



# CNMI State Board of Education

## School Attendance Review Committee

### Standard Operating Procedures

#### **BACKGROUND**

This is a living document. The procedures contained herein shall be reviewed and amended as needed to ensure that the School Attendance Review Committee's (SARC) mission to prevent school failure is successful. The SARC recognizes that school failure results in huge present and future costs for the CNMI community and it is from this reality that the SARC is committed to combating this problem. The SARC shall swiftly and fearlessly provide advocacy and other recourses to students, guardians and families to prevent school failure by addressing truancy, irregular attendance, insubordination, or disorderly behavior, in school at the community level.

In order to accomplish its mission, the SARC will investigate and diagnose the student's presenting issues by first looking at the student. When necessary the SARC will look at the student's parents or guardians. When necessary, the SARC may intervene and assess a student and parent or guardian's cumulative life activities to determine potential causes of the presenting behavior.

The SARC will make decisions as quickly as possible with directives to the student and parent or guardian regarding the type of assistance, guidance, education or referral, or combination thereof, is warranted in order to address the presenting issue. Although a last resort, failure of the student or parent to actively and in good faith participate in the program, adhere to the regulations of the Juvenile Justice Act, and or a willful failure to follow a directive from the SARC, may result in that student's case being removed from the SARC and referred to the justice system or other appropriate government agency.

Meetings with the SARC and a student and parent or guardian may take many forms but in no event shall they be adversarial.

## JURISDICTION

Any student and his or her parent or guardian, who is enrolled in any public school, is subject to reach of the SARC.

The SARC does not deny any school, agency or any court of the Commonwealth or United States Government, their inherent obligations and powers necessary to maintain control over proceedings before them.

## COMPOSITION OF COMMITTEE

The SARC Committee is comprised of representative(s) from each of the following agencies: Public School System (PSS), the Child Protective Unit (CPU) and Juvenile Probation Unit (JPU) of the Division of Youth Services (DYS), the Department of Public Safety (DPS), the Coalition of Private Schools (COPS), Parent of a school-aged child and any other group the Chairman of the committee might deem appropriate in carrying out the committee's mission.

## DEFINITIONS

*Truant:* means a juvenile who fails to attend school as required by law.

*School Failure:* (1) When a student drops out of school before his or her planned graduation; (2) When a student fails to advance to the next grade level as scheduled; (3) When a teacher, counselor or school, fails to recognize the behavior of a student on the brink of dropping out and or not advancing to the next grade; (4) When a school fails to engage a student and his or her parent or guardian in order to prevent that student, parent or guardian from becoming alienated from the PSS.

*Student:* Any child enrolled in the CNMI PSS from pre-school to 12<sup>th</sup> grade.

*Parent or Guardian:* The person who has the legal authority and or who has assumed the duty to care for the student.

*Referral:* The process a School goes through to refer a case to the SARC, which includes filling out the Referral Form and submitting the same via email to the SARC to determine acceptability.

*SARC member* – shall include the SARC committee voting member as listed in the SARC Composition and SARC team member as determined by the Chair and SARC committee.

## TYPES OF CASES FOR REFERRAL

The SARC committee has discretion in what cases it takes but shall attempt to take as many cases as its resources allow. Priority shall be given to cases where a student is on the brink of school failure.

## HOW TO REFER A CASE

The goal of these procedures is to develop a system that can manage a referred case quickly, efficiently and effectively. It is envisioned that any assigned SARC member is empowered to provisionally resolve an accepted case.

The Principal of a school or his or her designee may refer a student to SARC. In the event another individual would like to refer a student to SARC they should contact the administration of the school the student attends and alert the administration of the facts that would warrant SARC referral and request that school to make the referral.

SARC referral forms are available on the PSS website at [www.cnmipss.org/state-board-of-education/sarc](http://www.cnmipss.org/state-board-of-education/sarc). Once completed and the supporting documents are attached, the form should be emailed to [sarc@cnmipss.org](mailto:sarc@cnmipss.org).

Referral email received by SARC at [sarc@cnmipss.org](mailto:sarc@cnmipss.org) is immediately shared with all SARC members.

The Chair or designee provisionally determines if case is appropriate for SARC. This determination should involve communication with other SARC members to determine if case is appropriate for SARC.

If case is determined appropriate, a form letter from SARC shall be delivered to student and his or her parent or guardian, outlining SARC mission and procedures and expectations.

If SARC Chair or designee provisionally determines case is proper for SARC, case will take one (1) of two (2) tracks: Track 1 will be the Super-Fast Track and Track 2 will be the General-Fast Track.

Super-Fast Track: Case is assigned to the on-call SARC member who will speak with all necessary players from the referring school personnel, student and parent or guardian which will likely involve a home-visit.

If a home-visit is determined necessary, the on-call SARC member shall be accompanied by the Principal or designee from the referring school.

The on-call SARC member will memorialize the initial assessment, home-visit (if necessary), preliminary findings, any directive(s) given to the student and parent or guardian, and any referrals made to community recourses and any conclusions made. It is hoped that some cases can be resolved at this step.

If resolved, the on-call SARC member shall provide a written report to the SARC at the next meeting and any decisions and directives made, if necessary, shall be ratified by the SARC.

General-Fast Track: If a case requires additional SARC attention after proceeding through the Super-Fast Track, the case will be heard at the next SARC meeting and all necessary persons shall be given notice of the meeting including but not limited to the student and parent, the relevant person(s) from the referring school and any resource agencies deemed to be helpful in abating the presenting issue. (Note: If possible, the referring school's relevant personnel and on-call SARC member or designee, shall discuss presenting issue(s) before SARC meeting. If the SARC meeting includes the student and parent or guardian, the SARC Chair will designate the SARC member or designee best suited to lead the intervention or conciliation.)

### **SARC INTERVENTION CHARACTER**

The SARC shall make every effort to take non-punitive action toward a student and his or her parent or guardian. Instead, SARC shall attempt to create an effective plan by coordinating resources and providing support to abate the presenting behavior.

The purpose of any meeting or any program proposed by SARC is meant to create agreed upon terms, conditions, and options to reduce and eliminate the presenting behavior of the student. Meetings with the SARC and a student and parent or guardian may take many forms including an intervention or conciliation, but in no event shall they be adversarial.

However, in the event a referred student, parent, guardian and or person in charge of the juvenile fails to respond to the directives and community resources provided by the SARC and continues his or her presenting behavior, when warranted, the SARC may direct that the student be referred to DPS, CPU, JPU, and or the Office of the Attorney General.