

PA 96-0689 - Individual School Building Closure Due to Public Health Emergency

Public Act 96-0689 added Section 18-12.5 to the Illinois School Code. This new language allows a district to close to student attendance one or more, but not all, recognized school buildings due to a public health emergency after the district has consulted with a local health department and still claim attendance for that building for General State Aid purposes. The State Board of Education in consultation with the Illinois Department of Public Health must determine a public health emergency exists. Once a public health emergency has been verified for General State Aid purposes, the district may claim attendance for the day(s) that the building is closed based on the average of three days of attendance immediately preceding the closure.

The district must follow the steps outlined below in order to justify a school building being closed to student attendance due to a public health emergency and claim the attendance for General State Aid purposes.

1. The school district must consult with a local health department in their area and request a written statement from that entity. The school district must then submit that signed statement to ISBE and assure the statement includes:
 - the name of building that is being recommended for closure;
 - the specific public health emergency that warrants the closure; and
 - the anticipated dates that the building will be closed as recommended by the health department.
2. Once the signed statement is received, ISBE will consult with the Illinois Department of Public Health to determine that a public health emergency exists.
3. If verified, the district and the appropriate Regional Office of Education will be notified that a public health emergency exists and the district will be allowed to submit an electronic request of the building closure.

The manual reporting mechanism, which was put into place to report a situation covered by Public Acts 95-0152 and 95-0811, was the ISBE 50-65 form. Starting with school year 2009-10 when a closure affects an individual building(s), as described in all three public acts, the closure must be reported within a month of occurrence to the Illinois State Board of Education via the Electronic Public School Calendar system available in IWAS.

Here are the steps for a district *document author* to electronically submit a request regarding a building closure. These instructions may also be found in the User Guide available in the Public School Calendar system:

1. Login to the Public School Calendar system via IWAS;
2. Choose menu item *Enter School Building Interruption/Closure*; ;
3. Choose from the drop down the school building that was closed;
4. Click the closure button;
5. Select the correct month and day for the closure;
6. Click the continue button. **NOTE: An individual submittal will have to be done for each day the building was closed;**
7. Enter the reason for the closure in the box provided;
8. Click the *Save Page Entry* button.
9. Click the *Submit* button to forward the information to the appropriate district staff/regional office for approval. You will receive a confirmation screen that the request has been submitted.

Here are the steps for the *district administrator* to submit the request to the appropriate Regional Superintendent:

1. Login to the Public School Calendar system via IWAS;
2. Choose menu item *Approve - School Building Interruption/Closure*
3. Click the School dropdown to select the school building that was closed and click the *Continue* button.
4. Click the *Approve* link.
5. Verify the information is accurate.
6. Click the appropriate button to Submit to ROE or Disapprove. You will receive a confirmation screen that the request has been submitted/disapproved.

Public Act 95-0152 that took effect August, 2007 and Public Act 95-0811 that was signed in August, 2008 updated Section 18-12 of the School Code and provides that if a district must close one or more recognized school buildings, but not all district buildings, attendance may be claimed for that building for a maximum of two days. The attendance for that building for the affected day(s) that may be included on the General State Aid claim would be based on the average attendance of that building for the three prior student attendance days immediately preceding the closure/interruption.

The main difference between P.A. 95-0811 and P.A. 96-0689 is if the school building is closed due to a public health emergency there is no maximum number of days for which the district may claim attendance based on the average of the preceding three days formula. If no health emergency is involved, the maximum allowed for claiming attendance is two days.

The electronic submission process previously described is used for reporting closures and interruptions as allowed in all three Public Acts.

Please remember, when a closure affects an individual building within the district but not *all* district buildings, this electronic process must be completed within 30 days of the interruption/closure in order to claim attendance for the affected building and day. **No change is made to the Public School Calendar,**

I hope you find this information helpful. Please contact Marj Beck at mbeck@isbe.net or by telephone 217/782-5256 if you have any further questions.