



PA Distance Learning
CHARTER SCHOOL

Parent/Student
Handbook

2017-18

CONTACT INFORMATION

Pennsylvania Distance Learning Charter School
2100 Corporate Drive, Suite 500
Wexford, PA 15090

Main Toll-Free Phone Number 1.888.997.3352

Enrollment and Testing – press 1

Technical Support - press 2

Student Records and Reporting- press 3

Guidance Office – press 4

Administration – press 5

Homeless Liaison: Mrs. Desrochers – ext. 105

Foster Care Liaison: Mrs. Rossetti – ext. 114

Right to Know Officer: Dr. Posney – ext. 150

Title IX (Office of Civil Rights): Mrs. Rossetti – ext. 114

Books, Materials, Internet Reimbursement, and Flex Funds – press 6

Special Education – press 7

Main Toll-Free Fax Number 866.977.3527

Dear Families,

Welcome to the Pennsylvania Distance Learning Charter School family! We congratulate you on making a choice to be actively involved in your child's education. We understand and value the questions and concerns many experience when selecting a school for a child. We are confident that your decision to enroll in Pennsylvania Distance Learning Charter School is because you are seeking unique solutions for your family. Our service mission is to create a meaningful learning experience for students and families. We thank you for the opportunity to be a part of your child's academic growth. Welcome!

Teachers, Administration, and Support Staff



2100 Corporate Drive, Suite 500
 Wexford, PA 15090
 Phone: 1-888-997-3352
 Fax: 1-866-977-3527

2017 - 2018 Calendar

July 2017

S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
					1	
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

October 2017
Students - 0 days

S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

January 2018
Students - 21 days

S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

April 2018
Students - 19 days

S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

August 2017
Students - 2 days

S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

November 2017
Students - 2 days

S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

February 2018
Students - 17 days

S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28			

May 2018
Students - 19 days

S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

September 2017

S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

December 2017
Students - 20 days

S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

March 2018
Students - 16 days

S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

June 2018
Students - 21 days

S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

Notes:

July 4: Independence Day
Aug. 30: First Day of School
Sept. 4: Labor Day
Oct. 9: Columbus Day
Nov. 2: Last Day - Quarter 1
Nov. 10: Veterans Day Observed
Nov. 22-27: Fall Break
Dec. 4-15: Keystone Testing
Dec. 25- Jan. 1: Winter Break
Jan. 15: Martin Luther King Jr. Day
Jan. 22: Last Day - Quarter 2
Jan. 23-24: PD Staff - No School
Jan. 25: First Day Spring Semester
Feb. 19: Presidents' Day
Mar. 29: Last Day - Quarter 3
Mar. 30-Apr. 2: Spring Break
Apr. 9-27: PSSA Testing
May 14-25: Keystone Testing
May 28: Memorial Day
June 5: Last Day of School
June 9: 2018 Graduation

Students - 3 days

Students - 22 days

Students - 20 days

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Pennsylvania Distance Learning Charter School. Throughout this Parent/Student Handbook, the school is referred to as “PDLCS” and the parent/guardian is referred to as “parent”.

Choosing a school for your child or children is an important decision. PDLCS places a great deal of responsibility on the parent and student to make distance-learning work. To better understand this responsibility, parents (and students 18 and older) who are enrolling or re-enrolling at PDLCS are required to read this Parent/Student Handbook and to sign the Agreement Form found at the end of this document stating that the handbook has been reviewed and that both the parent and student agree to the regulations and guidelines within the handbook.

Non-Discrimination Policy

PDLCS accepts students of any race, creed, gender, gender expression, sexual orientation, disability or ethnic origin. PDLCS will not discriminate on the basis of race, creed, gender, gender expression, sexual orientation, disability, immigration status or ethnic origin in the administration of its educational programs and activities.

Mission

PDLCS’ mission is to offer a valuable educational alternative; to practice and promote academic integrity; to present quality curriculum, technology, and support; and to foster academic excellence in our students.

Vision

The Pennsylvania Distance Learning Charter School will be a highly visible school known as the best cyber charter school in the state. We will become a leader in technology based education. We will actively promote self-directed learning to achieve academic success and encourage students to become lifelong learners. In order to achieve our vision, the Pennsylvania Distance Learning Charter School commits to providing a quality education that exceeds Pennsylvania academic standards. We believe our first responsibility is to provide exceptional educational opportunities and equip our students with the necessary tools to succeed.

In carrying out our day-to-day activities, we strive to:

1. Offer a viable educational alternative
2. Offer guidance that allows students to meet their educational goals and become contributing members to society
3. Promote academic integrity and encourage academic excellence.

Through a long-term commitment to its mission, we will be known as a school that fosters academic and personal growth. Our students, parents and community will see PDLCS as offering a valuable alternative to a traditional education.

ACADEMIC PROGRAM

Course Completion

High school courses are scheduled as semester long courses receiving credit for successful completion (“D” grade or better). There are two semesters scheduled within one school year. Students are expected to complete each course according to the due dates required by the course teacher within the semester given.

High School Credits and Grade Level Assignments

Number of Credits Earned	Grade Level
0 – 5.5 Credits	9 th Grade
5.6 – 10.9 Credits	10 th Grade
11 – 16.5 Credits	11 th Grade
16.6+ Credits	12 th Grade

PDLCS Minimum Graduation Requirements						
Course	9th	10th	11th	12th		
English	1	1	1	1		4
All students must earn 4 credits of English						
Mathematics	1	1	1			3
All students must pass Algebra I. College-bound students are encouraged to take 4 credits of mathematics including Geometry, Algebra II, and PreCalculus						
Science	1	1	1			3
All students must take Biology. College-bound students are encouraged to take 4 credits of science including Chemistry, Physics, and one science elective						
Social Studies	1	1	1			3
All students must take U.S. Government, U.S. History, and Geography. College-bound students are encouraged to take 4 credits of social studies						
Business/Technology	0.5					0.5
Physical Education	0.5	0.5				1
World Language	1					1
College-bound students are encouraged to take a minimum of 2 world language credits						
Fine Arts (Music/Art)			0.5	0.5		1
Health			0.5			0.5
Electives (Student Choice)		1.5	1	2.5		5
TOTAL CREDITS	6	6	6	4		22

Curriculum – General

PDLCS' curriculum and graded courses of study meet ALL requirements set forth by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The curriculum will be explained to all parents during student course scheduling.

Curriculum – Credit Recovery

PDLCS offers a Credit Recovery program. This program is for students who have experienced setbacks in their education for many reasons. It allows students to recover lost credits in a short amount of time moving them towards graduation from high school. This program is fully on-line with daily requirement for live learning sessions. For more information, contact your Counselor.

Curriculum – Advanced Placement (AP)

PDLCS offers Advanced Placement (AP) classes allowing students to earn credits for college. Most four-year colleges award students credit, advanced placement or both on the basis of AP Exam scores. Talk with your Counselor for more details.

High School Drop/Add Period

PDLCS understands that a student may need a schedule change. High school students may contact their Counselor to discuss the need for schedule changes. Classes will only be changed within a 2 week period of the start of a semester. Students may not drop a course after 2 weeks.

Daily Schedule

- Attendance is recorded by evidence of student active online engagement each day.

Families follow different schedules depending on classes and/or grade of the child. Families have the flexibility to set up their child's schedule. The important thing for families to know is that your child's success increases with consistency. Set a schedule and stick to it.

Synchronous Class is time spent during live learning. Students gather in the virtual classroom with their teacher and learn. *Asynchronous Class* is learning through the lesson folders that are set up in the virtual course. Students can complete daily lessons independently at any time of the day.

Students have synchronous class (live learning) in all grades for every class. Asynchronous lessons are available to students 7 days a week, 24 hours a day. The table below gives an idea of average daily instruction and learning time.

Kindergarten students are required to complete 5.0 hours of schoolwork daily. Elementary students (grades 1-6) are required to complete 5.0 hours of schoolwork daily. Middle and high school students (grades 7-12) are required to complete a minimum of 5.5 hours of schoolwork daily. It is up to families to determine how a student will make up their total number of required learning hours. Families can do this by combining Synchronous and Asynchronous learning spaces.

	Synchronous (approximate time of live learning) Monday - Friday	Asynchronous (in addition to virtual lessons completion of daily calendar lessons with supervision of parent)	Total
Kindergarten	1.5 hours/day	3.5 hour/day	5
Grades 1-6	2.5 hours/day	2.5 hours/day	5
Grades 7-12	2.5 hours/day	Varies 2.5-5.5 hours/day	5.5

Standardized Testing

Like all public schools in Pennsylvania, PDLCS is required to administer several standardized tests each year. Further explanation of the tests currently in place appears below.

PSSA (Pennsylvania System of School Assessment)

The PSSA is a standards-based assessment administered in all Pennsylvania public schools. They are administered in a face-to-face environment, usually in the months of March and April, to students in grades 3-8. There are currently three content-specific assessments including English Language Arts, Math, and Science.

Keystone Exams

The Keystone Exams are end-of-course assessments designed to evaluate proficiency in academic content. Students must demonstrate proficiency on the Algebra I, Literature, and Biology Keystone Exams to graduate. Students will be offered multiple face-to-face opportunities to take the Keystone Exams throughout their high school careers.*

Benchmark Assessments

Benchmark Assessments are computer-adaptive tests that measure the proficiency level and academic growth of students in grades K-12 in the subjects of Math, Reading, Language Arts, and Science. Benchmark tests are administered three times each school year and students complete the tests online at home.

ACCESS Testing (Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State for English Language Learners)

ACCESS for English Language Learners is an English language proficiency assessment that is administered to all Kindergarten-12th grade students identified as English language learners. The test is given annually to monitor students' progress in acquiring academic English. The ACCESS for English Language Learners assesses students' in the four language domains of Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing.

For more information about testing, please contact the PDLCS Testing Department.

Grading

Grades K-12 Academic Letter Grades

- A+ 97%-100%
- A 93%-96.99%
- A- 90%-92.99%
- B+ 87%-89.99%
- B 83%-86.99%
- B- 80%-82.99%
- C+ 77%-79.99%
- C 73%-76.99%
- C- 70%-72.99%
- D 60%-69.99%
- F 0%-59.99%

Daily Assignments

Each grade or course teacher will share with students how to turn in assignments. All assignments are submitted electronically. Students learn how to submit assignments during course orientation, and in school orientation.

PDLCS has an After-School Lesson Assistance Program. Students may enter a live-learning classroom between 4:30 and 5:30 Monday through Thursdays to receive support from a teacher.

Honesty in Schoolwork

It is important that students complete their own work. While families can help students develop study habits and encourage organization of time and materials, families must resist the temptation to provide answers for the student. This may be misleading to the teacher who then thinks the student is applying their learning on their own. If you see your child struggling on an assignment, direct them to their resources to find answers – online textbook, study guide, course folder. It is also good advice to tell your child to write down questions and ask the teacher in class, in an email, or by calling on the phone. This information helps the teacher plan for future instruction for individual students as well as future whole-group class instruction.

What is plagiarism?

Plagiarism is the act of presenting the words, ideas, images, sounds, or the creative expression of others as your own. In more common terms – you are “copying” someone else’s ideas, words, or expression as your school work.

Two Types of Plagiarism

Intentional

- Copying a friend’s work
- Buying or borrowing papers
- Cutting and pasting blocks of text from electronic sources without documenting
- “Borrowing” from print sources without documentation

Unintentional

- Careless paraphrasing
- Poor documentation
- Quoting excessively
- Failure to use your own “voice”

Avoid Plagiarism by using Documentation

There is nothing wrong with using other people's words or ideas, but you must give them credit. Giving credit is called *documentation*. It is a simple process, and it turns a dishonest essay into true scholarship

Documenting Sources Has Two Steps:

1. Indicate in the text where the information was found. Most modern writers put that information in parentheses.
2. Have a *Works Cited* page at the end of the paper providing the full bibliographic information about the source. Documentation is taught in your courses when outside research is required. Information about documentation can be obtained from teachers at any time.

Tips when documenting, or citing, someone else’s work:

- When using quotes, be sure to cite the source
- When paraphrasing¹ information from a source, be sure to cite the source
- The only time you do NOT need to cite information is if it is common knowledge, and you knew it before beginning your research
- For example: “William Shakespeare is a poet and playwright from the 16th century.”

¹ *Paraphrasing* is when you use your own word order to express someone else’s idea. You still give credit to the source, but you do not need to use quotes around the words.

If you plagiarize your work, you will not receive credit for the assignment. Continued acts of plagiarism will constitute a referral to administration and in extreme cases *can* result in legal action. Plagiarism is an illegal action and is taken very seriously in this environment to protect academic integrity.

Reporting Progress

Families receive Progress Reports each quarter, or every 45 school days. Report cards are issued at the end of the each semester (January and June) for secondary students, and in June for elementary students. These are mailed to families through the U.S. Postal service. Students and parents may also view grades in their online courses.

Retention

PDLCS may retain an elementary student in a grade level if mastery of that grade level's curriculum has not been achieved. The student's teachers may complete a *Recommendation for Retention Form*. In the case of an IEP student, the Director of Special Education must agree and sign off on the form. Documentation, evidence, and/or explanation must accompany the form. There will be an opportunity for a parent to schedule a conference with an Administrator and the student's teachers to review the child's academic progress and educational plan.

Recommendations for Retention consider the following data:

1. Benchmark Assessment and Standardized State Test Scores
2. Rate of attendance poor – Student Attendance Improvement Program (SAIP) has not been successful
3. Multi-tiered System of Supports - Response to Instruction and Intervention (MTSS-RTII) has not been successful
4. Student has not completed required educational hours for school year
5. 70% of hours are not curriculum-based
6. Grades/Performance lack evidence of required standards-based mastery level or failure to complete grade-level curriculum by last day of school

ENROLLMENT

PDLCS does not charge tuition to parents or students. PDLCS will be in full compliance with open enrollment regulations and withdrawal requirements specified by the PDLCS' Charter and Pennsylvania Law. When demand exceeds places available (as determined at the sole discretion of the School's Board of Trustees), enrollment will be determined by a Lottery of all applicants in a given category, except that returning students and their siblings will be given priority over new students. After the Lottery is completed, those students not selected for enrollment will be placed on a waiting list in order of their random selection. Students whose application for enrollment is received after the Lottery is completed shall be placed on the waiting list and admitted on a first-come, first serve basis as long as the last date for enrollment to PDLCS has not passed.

Non-Discrimination Policy

PDLCS will not discriminate on the basis of race, creed, gender, gender expression, sexual orientation, disability or immigration status, or ethnic origin in the administration of its educational programs and activities.

Age Requirements

Children entering the kindergarten program must be five years of age prior to the cut-off date outlined by the home school district's enrollment requirements. Students may not be more than 21 years of age at the time of Enrollment, but may be permitted to complete the school year in which his/her 21st birthday falls, subject to change based on rules and regulations established by the Pennsylvania Department of Education.

Enrollment Application

The Enrollment Application represents the first step in a multi-step process. By completing, signing and submitting the Enrollment Application, the parent expresses a desire to have his/her child attend PDLCS. Completing the application does not mean the child will be automatically enrolled in PDLCS. As part of the process, the parent will submit copies of the following documents for each student as required by grade level:

PDLCS Enrollment form requests and **requires** upon enrollment:

1. Proof of age (Birth Certificate)
2. Immunizations Record as required by law
3. Proof of residency (Driver's License, mortgage statement, utility bill)
4. Parent registration statement

5. Home language survey

After signing and submitting these forms to the Enrollment Department, the parent/guardian will be contacted by a PDLCS Enrollment Specialist to discuss the next steps. The student is officially enrolled at PDLCS when he/she is assigned an official start date which is within five business days after all required documentation is received.

PDLCS also requests the following information, but does not delay enrollment of a student:

1. Private Physician Medical Form
2. Private Dental Form
3. Proof of Custody if applicable
4. Copy of most recent k-8 Report Card or High School Transcript
5. Enrollment Notification Form
6. Signed Parent/Student Handbook Form
7. Signed Authorization for Release of Information Form if applicable
8. Signed Computer/Internet Acceptable Use Policy
9. Income Verification Form (Free & Reduced Lunch Form)

Health Certification and Immunization Requirements

In order for a student to be admitted to PDLCS, the parent must submit satisfactory evidence that all required immunizations have been administered or are in the process of being administered, or must file a certificate of exemption. In special circumstances, the student's physician may recommend additional immunizations.

If there are any questions about immunizations or where to get them, the parent should contact his/her county or city Public Health Nurse.

Official Enrollment

On the official start date provided to the parent, the student must attend orientation and begin completing his/her school work daily as outlined in the student's course calendars.

In order to maintain a student's enrollment, the parent must:

- assure that a working phone and Internet connection (high-speed) are maintained at the

location where the student is being educated at all times;

- call the PDLCS Records Department, to provide updated Proof of Residence and Enrollment Notification form, of any and all parent or student address and phone number changes within 10 days; failure to submit up-to-date proof of residency information may result in the removal of a student from PDLCS rolls; and
- monitor daily attendance and completion of course work via the course delivery system. Attendance must be substantiated by course work completed as outlined by the teacher in each course the student is enrolled.

Re-Enrollment

PDLCS students will automatically be re-enrolled from school year to school year. Parents of re-enrolling students will be sent required annual forms to fill out, print, sign, and return

Annual forms required for Re-Enrolling students are:

1. Signed Parent/ Student Handbook Form
2. Signed Authorization for Release of Information Form (if applicable)
3. Home Language Survey
4. Signed Computer/Internet Acceptable Use Policy
5. Private Physician Medical Form for students entering 1st, 6th, and 11th grades
6. Private Dental Form for students entering 1st, 3rd, and 7th grade
7. Income Verification Form (Free and Reduced Lunch Form)

MATERIALS, TECHNOLOGY, AND SUPPLIES

Certain equipment, supplies and services will be on loan to PDLCS students, which have been deemed necessary to ensure the functionality and ability to participate in the PDLCS educational program. The textbooks, computers, software, hardware, and other materials loaned to the parent and/or student are the property of PDLCS and no parent and/or student has any right to these except for usage in strict accordance with the school's educational model, Code of Conduct, rules, regulations, policies and procedures. Parents and students are responsible for the care and safekeeping of textbooks, computers, software, hardware, and other materials loaned to the parent and/or during the school year. Materials and property must be used solely in connection with the education services provided by PDLCS.

Parents must return the materials and property promptly if their student withdraws, is removed or expelled from the program. Parents must return curriculum materials at the close of the semester and/or school year.

Loaned Materials and Property

Pursuant to Pennsylvania law, each family enrolled in PDLCS has the right to have one computer provided per child enrolled in the program. PDLCS loans families a computer, a combination printer/scanner/copier, and other curriculum materials.

Recovering and Returning Materials

Recovery of the computer and printer/scanner/copier commences when any of the following occurs:

- A parent's written Notice of the Intent to Withdraw;
- A student's mandatory withdrawal after 10 consecutive school days of non-attendance;
- A student's graduation from PDLCS; or
- A student's expulsion

Within thirty days after four corresponding authenticated attempts of recovery have been made by an authorized PDLCS de-installer, a written notification is sent to the parent informing them that the following actions may be taken:

- A police report will be filed with the appropriate law enforcement agency to recover the computer, printer, accessories and all other Material and Property from the parent.
- A credit complaint against the parent may be filed with the three major credit-reporting agencies. Other legal action permitted by law and in equity may be taken to secure the return of the school's materials and property, including civil and criminal actions.

• Technical Support and Technology Repair

PDLCS offers technical support services during regular office hours (7:30 am to 4:30 pm on school days) by telephone, 1-888-997-3352, ext. 2. Students and families may call to receive assistance with setting up or trouble shooting issues with school-owned and/or issued hardware, software, and websites.

The PDLCS help desk staff will make every attempt to resolve issues remotely via guidance over the phone, or by using software or apps to remotely access the student's computer. In the event that a computer or other hardware must be shipped back to the school for repair, the school will mail or email return shipping labels. Parents must ensure shipping of equipment to the school upon receipt of the labels. Technical Support will repair or replace then, ship out the hardware within one (1) business day of receipt of the equipment.

Most initial repairs will be completed at the school's expense. Families may be charged for repairs of obvious physical abuse of the equipment is evident, or when a pattern of repeated damage is evident. Please refer to the letter included with your computer to see a list of potential fees associated with hardware repair.

ATTENDANCE

Pennsylvania Public School Law requires children to receive the following Educational Learning Hours:

- Kindergarten: 5.0 per day hours (25 hours per week, completing a minimum of 900 hours per year)
- Grades 1-6: 5.0 hours per day (25 hours per week, completing a minimum of 900 hours per year)
- Grades 7-12: 5.5 hours per day (27.5 hours per week, completing a minimum of 990 hours per year)

Accordingly, parents are required to supervise daily school attendance to avoid truancy issues. **Under the supervision of their parent, students must log into each scheduled course daily, complete and submit assignments as outlined in the student's course calendar.** Parents are responsible for providing PDLCS with written verification of the reason for an absence **within (3) days** of such absence. A partial day of absence is considered a day of absence from school requiring documentation to be submitted by the parent to PDLCS. A maximum of ten days of cumulative lawful absences verified by parental notification may be permitted during a school year. All absences beyond ten cumulative days require an excuse from a physician.

Truancy Prevention Process

It is the belief of PA Distance Learning Charter School that students **achieve academic success through consistent attendance**, engagement in daily coursework and on-going communication with teachers. In order for a student to learn expected skills, it is important they develop a positive and responsible approach to study habits through regular school attendance.

Preventing truancy issues is important to PDLCS and involves many people. **Parents** are responsible for ensuring students attend school. **Students** are responsible to complete daily coursework with the guidance of teachers and parents. PDLCS **Attendance Officer** is responsible for enforcing, tracking and reporting attendance, as well as developing a Student Attendance Improvement Program to aid families in complying with public cyber-charter school regulations. **Please take notice of changes as a result of Act 138 legislation for the 2017-18 school year.**

Attendance is taken on each school calendar day. Attendance involves daily log-in to each course and completion of assigned daily lesson, which includes submission of assigned coursework for each school calendar day.

Parents are notified of a full-day of absence through an automated phone reporting system. Parents may submit an Excused Absence Form within 3 days of a reported absence. There is a maximum limit of ten parental excuses in one school year. Medical excuses must be submitted for all subsequent absences. Students with more than twenty absences in one school year may be prohibited from progressing to the next grade level.

Unlawful or unexcused absences occur following a student's absence for which a parental or medical excuse is not submitted within 3-days of the reported absence. Parents are notified after the 3rd unexcused absence. Children and Youth Services are notified for students under 15 years of

age who do not participate in his or her Student Attendance Improvement Plan. Students who continue to accumulate absences will be referred to the local magistrate.

Partial days of absence are considered full-days of absence under Pennsylvania school regulations requiring parental or medical excused absence forms be submitted. Students who fail to make adequate progress in courses or with course grades below 60% is often a direct result of unexcused partial days of absences.

Excused Absences

Parents are responsible for providing PDLCS with written verification of the reason for each absence **within (3) days** of such absence. Legal excused absences constitute valid excuses for absence of a student from PDLCS, provided satisfactory evidence or documentation is submitted to PDLCS Administration within 3 days of such absence. This includes absence of partial days. A maximum of ten days of cumulative lawful absences verified by parental notification may be permitted during a school year. All absences beyond ten cumulative days should require an excuse from a physician. Legal excused absences include, without limitation, the following:

- Observance of a Religious Holiday. An absence may be considered excused if the tenets of a bona fide religion, to which a student or his/her parent adhere, require observance of a religious event. (22 PA. CODE § 11.21) The parent must submit written request for the excusal **prior** to the absence.
- Tutorial Work. An absence may be excused for the purpose of the student receiving tutorial instruction in a field not offered by PDLCS only if (i) the excusal does not interfere with the student's regular program of studies, and (ii) the qualifications of the instructor are approved by PDLCS Administration. (22 PA. CODE. § 11.22)
- Medical or Dental Appointments. An absence resulting from a medical (health care or therapy) or dental appointment, if: (i) such appointment cannot be scheduled outside of regularly scheduled academic calendar days, (ii) the health or therapeutic services are to be rendered by Commonwealth of Pennsylvania licensed practitioners, or (iii) the time of necessary absence from PDLCS involves a minimum of interference with the student's regular program of studies. Notice should be given to the teacher and/or Academic Advisor prior to the absence, except in the case of an emergency. (22 PA. CODE § 11.23)
- Illness or Injury. An absence resulting from illness or injury, which prevents the student from being physically able to attend PDLCS. Any student missing more than three (3) consecutive school days requires a note from a physician. (22 PA. CODE § 11.25)
- Urgent Reasons. An absence resulting from an urgent reason may be excused. PDLCS shall strictly construe the term "urgent reason" as it applies to such absences and such excuse does not permit irregular attendance. (22 PA. CODE § 11.25)

- Educational Opportunities or Family Educational Trips. An absence may be excused when it is demonstrated that the purpose of the absence is to take advantage of a valid educational opportunity (including classes for religious instruction totaling not more than 36 hours per academic school year) pursuant to 22 PA. CODE § 11.21), if (i) the student's parent submits written request for the excusal **prior** to the tour or trip, (ii) approval for such an absence is granted prior to the absence in accordance with the Student Educational Leave of Absence Policy, and (iii) there is an adult who is directing and supervising the student during the tour or trip who is acceptable to both the parents and PDLCS. (22 PA. CODE § 11.26)
- Death in the Immediate Family. An absence resulting from the death of a member of the student's immediate family. The immediate family of a student includes, but is not necessarily limited to, parents, grandparents, brothers and sisters.
- Court or Administrative Proceedings. An absence resulting from the attendance of a student at the proceedings of a court or an administrative tribunal if the student is a party to the action or under subpoena as a witness.

In the event that a medical excuse cannot be provided, the Parent may submit an Excused Absence Form to PDLCS Administration, requesting approval of the absence. Absences resulting in three (3) or more consecutive days require a medical excuse and Excused Absence Forms are not applicable. Students may only accumulate a maximum of twenty (20) excused absences per academic school year, or ten (10) excused absences per academic semester. This includes partial days. A maximum of ten days of cumulative lawful absences verified by parental notification may be permitted during a school year. All absences beyond ten cumulative days require an excuse from a physician.

Excused Absences and Making up Schoolwork

Students whose absences are excused are required to make up all assignments missed or to complete alternative assignments as deemed appropriate by PDLCS. Work missed because of absence must be made up within the timeline set forth by the course teacher. Any work not completed within this period shall result in no credit for the missed assignment. In the case of an extended illness or other extenuating circumstances, the parent must contact PDLCS Administration.

Unexcused/Illegal Absences

Any day that the student has not logged into PDLCS that is not determined to be legal or excused will be considered as an unexcused/illegal absence. The following reasons for absences are illegal and unexcused in accordance with the Pennsylvania State Attendance Laws:

1. Truancy

2. Lack of transportation
3. Trips not approved in advance
4. Shopping
5. Birthday or other celebration
6. Hunting, fishing, attending ball games or sporting events
7. Gainful employment
8. Sleeping in
9. Any other reason not listed in the Excused Absences section above
10. Babysitting

Attendance Notification

1. All Absences – reported to parents using an automated phone reporting system
2. Excused Absence Form – parents submit an Excused Absence Form or Medical Excuse within 3 days
3. Unexcused Absence – when no Excused Absence Form or Medical Excuse Form is received after 3 days
 - a. 1st Unexcused Absence – reported to parents via the school automated phone system
 - b. 2nd Unexcused Absence – reported to parents via the school automated phone system
 - c. **3 unexcused** absences they are considered truant by the law
 - i. Parent is contacted immediately after the 3rd unexcused absence occurs via phone call by the automated system and the attendance officer. A letter outlining the absences will also be sent parent via school issued parent email account and postal mail
 - ii. The attendance officer will set a Student Attendance Improvement Program meeting with the parent and student as well as the appropriate staff members to put a plan in place to eliminate truancy and assist in academic success
 - d. **6 unexcused** absences students are considered habitually truant by law
 - iii. **The student will be referred to our Student Attendance Improvement Program (SAIP).**
 - iv. A meeting with the parent/guardian, student and Attendance Officer is required to document the SAIP plan for achieving regular attendance and full participation in the school's academic program.
 - v. Students and parent/guardians of children under the age of 15 years old who refuse to participate in the SAIP or do not regularly attend school following the plan's implementation will be referred to Children and Youth Services.
 - vi. A truancy citation will be filed with the local magistrate (where the student resides) for students who fail to participate in the SAIP or fail to attend school regularly.

- vii. Failure to comply with a Student Attendance Improvement Program for ten consecutive days may result in truancy violations that may lead to the removal of the student from active membership at PDLCS.

EMERGENCY SCHOOL CLOSING

Should it be necessary to close PDLCS offices or testing centers for weather or other unforeseen emergencies, information will be posted on the PDLCS web site or provided in a telephone recording at the PDLCS' main number.

HARASSMENT POLICY

Harassment is any form of hostility, conduct or language that alters the condition of the student's school environment and which creates a hostile, intimidating or offensive school environment. Additionally, sexual harassment can consist of unwelcome sexual advances, intentional and unwelcome touching, verbal remarks and requests or demands for sexual favors.

The prohibition against harassment is applicable to all employees of the PDLCS, which includes all staff members, teachers, administrators, managers, and officers. The prohibition also applies to all PDLCS students and parents, prohibiting them from harassing other students, staff or other persons.

Any student that believes another student has harassed him/her, or any person employed by PDLCS, should immediately report the incident to a teacher. If there is any hesitation to discuss the matter with a teacher, the incident should be reported to the PDLCS Administrator. If a student is uncomfortable about reporting to the Administrator, a parent should make the report. Reported incidents will be investigated immediately and the results of the investigation will be thoroughly discussed with the parent and student. Corrective action will be taken if deemed appropriate and the student will be referred to the Student Assistance Team.

ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

I. General Statement of Policy

The PDLCS Board of Trustees recognizes the negative impact that bullying can have on the health and safety of students and the learning environment. The Pennsylvania Distance Learning Charter

School strives to preserve a learning environment that is devoid of bullying. Therefore, bullying is prohibited at school-sponsored events and activities, at annual testing and other school sponsored venues.

II. Definition Of Bullying

“Bullying” means repeated behavior by an individual student, an individual student within a group of students, or group of students that is intended to cause the victim(s) to feel frightened, threatened, intimidated, humiliated, shamed, disgraced, ostracized, or physically abused. Bullying implies an imbalance in power or strength in which the student being bullied has difficulty defending himself/herself. Bullying manifests itself in many forms, including physical, verbal, social/relational and/or cyber bullying.

Bullying occurs in several forms, including but not limited to, the following:

- Written, verbal, or nonverbal threats
- Intimidating or threatening gestures
- Unwanted physical contact, violence, or assault
- An intentional display of force that would give the victim reason to expect or fear physical contact or injury
- Jeering, taunting, or mocking
- Teasing
- Degrading, insulting, or derogatory comments
- Extortion
- Theft of money or possessions
- Vandalism of a student’s personal property
- Unauthorized exercise of control over a student’s personal property

III. Cyber Bullying

Cyber bullying, which is sometimes referred to as online social cruelty or electronic bullying, involves but is not limited to:

Sending mean, vulgar or threatening messages or images; posting sensitive, private information about another person; pretending to be someone else in order to make that person look bad; intentionally excluding someone from an online group (Willard, 2005).

Cyber bullying can occur through

- E-Mails,
- Instant messaging,
- Text or digital imaging messages sent on cell phones, Web pages,
- Web logs (blogs)
- Chat rooms or discussion groups, and
- Other information communication technologies

IV. Preventative Measures

- I. A copy of this policy will be provided to staff, students and parents on an annual basis.
- II. The staff will discuss bullying with students and will provide age appropriate examples to assist students in identifying bullying and understanding why it is inappropriate.
- III. All students shall be informed that bullying will not be tolerated in any form.
- IV. All students shall be encouraged to report any bullying regardless of whether they are the victim or an observer.
- V. When bullying has occurred and it has been dealt with in accordance with this policy, preventative measures shall include:
 - Counselor checking in with the student who has been bullied.
 - Counselor checking in with parents/guardians to see if the bullying has continued.

Additional preventative measures may include encouraging students to become involved in activities such as friendship groups, peer support groups, new student orientation groups and extracurricular activities and clubs.

The PDLCS Board of Trustees will review this policy at appropriate intervals to ensure it continued efficacy. As part of its review, the Board may require that a survey be conducted to determine the scope and extent of bullying in the school.

IV. REPORTING PROCEDURES

Victims/Targets. All students who believe they have been the victim/target of bullying shall promptly report the bullying to a teacher, building principal, assistant principal or other district staff member.

Parents/Guardians. All parents/guardians who become aware of any bullying are encouraged to report the bullying to a teacher, building principal, assistant principal or other district staff member.

Student Witnesses. All students who witness or become aware of bullying shall immediately report the bullying to a teacher, building principal, assistant principal or other district staff member.

School Personnel. Any staff person who witnesses bullying shall immediately intervene and take appropriate action to stop the bullying. In addition, any staff person who witnesses or receives a report of bullying shall make a report to the building principal, assistant principal, or their designee and follow any other processes put in place by the school for reporting bullying incidents.

School Administration. An Administrator who observes bullying or receives a report of bullying shall document the incident and ensure that the school process for investigating and following up on bullying incidents is implemented in a timely manner.

V. Disciplinary and Other Action

Consistent and appropriate disciplinary action will be taken for bullying behavior. The primary purpose of such action is to protect the victim and to deter bullying behavior in the future. The discipline imposed should match the offense.

In regard to investigating reports of bullying, Administrators or their designees shall discuss bullying with the victim in a place where the victim feels secure. The initial discussion with the victim shall not take place in the presence of the offending student(s). If more than one student is involved in perpetrating the bullying, the Administrator shall talk to each of the offending students separately. If an investigation substantiates that bullying has occurred, the building principal or their designee shall take appropriate action consistent with this policy, including placing a written record of the behavior in the offending student(s)'s discipline file. Students involved in bullying situations will also be referred to the Student Assistance Team who will follow-up with the appropriate post-vention procedures.

PDLCS recognizes that parents can play an important role in educating their children and preventing bullying. Accordingly, the parents of each offending student shall be informed of any bullying incidents involving their child. Parents of offending students may be encouraged to attend one or more conferences with an administrator or their designee to review the bullying behavior

and cooperative strategies for correcting it.

The school's Administrator or designee shall also inform the victim's parents as soon as reasonably possible of any and all bullying behavior involving their child. Parents of students who have been bullied may also be provided with bullying prevention resources to support their child and receive ongoing communications from the school regarding the bullying situation. The administrator or designee will inform the parents of the victim when the investigation has been completed.

Disciplinary action for bullying may include suspension of privileges, removal from class, suspension, and expulsion or exclusion. If the PDLCS Administrator believes that the conduct rises to the level of a crime, disciplinary action will also include referral to law enforcement officials.

The penalties and prohibitions in this policy are in addition to, and do not replace or supersede, any related provisions in District policy prohibiting conduct such as harassment, violence, assault, and hazing.

Without disclosing personally identifiable data, PDLCS shall make summary information about violations of this policy available to the public, upon request, consistent with the Pennsylvania statutes.

VI. Reprisal

The School will discipline or take appropriate action against any pupil, teacher, administrator or other school personnel who retaliates against any person who reports alleged bullying or any person who testifies, assists or participates in an investigation, or who testifies, assists or participates in a proceeding or hearing relating to such bullying. Retaliation includes, but is not limited to, any form of intimidation, reprisal or harassment.

VI. Dissemination of Policy and Training

This policy shall be presented to staff, student and parents upon enrollment or re-enrollment. Staff members, students, and parents will be required to sign a statement that they are aware of the policy and agree to adhere to its terms.

The School will develop and implement a method of discussing this policy annually with students and employees.

This policy shall be reviewed at least annually for compliance with state and federal laws.

CHILD ABUSE/SEXUAL ABUSE POLICY

School staff members who come into contact with children are mandated to report when they have reasonable

cause to suspect that a child under the care, supervision, guidance or training of that person or of their agency, institution or organization is an abused child. In addition, any person may report suspected abuse, even if the individual wishes to remain anonymous. All suspected child abuse situations will be referred to the Student Assistance Team.

CODE OF CONDUCT

As part of the Enrollment/Re-Enrollment process, both the parent and student are required to sign the Agreement Form (found at the end of this handbook) and submit it at the time of Enrollment. The signed agreement is kept in the student's cumulative file and, among other things, expresses the acceptance of the PDLCS Code of Conduct by both parent and student. Failure to adhere to the Code of Conduct by either the student or parent is cause for expulsion of the student from PDLCS. If a student is expelled from PDLCS, or leaves PDLCS for any reason, he/she must return all PDLCS property and materials, including, but not limited to, the computer, hardware, software, textbooks, workbooks, and other materials and supplies loaned by PDLCS.

All suspensions and expulsions will be conducted in accordance with due process procedures. Only the Administrator may suspend or expel a student. The Administrator will provide the student and the parent/guardian with written notice of the intent to suspend/expel, which will include reasons for the intended suspension/expulsion. The notice will state the time and place to appear for a hearing on the matter, which will not be less than three (3) days or later than ten (10) days after the Notice of Intent to Suspend/Expel was provided to the student and parent. The student, parent and/or legal representative will have an opportunity to appear on request before the Administrator at a PDLCS chosen location to challenge the suspension/expulsion, or to otherwise explain the student's actions that led to the intended suspension/expulsion. The Administrator may grant an extension of time for the hearing date. If granted, the Administrator will notify all parties in writing of the new date, time and place of the hearing.

Suspension and expulsion of students with disabilities will comply with all federal and state laws, policies and procedures. The IEP Team will meet to review the student's IEP and consider the development of a Behavioral Intervention Plan any time the suspension exceeds 5 days in the academic year. Any student with an IEP who is suspended for more than 10 days during an academic year will continue to receive special education services via a change of placement as determined by the IEP Team. In the event that the student is being disciplined for an expellable action, the IEP Team will meet and conduct both a Manifest Determination and Functional Behavior Analysis. An Alternate Interim Placement will be identified for a period of time not to exceed 45 school day suspension shall exceed ten (10) school days. No expulsion shall exceed one year, except as otherwise allowed or required by law. A written notice of the suspension/expulsion will be sent or given within one school day to the parent of the student. The notice will contain the reasons for the suspension/expulsion and the right of the student to appeal the suspension/expulsion to the Administrator or Board of Trustees, or its designee. **If a student is expelled from PDLCS for the remainder of the school year, that student may not attempt to re-enroll with PDLCS during the same school year without the approval of the PDLCS Administrator.**

Following are the infractions of the Code of Conduct that may subject a student to discipline up to and including suspension or expulsion, if the same occurs during the presentation of any learning opportunity or at any school event, activity or function.

- **Cheating** – To act dishonestly, copying or using someone else’s work.
- **Insubordination**- Not accepting directions; refusing to cooperate with PDLCS employees, agents, and other representatives.
- **Theft** – To take the property of another without right or permission.
- **Fighting** – To participate in physical contact with one or more students, faculty, or staff of PDLCS or any other person with the intent to injure.
- **Possession** or Intake of Alcohol, Illegal Controlled Substances or Tobacco Products.
- **Vandalism** – Purposeful destruction, misuse or defacing of PDLCS property or another’s personal property. This includes the computer, printer/fax/scanner/copier unit, and all hardware loaned to the student by PDLCS.
- **Profane/Obscene Language or Gestures** toward Students/Staff/Teachers/Others. Use of unacceptable, disrespectful words stated audibly or in text, terms or gestures intended to embarrass or insult.
- **Inappropriate use of Internet** access, as detailed in the Technology & Internet Acceptable Usage Policy.
- **Wrongful Conduct** – Any action or inaction not specifically referenced in the listing above that impedes, obstructs, interferes with, or violates the mission, philosophy, policies, procedures, rules, and/or regulations of the PDLCS and/or is disrespectful, harmful, or offensive to others or property.
- **Truancy** - as defined in the Attendance section of this Handbook.

GRIEF POLICY

Mental health issues as well as the death of a family member or friend may disrupt daily life at home, at school or in the community. Without help, mental health problems and unaddressed grief issues can lead to school failure, alcohol or other drug abuse, family discord, violence or even suicide. However, help is available through the Student Assistance Team at PDLCS. Any student experiencing barriers to learning that are social-emotional in nature, or who experience the loss of a loved one will be referred to the Student Assistance Program for follow-up and referral to outside community resources if needed.

*School community members wishing to memorialize a loved one within school parameters must discuss their wishes with the Student Assistance Team to determine the appropriateness of the proposed memorial.

SAFE AND DRUG FREE SCHOOLS POLICY

In accordance with Federal Law, the PDLCS prohibits the use, possession, concealment or distribution of drugs

by students on the PDLCS grounds, in any school building, or at any PDLCS related event, activity or function (e.g. standardized testing). Drugs include any alcoholic beverage, tobacco products, anabolic steroid, and dangerous controlled substance as defined by State or Federal statute, or any substance that could be considered a “look alike” controlled substance. Compliance with this PDLCS policy is mandatory for all students, and any student who violates this policy will be subject to disciplinary action, in accordance with due process and as specified in the PDLCS Code of Conduct as listed in this Parent/Student Handbook, up to and including expulsion from the PDLCS. The Student Assistance Team will be notified in any case of a student suspected of violating the Drug-Free School Policy. When required by the state law, the PDLCS will also notify law enforcement officials.

SUICIDE PREVENTION POLICY

The Pennsylvania Distance Learning Charter School Board of Trustees recognizes that suicide is a major cause of death among young people and that all suicide threats must be taken seriously. The school’s Administrator or designee shall establish procedures to be followed when a suicide attempt, threat or disclosure is reported. The Counselor and School Nurse shall also provide training for students, parents/guardians and staff to help them recognize the warning signs of severe emotional distress and take preventive measures to help potentially suicidal students.

Staff shall promptly report suicidal threats or statements to the Administration, Counselor, or School Nurse, who shall promptly report the threats or statements to the student’s parents/guardians. These statements shall otherwise be kept confidential. In addition, if a student self-reports that they are considering suicide, demonstrates any suicidal ideation or reports are received by any school member that another student may be suicidal, they will automatically be referred to the Student Assistance Team.

TECHNOLOGY & INTERNET APPROPRIATE USAGE POLICY

The use of technology is a privilege and an important part of PDLCS’ overall curriculum. PDLCS does not warrant that technology resources will meet any specific requirements the student, or other users may have, or that they will be error free or uninterrupted. PDLCS will, from time to time, make determinations on whether specific uses of technology are consistent with school policies for students and school employees. PDLCS always reserves the right to monitor and log technology use, to monitor file server space utilization by users, and to examine specific network usage (as may be deemed necessary) for maintenance, safety or security of the technology resources or the safety of the user. It is the policy of PDLCS to:

- Annually require students and parents to sign the Technology and Internet Acceptable Usage Policy;
- Prevent user access over its computer network to receive or transmit inappropriate material via Internet, electronic mail, or other forms of direct electronic communications;
- Prevent unauthorized access and other unlawful online activity and damage to school resources;
- Prevent unauthorized access and other unlawful online activity and/or damage to school resources;

- Prevent unauthorized online disclosure, use, or dissemination of personal identification information of minors; and
- Comply with the Children’s Internet Protection Act [Publ. L. No. 106-554 and 47 USC 254(h)].

Internet Cost Provision

PDLCS strongly recommends that all families use high- speed Internet to help their children succeed in the program. PDLCS will provide Internet reimbursement to families at the conclusion of each quarter. Complete instructions on how to submit the form for reimbursement can be found in the “How to Use Internet Reimbursement” document located in the Student Support Services homepages.

WEAPONS POLICY

The Board of Trustees of the Pennsylvania Distance Learning Charter School recognizes the importance of a safe school environment relative to the educational process. Possession of weapons in the school setting is a threat to the safety of students and staff and is prohibited by law.

I. Purpose

Weapons serve no educational purpose. The Board of Trustees directs that any student of the Pennsylvania Distance Learning Charter School found to be in possession of a weapon at a school related function shall be subject to discipline as outlined herein.

II. Definitions

Weapon - the term shall include but is not be limited to any knife, cutting instrument, cutting tool, martial arts device, firearm, air rifle, pistol, slingshot device, explosive device, replica of a weapon, and/or any other tool or instrument capable of inflicting serious bodily injury.

According to statute, “weapon” shall be defined as a device, instrument, material or substance (animate or inanimate) that is used for, or is readily capable of, causing death or serious bodily injury, except that such term does not include a pocket knife with a blade of less than 2 ½ inches in length.

Possessing - a student is in possession of a weapon when the weapon is found on the person of the student, in the student’s vehicle, under the student's control while on school property or on property

being used by the school, at any school function or activity (testing locations or field trips), or at any school event.

III. Prohibited Activity

Any student of the school who is in possession of a firearm, explosive, or weapons as defined herein, at any school function or activity, including school authorized events held away from school property, shall be in violation of this policy.

IV. Procedures

An investigation based upon reasonable suspicion requires specific objective facts that reasonably lead one to believe that the individual in question is in possession of a weapon(s).

When determining if there is reasonable suspicion, there are some factors that a school official may consider. These factors include the student's age, history and school record, the prevalence of weapon(s) in the school, the importance of not delaying the search, the value and reliability of the school official's information, and the school official's personal experiences with the student.

Only areas and spaces that could potentially contain a weapon may be searched. This is called the "scope of the search". If there is reasonable suspicion that an individual is in possession of a weapon, a police officer should be summoned to conduct the search.

- School officials should only search individuals of the same gender.
- The individual should be moved to a private area in which the search should take place. Such search should be witnessed by one individual who should note all of the surroundings and circumstances as well as all of the actions that take place.
- The police officer will pat-down the individual in a manner consistent with all applicable Federal and State laws and guidelines as well as the officer's training.
- If the search of the individual and/or his/her belongings does not reveal any weapon(s), then all removed items will be returned to the individual. The search is complete.
- If the search reveals any weapon(s), the police officer will immediately confiscate the item(s) and take appropriate action.

After the search is completed, the site employee shall notify and/or summon:

1. local police;
2. PDLCS Chief Executive Officer and Principal;

3. parent(s) or guardian(s) of any student(s) involved in the violation;
 - a. Any employee at the site of a school related activity, upon learning of a possible violation of this policy, shall immediately notify the school's administrator of the violation and the identity of the student(s) involved.
 - b. After the Administrator has confirmed the violation of the policy, the Administrator shall immediately notify the student(s) and the parent(s) or the guardian(s) of the student(s) in writing that the student(s) is/are suspended from school as outlined in the "Penalties" provisions of this policy.
 - c. The Administrator shall be directly responsible for investigating the violation on behalf of PDLCS with the requested assistance from other school personnel.

V. Penalties

PDLCS shall expel for a period of not less than one (1) year any student who violates this weapons policy. Such expulsion shall be given in conformance with formal due process proceedings required by law. The School's CEO may recommend modifications of such expulsions on a case-by-case basis.

In the case of an exceptional student, the School's Administrator shall take all necessary steps to comply with IDEIA.

VI. Reenrollment to School

Before any student found in violation of this policy may be reenrolled to school, a conference involving parents and school officials shall be held to determine if any remediation and/or guidelines for reenrollment are necessary.

As a condition of Reenrollment to PDLCS, the following items shall be considered:

1. Recommendation for outside counseling.
2. Referral to the Student Assistance Program.
3. Referral to a school counselor.

Any student discovered, without previous plan or knowledge that he/she is in possession of a weapon as defined shall:

1. Immediately report the weapon to a school official.
2. Not be in jeopardy of the discipline code unless it can be shown the student had

knowledge of the weapon prior to his/her admitted discovery.

VII. Enrolling Students

When the school receives an application from a student who was previously expelled from a Pennsylvania public school for an offense involving a weapon, PDLCS will not accept the student during the expulsion period without prior approval of a PDLCS Administrator.

SCHOOL RECORDS

Student records are directly accessible only to the professional staff and to the students' parents until the student reaches eighteen years of age. Parents have the right to review records, and a request for that viewing should be made through the Administrator.

An official cumulative record is maintained for each student. Recognizing students' rights for privacy, this record shall contain only verified information of recognized importance.

Release of Records

School records are only released to another school upon request from that school stating that the student is now enrolled in that school, from a signed release by the parent or guardian or as otherwise required by law.

Updating

To keep the student's records up to date and for times of emergency, parents must keep PDLCS informed of any address, telephone and/or job changes that may occur during the school year. Parents are required to provide at least one working phone number at all times.

Requests for Records

The Records Department will request the student's records upon completion of the Enrollment Process. Pennsylvania mandates that the requested records must be received within 10 days. If the records are not received within 10 days, the local law enforcement agency will be notified. The requirement in Pennsylvania that records must be received in a given time comes from school mandates relating to missing children.

Student Directory Information

It is the policy of the PDLCS not to release any personal information such as names, home address, and phone numbers to outside agencies or requesting parties without the direct written consent of the parent or as otherwise required by law. The parent will be requested to complete the *Authorization to Release Information Form* during the Enrollment Process. The completed *Prohibition of Release of Directory Information Form* is kept in the student's cumulative record folder.

Access to Student Recruiting Information

Pursuant to the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, all local educational agencies (LEAs) must provide to military recruiters or institutions of higher education, upon request, access to secondary school students' (i.e., juniors and seniors) names, addresses and telephone listings. The state military affairs law requires the release of directory information consisting of a list of senior male and female students by name, home address and telephone number. The list will be compiled by the first day of the academic year in which the senior students will graduate. Additionally, Section 9528 requires that parents be notified that the school routinely discloses names, addresses, and telephone numbers to military recruiters upon request, subject to a parent's request not to disclose such information without written consent. Please contact your child's counselor if you would like to opt-out of the public, non-nonconsensual disclosure of directory information. You must contact the counselor and submit the opt-out form no later than the first day of the academic year in which the senior students will graduate.

PARENT'S RIGHTS

Teacher Qualifications

The PDLCS will annually notify parents of their right to request the following regarding their child's teacher(s): 1) licensure and certification information emergency or provisional status educational background, 2) qualifications of Instructional Aides

Parent Involvement Policy

The PDLCS Title I program will foster and enhance parent/involvement in the school. PDLCS wants to involve parents in their children's learning and to form an open line of communication between school and home. This will be accomplished through the following methods:

1. Information. Parents are informed about school activities and events through interim progress reports, report cards, mailings, email correspondence, school announcements, parent newsletters, parent/teacher conferences and informal personal and telephone conferences.
2. Annual Title I Meeting. Parents have an opportunity to review Title I programs and provide input into the planning process during the annual Title I meeting held at the school during flexible dates and times. Additionally, parents rights and Title I requirements will be discussed.
3. Open Door Policy. Parents are invited to come to the school to observe the education of their children on any day.
4. Volunteer Program. All parents are invited to volunteer in the school on any given day of the week.
5. Curriculum. We provide a high quality curriculum to enable our students to meet high standards, and prepare for the state proficiency exam. We share these results with parents and provide an explanation of the results with parents during the course of the school year.

Conferences

Parents have the right to request at any time conferences referring to the cumulative progress of the student with an administrator.

School Contacts with Non-Custodial² Parents

Access to student records will be in accordance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 and other relevant Federal and State laws as pertaining to the release of records. Upon request, non-custodial* parents shall be entitled to exercise all parental rights to the extent that such rights are not restricted by a legally binding instrument or court order.

If there is a court order concerning legal custody of a child, the information must be shared with PDLCS and filed in the child's cumulative record.

² A non-custodial parent refers to the parent who does not have physical custody of the child, but does have the right to information about the child's education.

Special Education

PDLCs fully complies with state and federal laws regarding the education of students with disabilities. In the event that a parent, or a teacher, suspects that a child may have a disability, instructional intervention strategies will be provided through the Response to Intervention Team. When it has been determined that intervention strategies have not been successful, and the child continues to demonstrate a learning deficit, a multi-factored evaluation may be conducted to determine if the child does have a disability. PDLCs shall comply with all mandated timelines to complete the evaluation process.

When a child is identified as having a disability, an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) will be provided to meet the specialized needs of the child. As a distance-learning school that relies upon parent educators, PDLCs may deliver educationally appropriate services to students with an IEP using methods that differ from those used at traditional public schools. These methods and services will be determined by the IEP Team. It is the responsibility of the student's parent to take his/ her child to a location specified by PDLCs, for state-mandated standardized testing and other purposes, including certain special education related services.

Policy and Procedure for Parental Complaints

Any parent may file a complaint regarding a violation of school policies, regulations, rules or procedures or federal, state or local law to the Board of Trustees of PDLCs by filing the same in writing with the School Administrator. To file a complaint with the Administrator, the parent shall deliver the written complaint containing:

- The student and parent's name (anonymous complaints will not be processed)
- The signature of the complainant
- The complainant's name and phone number
- The specific violation of school policy, regulation, rule and procedures, and/or federal, state or local law. The complaint may be delivered in person or by U.S. Mail properly addressed to PDLCs in care of the Administrator.

Upon filing of any complaint, PDLCs will do the following:

1. Date stamp the complaint upon receipt.
2. Notify the President of and attorney for the Board of Trustees.
3. Send a letter of acknowledgement to the complainant within 7-10 business days. The letter should address the general procedures that will be followed.

4. Conduct an investigation as directed by the President of the Board of Trustees. This process may include the following:
 - a. Collaborating with other offices, employees and personnel within the school;
 - b. Conducting a telephone or personal interview and/or conference(s) with complainant and other necessary parties; and/or
 - c. Sending written correspondence.
5. The Administrator will inform the President of the Board of Trustees of the investigation process and findings.
6. The investigation will be based on fact and findings specific to the allegation(s) stated in the complaint. (The reason for the decision will be outlined in the letter of findings.)

The Board of Trustees, or its representative, will issue a letter (or approve the letter) to the Complainant of:

- Compliance – (findings were unsubstantiated and school has complied); or
- Non-Compliance – (noting the areas of non-compliance, recommending possible changes/technical assistance and requesting that the school respond to Complainant with a corrective action(s) plan letter within 10-15 business days); All documentation of the Complaint, findings and any corrective action(s) plan must be placed in the appropriately marked complaint file for closure.

WITHDRAWAL

It is against Pennsylvania state code for a student to be simultaneously enrolled in PDLCS and another school district; therefore, the parent is responsible for contacting the PDLCS Records Department *before* his/her student enrolls in another public school. It is critical that parents send PDLCS a written request for withdrawal as soon as the decision to withdraw a student has been made.

To withdraw a student from PDLCS, the parent must contact the Records Manager to obtain the necessary forms, sign and submit the forms to PDLCS Records Department. This signed form gives official notice of the child's withdrawal and grants permission for PDLCS to send records to the student's new school. Except as prohibited by law, the student's grades and credits will not be released until all obligations are met, including the return of all textbooks, equipment, and materials as detailed in this handbook.

Returning Materials

All PDLCS materials shall be returned. PDLCS has an obligation under Pennsylvania Law to immediately initiate proceedings to withdraw a student in the event that said student, without a

legitimate excuse, fails to participate in 10 consecutive school days (the equivalent of 55 Continuous Educational Learning Hours of curriculum-based educational learning) during any academic year.

Pennsylvania Distance Learning Charter School’s Annual Child Find Notice and Student Records Notice

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REQUIRED ANNUAL NOTICES

Student Records

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA - C.F.R. Part 99), was most recently amended January 8, 2008, state regulations (Chapter 14-Special Education Services and Programs, Chapter 12-Student Rights and Responsibilities, and Chapter 711-Charter School and Cyber Charter School Services and Programs for Children with Disabilities) and PDLCS policy.

It is the intent of this Annual Notice and policy to inform parent/guardian(s) and eligible children (i.e. students 18 and older) of their rights relevant to their privacy rights in the collection, maintenance, release and destruction of these records as required by the *Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)*, 20 U.S.C. '1232g. 34 C.F.R. part 99 and the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.

Annual notice of this policy is given on the PDLCS website, in Student and Family Handbooks, and hard copies are available in the lobby area.

The different categories of information maintained by PDLCS are as follows; educational and health records, personally identifiable information and directory information. Information known as directory information can be released without consent. Parents may opt out of this by requesting in writing to the school principal that some or all directory information not be released. In addition, photographs, audio, videos may be used in publications, websites, or social media highlighting various school activities or coverage of school events. If you do not wish your child to be photographed or videotaped for these purposes, you must inform PDLCS principal in writing.

Education Records include records directly related to a student that are maintained the Pennsylvania Distance Learning Charter School (PDLCS). The Educational Records of PDLCS may include all of the following (this list is not intended to be exhaustive): grades, standardized test results, student evaluation reports, samples of student work, records transferred from sending schools, discipline records, medical records and any other records created and maintained by the school district directly related to the student. Educational records do not include communications with legal counsel that are attorney client privileged. Educational Records do not include records maintained solely by the creator for their personal use, not shared with others. The contents of a student's educational file shall be determined by the District unless a specific parental request is made or a complaint is made, consistent with this Notice

PDLCS shall permit the parent/guardian(s) of a student or an eligible special education student, who is or has been in attendance in the school, to inspect and review the education records of the student upon written request. The school will comply with a written request to review records within a reasonable period of time (never to exceed 45 calendar days from the date of written request) after the request has been made. When there are special cases and where necessary, a parental request to review records will be granted and arranged as soon as possible. Visits to review a student's records shall be arranged and facilitated by the principal or designee, or any party selected by the school, for the purposes of security and assistance in explaining or interpreting the data. The right to inspect and review education records includes:

1. The right to a response from PDLCS to reasonable requests, made in writing, for explanation and interpretations of the record; and
2. The right to obtain copies of records from PDLCS where failure of PDLCS to provide the copies would effectively prevent a parent or eligible student from exercising the right to inspect and review the educational records (e.g. where the parent lives too far to come review the records personally). *A reasonable fee of .25 will be charged per page for duplicate copies of documents already provided to parents/guardians.*

In accordance with FERPA, PDLCS will not produce or compile documentation that does not already exist.

It is presumed by the school that both natural parent/guardian(s) of a student has authority to inspect and review the education records of the student at the school in the conference room by appointment unless there is evidence that there is a legally binding instrument, or a State law or court order governing such matters as divorce, separation or custody, which provides to the contrary. A school designee will sit with the parent when the parent reviews the records in a private conference area of the main office.

Under federal law, parental consent is not required for the release of Directory information, which is information contained in an education record of a student that would not generally be considered harmful or an invasion of privacy if disclosed.

PDLCS designates the following as **Directory Information:** information contained in an education record of a student that would not generally be considered harmful or an invasion of privacy if disclosed.

(a) Directory information includes, but is not limited to, the student's name; address; telephone listing; electronic mail address; photograph; date and place of birth; grade level; enrollment status (*e.g.*, active or inactive); dates of attendance; participation in officially recognized activities and sports; weight and height of members of athletic teams; degrees, honors and awards received; and the most recent educational agency or institution attended.

(b) **Directory information does not include a student's ---**

- (1) Social security number; or
- (2) Student identification (ID) number, except as provided in paragraph (c) of this section.

(c) Directory information includes a student ID number, user ID, or other unique personal identifier used by the student for purposes of accessing or communicating in electronic systems, but only if the identifier cannot be used to gain access to education records except when used in conjunction with one or more factors that authenticate the user's identity, such as a personal identification number (PIN), password, or other factor known or possessed only by the authorized user.

A written record of this information, or electronic copy of the same, including grade level completed and year completed, may be maintained at least 100 years after a student attains age 21. A parent/guardian or eligible student may notify the school in writing of their refusal to allow the school to release directory information without prior consent. Such written refusal for consent must be sent to the Right to Know Officer, Dr. Darla Posney, 2100 Corporate Drive, Suite 500; Wexford, PA 15090 1.888.997.3352 x150

Pursuant to Section 9528 of the *No Child Left Behind Act*, the District is required to release student directory information (access to names, addresses, and phone numbers of high school juniors and seniors) to **military recruiters and college admissions officers**. The *No Child Left Behind* law requires high schools to release information to colleges or other higher learning institutions upon request. Any parent/guardian or student who has reached age eighteen may notify the School **in writing of their refusal** for this information to be released. Letters seeking the withholding of information to military recruiters should be sent to: The Right to Know Officer, 2100 Corporate Drive, Suite 500; Wexford, PA 15090 1.888.997.3352 x150

Per federal guidance, **student medical records**, maintained by the nurses' office, are considered educational records and will be shared with staff who the school determines have a legitimate educational interest in the information and a need to know medical information to protect the safety and health of the student. **Once provided to the School, specific parental consent will not be sought to share information on a need to know basis. Parental requests to maintain the confidentiality of specific medical information must be made in writing to the nurse's office.** Requests for complete confidentiality of medical information will be granted at the discretion of the nurse. These requests will be granted unless dangerous to the student.

If the agency reported a crime committed by a student with a disability the school will ensure that copies of the special education records and disciplinary records of the student will be transmitted properly and only to the extent possible that the transmission is permitted by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act.

The school can communicate about sex offenders from agency to agency.

The school shall obtain the written consent of the parent(s)/guardian(s) of a student age eighteen before disclosing personally identifiable information, other than directory information, from the education records of a student to a third party. Consent is not required where the disclosure is to the parent/guardian(s) of a student who is not an eligible student or the student himself or herself.

Personally Identifiable Information

The term includes, but is not limited to ---

- (a) The student's name;
- (b) The name of the student's parent or other family members;
- (c) The address of the student or student's family;
- (d) A personal identifier, such as the student's social security number, student number, or biometric record;
- (e) Other indirect identifiers, such as the student's date of birth, place of birth, and mother's maiden name;
- (f) Other information that, alone or in combination, is linked or linkable to a specific student that would allow a reasonable person in the school community, who does not have personal knowledge of the relevant circumstances, to identify the student with reasonable certainty; or
- (g) Information requested by a person who the educational agency or institution reasonably believes knows the identity of the student to whom the education record relates.

Uses of Personally Identifiable Information

The school may disclose personally identifiable from the education records of a student without written consent of the parent/guardian(s) or the student or the eligible student in several situations. See 34 C.F.R. Part 99. Some important examples of when no consent to release information include (list not exhaustive):

1. To other school officials, including teachers, guidance counselors, nurses, and I.U. personnel within the School who have been determined by the School to have legitimate educational interests or are providing instruction or services to students. The School has determined that all school employees involved in the direct supervision of a student (academic or non-academic) (including support staff) have a legitimate education interest in academic and health related student information if the information is necessary to ensure appropriate fulfillment of their professional duties and to ensure the health and safety of the student.
2. To officials of another school or school system or post-secondary schools in which the student seeks or intends to enroll, subject to the requirements set forth in 99.34. Parents may request a copy of the record sent.
3. To appropriate parties in a health or safety emergency, subject to the conditions set and 99.36, if knowledge of the information is necessary to protect the health or safety of the student or other individuals.
4. Information designated by the School as Directory Information.
5. Generally, schools must have written permission from the parent/guardian or eligible student in order to release any information from a student's education record. However, FERPA allows schools to disclose those records, without consent, to the following parties or under the following conditions (34 CFR § 99.31):
 - Specified officials for audit and evaluation purposes
 - Appropriate parties in connection with financial aid to a student
 - Organizations conducting studies for or on behalf of the school
 - Accrediting organizations
 - To comply with a judicial order or lawfully issued subpoena
 - State and local authorities, within the juvenile justice system, pursuant to specific state law
 - Contracted, consultant, volunteer, or other party to whom an agency or institution has outsourced institutional services or functions may be considered a school official under this paragraph--

(1) Performs an institutional service or function for which the agency or institution would otherwise use employees;

(2) Is under the direct control of the agency or institution with respect to the use and maintenance of education records; and

(3) Is subject to the requirements of §99.33 (a) governing the use and redisclosure of personally identifiable information from education records.

(ii) An educational agency or institution must use reasonable methods to ensure that school officials obtain access to only those education records in which they have legitimate educational interests. An educational agency or institution that does not use physical or technological access controls must ensure that its administrative policy for controlling access to education records is effective and that it remains in compliance with the legitimate educational interest requirement.

When providing records to authorized third parties, the school will make a reasonable attempt to notify the parent/guardian(s) of the student or the eligible student of the transfer of the records at the last known address of the parent(s)/guardian(s) or eligible student. Per state law, the school will not provide any notice of transfer of records of a student to a school in which a student seeks or intends to enroll.

The school maintains student records in locked filing cabinets within the confines of PDLCS. This storage space contains special education student records, student health records, 504 Student Service Plan records, etc. Current original special education records with psychological records are maintained in the Special Education Department. All school records of students (K-12) who were evaluated by the school psychologist(s) and found not to be non-exceptional are kept and are secured in the school(s)'offices. All records are kept in a secure location and access to files is limited.

PLEASE NOTE: PDLCS BOARD POLICY PROVIDES RESIDENT STUDENTS AND THEIR PARENTS WITH NOTICE THAT THE SCHOOL MAY DESTROY RECORDS UNDER THE FOLLOWING CIRCUMSTANCES AND TIMELINES:

a. Records that include a student's name, address, grades, attendance records, classes attended, grade level completed and year completed may be destroyed once 100 years have passed since the student's 21st birthday.

b. **Special Education records**, Section 504 records, Response to Intervention (RTI) records, and health records **may be destroyed once 7 years have passed from the date a student has graduated or reached graduation age** (if exiting the school before graduation) as long as there is no outstanding request to inspect and review the records and the records are no longer deemed useful to the school.

c. **Notice of destruction of these records is provided annually via this publication.** Educational records of a student are no longer needed by PDLCS to provide educational services at the end of one year following a student's graduation from PDLCS. A parent/guardian may submit a written request for the destruction of all education records at that time.

d. Destruction will proceed where parents or eligible students have not requested copies by July 1 of the year the records may be destroyed as per paragraphs *a* and *b* above. Parents or students over eighteen have the right to request a copy of their record before destruction.

Parents are reminded that copies of the records might be needed for the acquisition of Social Security benefits or for other purposes.

Amendment of Education Records

A Parent/guardian or eligible student has the right to request amendment of a student's educational file if it is believed that any information is inaccurate, or in violation of a student's rights. The educational agency shall decide within a reasonable time whether to amend the record. If PDLCS decides not to amend the educational record it shall notify the parent/student of the right to and arrange an informal hearing. The hearing will be conducted by an official of the school without an interest in the outcome, who will be either the Right to Know Officer or their designee. The parent may present relevant evidence. The school will issue a written decision based on the hearing. Informal inquiries may be sent to: ferpa@ed.gov or ppra@ed.gov. The website address is: www.ed.gov/policy/gen/guide/fpcd

Complaints regarding violation of rights accorded parent(s)/guardian(s) and eligible students with respect to student records are to be submitted to the PDLCS Principal, 2100 Corporate Drive, Suite 500; Wexford, PA 15090 1.888.997.3352 x114. All Complaints will be investigated and responded to in writing within a reasonable period of time. If complaints cannot be satisfactorily resolved by the District, complaints can be filed with the following

**Family Policy Compliance Office
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20202-4605**

Questions regarding the above information or requests for a copy of the records policy may be referred to The Right to Know Officer, 2100 Corporate Drive, Suite 500; Wexford, PA 15090 1.888.997.3352 x150

Screening and Evaluation

The PDLCS employs the following procedures for locating, identifying and evaluating the needs of school age students who may require special education programs and/or services. These procedures, as required by state regulation, are as follows:

As prescribed by Section 1402 of the Pennsylvania school code, the PDLCS helps families make provisions for health screenings for kindergarten (K) through 12th grade students and new students without history of recent exams: Vision (Gr. K-12); Hearing (Gr. K, 3, 7 and 11 and any student with a known history of hearing loss); Mandated Physical Exams (Gr. K, 6, and 11); Dental Screenings (Gr. K, 1, 3, and 7); Scoliosis Screening (Gr. 6, 7) and Body Mass Index (BMI) screening (Gr. K-12).

Speech and language skills are screened in kindergarten and on a referral basis by speech clinicians.

Gross-motor and fine-motor skills, academic and social-emotional skills are assessed by the teachers and support staff. Screening activities include: review of group-based data such as cumulative enrollment and health records, report cards and

academic skills scores. Identified needs from these screening sources, as well as information obtained from parents and outside agencies, is assessed, noted within the student's record and discussed with parents.

PDLCS has intervention/prevention teams in place to support students as a pre-referral system. A **Student Academic Team** has been established as part of the pre-referral intervention process. The team consists of principal, academic advisor, regular education teachers, reading specialists, school psychologist when needed and special education staff when needed. Parents are also part of this process and are contacted and strongly encouraged to participate in all phases of the Student Academic Team process. The Student Academic Team assists teachers and parents with supporting students who are experiencing academic, behavioral, medical, emotional and social skills difficulties.

The **Response to Instruction and Intervention (RTII)** model is utilized as part of the pre-referral intervention process. The MTSS-RTII team coordinates and oversees the MTSS-RTII pre-referral process. The team coordinates all meetings between parents and staff and identifies researched evidenced-based strategies that can be implemented in the regular education classroom setting for students who are at-risk. The MTSS-RTII team will develop appropriate academic goals that the students need to achieve in order to succeed academically in the regular classroom setting. The MTSS-RTII teacher also monitors the effectiveness of the instructional strategies that are utilized in the regular classroom environment. She also works with students on study skills, organizational skills, preparedness, etc. She will, on occasion, provide individual or small group focused tutoring sessions.

The **Student Assistance Program (SAP)** is an additional support used by the district to identify at-risk students. SAP teams are currently in place at the middle and high school levels. SAP is a cooperative effort with parents in utilizing the support staff, students, and community services. It is a proactive prevention/intervention program that attempts to provide intervention before school performance is seriously compromised. The SAP Core Team of individuals are trained in the SAP Model and focus on screening/intervention for student who may be experiencing drug and alcohol, depression, and/or family issues, referrals to appropriate agencies or treatment facilities, aftercare for those returning from treatment, and crisis intervention as needed.

If appropriate, a referral process is initiated at each building level through the Student Academic Team, Response to Intervention Team, and Student Assistance Teams (SAP), guidance departments, principal or the Department of Special Education. Assessment data is used by the team to meet the student's specific needs by recommending modifications or adaptations to the regular education program, creating interventions to address the problem and monitoring the student's response to intervention, or to document the need for further evaluation.

If it is determined that a student is in need of further evaluation, the student is referred for a multidisciplinary team (MDT) evaluation, which requires parent permission and includes parent input. Next, a "Permission-to-Evaluate Consent Form" is issued to the parent to sign giving the school district permission to conduct the evaluation. The school district has 60 calendar days to complete the evaluation. After the evaluation is completed, an evaluation report is prepared which includes specific recommendations for the types of intervention necessary to meet the needs of the student and to determine the child's eligibility for special education services based upon a disability.

When the evaluation report is completed parents are invited if necessary to a multidisciplinary team meeting to review findings and plan for the student's needs. After the MDT evaluation is completed, the parents are given a NOREP, which they sign to indicate their agreement or disagreement with the recommendation.

Parents of students who suspect that their child has a disability and is in need of special education may request an Response to Intervention meeting or multidisciplinary team evaluation of their child through a written request to the PDLCS Principal.

You may find information regarding the appropriate developmental milestone descriptors for infants and toddlers at the Center for Disease Control (CDC) website: <http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/milestones/index.html> For additional information regarding the signs of developmental delays, please contact PDLCS, Director of Special Education, 2100 Corporate Drive, Suite 500; Wexford, PA 15090 1.888.997.3352 x105

Services for School Age Students with Disabilities

PDLCS provides a free, appropriate public education to students with disabilities according to state and federal rules. To be eligible, the child must:

- Be of school age.
- Have a disability *and* be in need of specially designed instruction.

- Meet eligibility criteria for one or more of the following physical or mental disabilities as set forth in the Pennsylvania State Standards: autism, deaf-blindness, blindness, visual impairment, emotional disturbance, specific learning disability, other health impairment, traumatic brain injury, and speech/language impairment, orthopedic impairment, hearing impairment, deafness, multiple disabilities or mental retardation. Services designed to meet the needs of eligible disabled students include:
 - The annual development of an individualized education program (IEP).
 - A triennial multidisciplinary re-evaluation for students with disabilities (except for those students with mental retardation where evaluation remains biennial).
 - A range of supports for students from itinerant level to supplemental level to full time level special education support within the school district or placement in a full-time special education disabilities class outside of the regular school.

The extent of special education services for disabled students and the location for the delivery of such services are determined by the parents and the district staff at the IEP team meeting and are based on the student’s identified needs and abilities, chronological age and the level of intensity of the specified intervention. PDLCS also provides related services such as speech therapy, physical therapy, occupational therapy and assistive technology if they are required to enable the student with disabilities to derive educational benefits.

a) Prior to initiation of services, parents of a student with disabilities are presented a “Notice of Recommended Educational Placement/Prior Written Notice” (NOREP) with which they agree or disagree. If parents agree to the program outlined by the multidisciplinary team and the parent signs either the NOREP or NORA, then the program is implemented for their child. If parents disagree with the program being recommended, they have the right to request IEP facilitation, mediation and/or a due process hearing. Parents are issued their “Procedural Safeguards” which outlines in detail their legal rights as a parent of a child identified as having a disability. Lastly, if a child proves to have a disability or handicapping condition under PA Chapter 15 and the American Disabilities Act and it is determined the child is entitled to services and accommodations that are necessary to enable them access and safety when participating in programs and activities of the school, then a 504 Student Services Plan is outlined between the parent, district LEA and district staff. Parents are also given “Procedural Safeguards” for Chapter 15 504 Student Services Plans which outlines their rights as a parent of a student who has a disability and requires accommodations.

Detailed information regarding Chapter 14 special education, Chapter 711 Charter School and Cyber Charter School Programs for Children with Disabilities, and Chapter 15 504 Service Plan/Agreement procedures and services may be obtained by contacting the PDLCS Principal, 2100 Corporate Drive, Suite 500; Wexford, PA 15090 1.888.997.3352 x150

Services for Students in Nonpublic Schools

Public school education may be accessible to resident students attending nonpublic schools on a dual enrollment basis in a special education program operated in a public school. A multidisciplinary evaluation which determines the child’s eligibility for services must be conducted and, if eligible, an individualized education program plan (IEP) is developed. Parents of nonpublic school students who suspect that their child is disabled and in need of special education may request a multidisciplinary evaluation of their child through a written request to PDLCS Principal or Director of Special Education.

Services for Protected Handicapped Students

The school district will provide to each protected handicapped student without discrimination or cost to the student or family those related aids, services or accommodations which are needed to provide equal opportunity to participate in and obtain the benefits of school programs and extracurricular activities to the extent appropriate to the student’s abilities. To qualify as a protected handicapped student, the child must be of school age with a physical or mental handicap which substantially limits or prohibits participation in or access to an aspect of the school program.

Services for protected handicapped students are distinct from those applicable to disabled students enrolled in special education programs. Protected handicapped students fall under Pennsylvania’s Chapter 15, sometimes known by its federal name, Section 504 (of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act). In contrast, students with disabilities who qualify for special education services are covered by regulations contained in Pennsylvania’s Chapter 14. While both Chapter 14 and 15 provide services to students, there are technical differences between the two. Additional information about evaluation procedures and provision of services to protected handicapped students is available by contacting the building principal.

Services for Preschool Age Children

Act 212, the Early Intervention Systems Act, entitles all preschool age children with disabilities to appropriate intervention services. Young children experiencing developmental delay or physical or mental disabilities are eligible for early intervention services if it is determined that they meet eligibility requirements.

The **Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare** is responsible for providing services to infants and toddlers, defined as children from birth to three year of age. Contact the Early Learning Institute, 2510 Baldwick Road, Pittsburgh, PA, 15205-4104, 412-922-8322.

The Pennsylvania Department of Education is responsible for providing services to preschool age children from ages three through five. Contact the **Allegheny Intermediate Unit, Project DART**, 425 East Waterfront Drive, Homestead, PA 15120, 412-394-5941.

Confidentiality of Student Records

The privacy rights of parents and students are mandated by federal legislation known as the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA - C.F.R. Part 99), most recently amended in November 1996, state regulations (Chapter 14-Special Education Services and Programs, Chapter 12-Student Rights and Responsibilities) and district policy

Highly Qualified Teachers

All public school teachers with primary responsibility for direct instruction in one or more of NCLB's core content areas are required to demonstrate that they satisfy the definition of a "Highly Qualified Teacher." This requirement includes:

- Elementary level (grades K-6) teachers who teach all subjects to a particular grade;
- Middle- and secondary-level (grades 7-12) core content area teachers;
- Special education teachers who provide direct instruction in one or more core content areas;
- English as a second language (ESL) teachers who provide direct instruction in one or more core content areas

Pennsylvania's Definition of Highly Qualified Teacher

The PDLCS staff meet the No Child Left Behind Standards for highly qualified teachers. A highly qualified teacher, according to the United States Department of Education, is fully certified, has a bachelor's degree, a content area major and has passed a content area test. In addition, fully certified teachers in Pennsylvania have completed pedagogical course work in education, including student teaching. We take pride in the tremendous skill and dedication of our faculty and staff.

Please note that, as parents, you have a right to request and receive timely information regarding the professional qualifications of your child's classroom teacher. If you have any questions about our Title I Program or about your child's teacher, please feel free to contact the PDLCS Principal, 2100 Corporate Drive, Suite 500; Wexford, PA 15090; 888.997.3352 x150.

Parents' Right to Know

As stipulated in the No Child Left Behind Act, parents/guardians may request information regarding the professional qualifications of their child's classroom teacher(s). Specifically, individuals have the right to ask for the following information:

- Whether the student's teacher has met state qualifying and licensing criteria for the grade level or subject he/she is teaching;
- Whether the teacher is teaching under emergency or other provisional status;
- The teacher's college major, the baccalaureate degree, and/or any advanced degrees earned by the teacher;
- Whether the child is provided services by paraprofessionals and, if so, their qualifications.

To obtain this information, please submit your request in writing to the PDLCS Principal or CEO who oversees teacher/paraeducator certifications/qualifications. Each request should include the child's name, his/her teachers' names and the school he/she attends. Please be certain to include your name, address and a telephone number at which you can be contacted during the day.

Pennsylvania Distance Learning Charter School

Attn: PDLCS Principal

2100 Corporate Drive

Wexford, PA 15090

888.997.3352

Surrogate Parents For Students with Special Needs

Surrogate Parent Program

Federal law establishes the right of a free and appropriate public education for all children with disabilities. To ensure that this right is realized for all such children, procedures are written into the laws to ensure that children with disabilities who are wards of the state, or whose parents are unknown, unavailable, or have had their parental rights legally terminated, have appropriate representation when educational programming decisions are made. This is provided through the recruitment, training and assignment of volunteer surrogate parents who represent the child during the educational process. In Pennsylvania, Intermediate Units have been given the responsibility of recruiting, training and assigning parents to children meeting the qualifications listed. The PDLCS District works with the Allegheny Intermediate Unit #3 in providing this service.

Identification of Children Eligible for Surrogate Parents

Special needs preschool and school-aged children receiving a free and appropriate education in a public school or an approved private school, who meet one of the following criteria, are eligible for the assignment of a qualified surrogate parent:

1. The Child is a ward of the state, or
2. The child's parent(s) or guardian(s) are unknown or unavailable.

To be identified as being in need of a surrogate parent, the preschooler or school-aged child must have special needs, or be thought to have special needs, and be in need of special education services at PDLCS.

Qualification for Surrogate Parents

Surrogate parents must meet the following qualifications:

- Be of a person of good character,
- Be at least 18 years of age,
- Possess reasonable abilities to make decisions regarding a child's educational needs,
- Be willing to acquaint themselves with the child's educational needs and with the special education system in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania,
- Have no vested interest that would conflict with the primary allegiance to the child they are representing. The surrogate parent should not be an employee of the agency responsible for the care of the child,
- Foster parents may be considered if they meet all other qualifications,
- Have Act 33 and Act 34 clearances from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania,
- Be willing to complete a training program conducted by the Allegheny Intermediate Unit.

Responsibilities of the Surrogate Parent

The surrogate parent is expected to act in place of a parent for the student concerning his or her educational program. This involves:

- Attending a planning conference to develop an individualized educational program,
- Being familiar with appropriate procedures for due process and confidentiality of school records,
- Receiving and responding to requests and notices concerning the evaluation and/or educational placement of the assigned student,
- Making self-familiar with the unique educational needs of the assigned student.

The surrogate parent takes on certain quasi-legal responsibilities in order to serve the best interests of the child. The primary function is to represent the student in those circumstances in which decisions need to be made concerning the student's educational program or placement. It is necessary for the surrogate parent to receive considerable training to familiarize him or herself with all aspects of the surrogate parent role. The demands of the role may be extensive and require the volunteer to make a significant commitment of time and learning in order to serve the best interest of the child.

If you are interested in being a surrogate parent for a child/youth with disabilities, please contact our Director of Special Education or Principal, at 2100 Corporate Drive, Suite 500; Wexford, PA 15090 1.888.997.3352.

English as a Second Language Services (ESL)

In accordance with federal law and state regulations, the PDLCS must identify all students who have “limited English proficiency” (LEP). These students typically have a primary language other than English that is used in their homes. Students identified with a limited English proficiency are eligible for ESL instructional services to help them attain proficient skills in their use of the written and spoken English language.

All students must have a Home Language Survey completed by their parents prior to admission into the school district. This survey allows the PDLCS to identify possible LEP students. Our ESL Coordinator will screen any student identified as possibly having a limited English proficiency and will provide direct services to students based on their level of need.

Parents or guardians who feel that their child may have a limited English proficiency should the ESL Coordinator, 2100 Corporate Drive, Suite 500; Wexford, PA 15090 1.888.997.3352 x110 for more information.

Title I Performance Report

The PDLCS receives Title I funds annually. The funding is used to provide the Title I Reading and Mathematics Services to third through sixth grade students who are below basic or basic in their reading and mathematics skills.

SIGNATURE PAGE

Pennsylvania Distance Learning Charter School PARENT/STUDENT INFORMATION HANDBOOK

The Parent/Student Handbook is available to all families who are enrolled in PDLCS. Please take the time to review the content with your child/children. We provide you with a copy of the handbook, but it is also available electronically.

The intent and the spirit of the handbook is what will help us create an emotionally and physically safe environment for all our children.

(Please call your child’s teacher or Principal if you need any clarification or explanation).

“We have reviewed the PDLCS 2017-18 Parent/Student Handbook received from the school. We have discussed the content with our child/children.”

PLEASE SIGN AND RETURN THIS FORM TO THE ENROLLMENT DEPARTMENT.

Thank you.

Printed Parent/Guardian Name

Parent/Guardian Signature

Printed Student Name

Student Signature