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**Act No. 122 (H.930). An act relating to addressing and preventing chronic absenteeism**

**Subjects: Education; truancy; attendance and discipline; chronic absenteeism**

This act updates the laws regarding school attendance. It adds definitions for the terms absence, chronic absenteeism, excused absence, parent or guardian, truancy, and unexcused absence. It requires the Agency of Education, in consultation with several stakeholders, to develop and review at least every three years a model policy on the prevention of chronic absenteeism and truancy. The model policy is required to provide guidance for the reasons an absence may be excused, guidance for when justification for an absence may be requested, provide guidance for how to address the absence of a child with a disability, and consider the impact of hazing, harassment, and bullying may have on student attendance. The Agency is also required to develop model procedures to accompany the model policy, including a template for documentation of actions taken according to the model policy to address an absence and a template for documentation to be provided to parents or guardians regarding student absences. The Agency is required to publish the model policy on or before July 1, 2027. On or before July 1, 2028, each school board is required to adopt a policy on the prevention of chronic absenteeism and truancy at least as stringent as the Agency's model policy.

This act requires a principal to notify a superintendent, who then is required to notify the truancy officer and DCF, when a student accumulates 20 or more unexcused absences either within the same school year or within the last 175 consecutive student attendance days. If the parent or guardian continues to fail to cause a child to attend school as required, this act requires the truant officer to enter a complaint to the State's Attorney of the applicable county, and the State's Attorney may then either prosecute the parent or guardian or file a child in need of supervision petition.

This act repeals the provision of law that allows a superintendent or truant officer to stop a child between six and 16 years of age and enrolled in public school, wherever the child is found, and take the child to school. It also repeals the provision of law that allow a superintendent, truant officer, or teacher to be fined for violating the attendance and discipline laws.

This act allows a public or approved independent school to provide access to alternative education, such as tutoring, instructional materials, and assignments, to a student during any period of suspension of three or more days or any period of expulsion, provided that the school is still required to provide educational access to the extent otherwise required by law.

Finally, this act requires the Agency of Education to submit a written report to the House and Senate Committees on Education with recommendations for updates to Vermont's home study program law on or before December 1, 2026.

Effective Date: July 1, 2026