



STATE OF CONNECTICUT  
STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



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**Background, History, and Suggested Protocols for Addressing Parent Requests for Students to “Opt-Out” of Mandated State Testing**

**Background**

There is no opt-out language in state or federal law governing assessment. Sec.10-14n of the Connecticut Education Laws states that “Each student enrolled...in any public school shall annually take a statewide mastery examination.” One longstanding rule governing assessment is that no student enrolled in private school or in home school is allowed to take the current version of the test. (Some states allow this, but no state, *requires* that the state test be administered in the private sector).

So, apart from non-public school students, the exceptions to the rule that every student be examined are minimal:

- Public-school students who are deemed “Medically Exempt” are not required to take the statewide exams. Districts/families follow a rigorous process for medical exemption.
- Public-school students who are placed at an *out-of-state* educational facility. It is possible to test such students, but the district would need to send a certified staff member across state lines (or bring the students back to the home school) for the entire battery of tests in order to administer the test. The state does not allow out-of-state school staff to administer our in-state test at this point.

Other than these few exceptions, there are no legal/policy directions when parents seek to remove a child from statewide testing. Until recently, there have only been a handful of requests for exemptions each year. Districts are now reporting greater numbers of parents desiring to remove their child(ren) from participation in the statewide testing program.

**CSDE’s Historical Approach**

Over the years, the CSDE has developed a graduated approach in response to parents who want their child(ren) removed from statewide testing. The overall goal is to test as many students as we can in adherence to state and federal law.

<b>Suggested Protocols for Handling Requests</b>	
<b>Request</b>	<b>Response</b>
Parent(s) contact their public school district to request/inform the district that they want their child(ren) removed from statewide testing	The school or district administrator explains to the parent that the district has no degrees of freedom in the matter. Federal and state law requires that public school students are to be tested.

<p>Parent calls the state to ask if they can opt-out of testing.</p>	<p>State informs parent that there is no opt-out language in the law. As long as the student is enrolled in a Connecticut public school, the district is required to test them on some form of the statewide exam. The state sends a copy of the statutory references to the parent.</p>
<p>Parent informs the district that, regardless of the law, the district is not to test the student.</p>	<p>District is advised to get this statement of intent from the parent in writing so that the district can provide a written response. <u>The CSDE's legal office has provided a model letter (attached)</u>, which districts may adapt, citing all pertinent laws and regulations and asking the parent to reconsider as it is a violation of the law not to comply.</p>
<p>Parent writes back to the district a letter explaining that they have read and understood the district's letter, but insist that the child not be tested.</p>	<p>In these cases, the district generally does not test the student and the student is counted as "absent" (for purposes of testing), which negatively impacts the participation rate for the district. The state, to date, has not done any follow-up on these cases.</p>

For further information, please contact:

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