework and avoid credit loss. Materials may be sent home, emailed, or accessed via the school's online platform. Parents/guardians should contact the teacher or school office to arrange pickup or delivery.
3. **Flexibility in Physical Education (PE):** PE requirements will be adjusted based on the student's health needs. Students may participate in the regular PE program to the extent their condition allows, with modifications such as alternative activities, reduced intensity, or exemptions for specific sessions. Adjustments require documentation from the certifying health professional.
4. **Integration into Regular Education:** The school will work with parents/guardians, teachers, and health professionals to integrate the student into the regular Montessori program as much as possible. This may include homebound instruction, partial-day attendance, virtual learning options, or accommodations under an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or 504 Plan if applicable.
5. **Homebound or Hospitalized Instruction:** If a student's condition qualifies them as homebound or hospitalized (as defined in A.R.S. § 15-901), the school will provide at least four hours of instruction per week to count as full attendance, subject to certification.

## Rights of Parents/Guardians

Nothing in this policy obstructs, interferes with, or overrides the rights of parents/guardians concerning their child's education and health care. School personnel will not:

- Authorize absences without prior consent from the parent/guardian.
- Recommend, prescribe, or provide medication without prior consent from the parent/guardian.

Parents/guardians retain full authority over decisions related to their child's health and education.

# Information on Truancy Exemptions for Guardians

Under Arizona law, guardians may be exempt from truancy penalties if a student's absences are due to a certified chronic health problem, including mental health conditions, that makes regular attendance inexpedient or impracticable.

- **Excused Absences:** Per the Arizona Department of Education (ADE), excused absences include those due to illness, doctor appointments, mental or behavioral health matters, bereavement, family emergencies, homelessness, time for armed forces processing, and out-of-school suspensions (not exceeding 10% of instructional days). Absences must be notified to the school in advance or at the time by the parent/guardian, with documentation maintained for at least four years.
- **Chronic Health Exemption:** Students with a documented chronic health condition are exempt from non-fundable attendance intervals and withdrawal rules (e.g., automatic withdrawal after 10 consecutive absences under A.R.S. § 15-901). The school will submit a Chronic Illness Need form to AzEDS (Arizona Education Data Standards) for this exemption.
- **Truancy Penalties:** Compulsory attendance is required under A.R.S. § 15-802, with violations potentially classified as a class 3 misdemeanor. However, absences are excused if the child is in a physical or mental condition making instruction inexpedient or impracticable (A.R.S. § 15-802(D)(1)). Certified chronic mental health conditions qualify under this provision, protecting guardians from penalties related to truancy (A.R.S. § 15-803) or incorrigibility proceedings.

Parents/guardians should promptly provide certification to ensure absences are excused and to avoid any truancy notifications. For questions, contact the school principal.

## Review and Updates

This policy will be reviewed annually or as needed to comply with state laws.

Approved by the Hermosa Montessori Charter School Governing Board.

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For the Governing Board

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Date