

Policies & Procedures: Excessive Student Absences

Serving Deaf & Hard of Hearing Students

Students who are deaf or hard of hearing have the same rights as their hearing peers, including the right to be absent from class. Disability service professionals, on the other hand, become concerned when funds expended for accommodations are not being used effectively. Establishing policies and procedures, disability service professionals can balance the need for access with the need for responsible budgetary management.



A “No Show” Policy

A ‘no-show’ policy encourages the responsible use of access services. It can be part of an institution’s overall guidelines for using interpreters and speech-to-text providers. A well-designed policy should:

- define what constitutes a “no-show”
- outline the process for notifying the institution’s disability services office of an upcoming absence
- describe penalties that will be imposed for excessive absences
- include a mechanism for student notification if services will be suspended, along with the procedures required to reinstate them
- delineate how responsible use of accommodations benefits everyone involved

Other helpful strategies include:

- cultivating student understanding and respect for the policy
- describing how the policy will be shared with students at the beginning of the term
- providing multiple means for students to notify the office when they will be absent
- allowing for emergency situations beyond the student’s control
- requiring students to sign a form stating that they understand the policy

What is Considered a No-Show?

Attendance policies vary among institutions and classes. Many institutions define a no-show as an absence where a student does not attend class *and* does not notify the disability service office in advance. It could also include cases when a student requests an accommodation for an event or appointment but fails to show up.

If a particular course has no set number of allowable absences for its students, the same standard should apply to a deaf or hard of hearing student - no additional expectations should be imposed.

Attendance is not required in some classes. In this case, alternative arrangements for scheduling interpreters can be considered. A student could request services for pre-arranged dates (test review dates, for example). Another option is to attend on scheduled days (perhaps one day a week).

Can I Suspend Service for No-Show?

Services cannot be cancelled, but they can be temporarily suspended until a student completes specified steps required to reinstate services. If suspending service is the only option, it should apply only to the class where excessive absenteeism occurs, not to all of the student's classes.

Some campuses provide reminders about the policy after the first or second no-show. This gives students advance notice that they risk having their services affected.

Reinstating Services

The goal of reinstatement is to create a process that yields timely restoration of services that does not create a burden for those involved. Reinstatement policies should clearly articulate the steps students must take to restore services. Some campuses require their students to attend a meeting with a disability services coordinator before reinstatement. Other strategies include:

- requiring students to contact the disability service office to verify they are still enrolled in the course and intend to keep going to classes
- ensuring the student understands consequences if excessive absences reoccur
- determining if additional support (i.e., counseling or tutoring) would be beneficial

Charging Students

Campuses should be careful not to structure a penalty fee as a cost-recovery effort. Instead, it can be designed as a nuisance fee to encourage responsible behavior that students can pay through regular campus fee procedures with an option of seeking a reduction in charges. The policy should also provide for multiple methods of communicating with the disability service office.

An effective no-show policy has a consistent process that also allows for individualized consideration when the need arises.