

**High School Exit Intervention Model Protocol**

May 2014

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On August 6, 2012 Governor Deval Patrick signed into law [An Act Relative to Student Access to Educational Services and Exclusion from School as Chapter 222 of the Acts of 2012](http://www.malegislature.gov/Laws/SessionLaws/Acts/2012/Chapter222).

Section 8 of this law amends [G.L. c. 76, § 1](https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXII/Chapter76/Section18), which sets forth the process for establishing that a student has permanently left school. The changes to the law go into effect on July 1, 2014. As amended, the statute requires that the administrator of the school last attended by the student:

* Send notice within a period of five days from the student’s tenth consecutive absence to the student and parent or guardian in both the primary language of the home, to the extent practicable, and English, which contains information prescribed in the statute. Among other things, the notice must initially offer at least two dates and times for an exit interview.
* Convene an exit interview which may proceed without the parent or guardian if the superintendent or designee has made a good faith effort to include the parent or guardian.
* Include a team of school personnel in the exit interview such as the principal, guidance counselor, teachers and other relevant school staff, and give the student information about the benefits of earning a high school diploma, the detrimental effects of leaving school, and alternative education programs and services available to the student.

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (Department) created this Model Protocol for Conducting Exit Intervention Interview with Students, as directed by the Acts of 2012, Chapter 222. This model protocol is based on the statutory language, and also incorporates promising examples of existing exit protocols used by some school districts in Massachusetts and nationally.

Schools and districts may choose to use this format when creating or adapting their own exit interview protocol for conducting exit intervention interviews, or develop an alternative format.

**Law excerpt regarding student exit interviews (Section 8):**

*No student who has not graduated from high school shall be considered to have permanently left public school unless an administrator of the school which the student last attended has sent notice within a period of 5 days from the student’s tenth consecutive absence to the student and the parent or guardian of that student in both the primary language of the parent or guardian, to the extent practicable, and English. The notice shall initially offer at least 2 dates and times for an exit interview between the superintendent, or a designee, and the student and the parent or guardian of the student to occur prior to the student permanently leaving school and shall include contact information for scheduling the exit interview. The notice shall indicate that the parties shall agree upon a date and time for the exit interview, and that interview shall occur within 10 days after the sending of the notice. The time for the exit interview may be extended at the request of the parent or guardian and no extension shall be for longer than 14 days. The superintendent, or a designee, may proceed with any such interview without a parent or guardian if the superintendent, or a designee, makes a good faith effort to include the parent or guardian. The exit interview shall be for the purpose of discussing the reasons for the student permanently leaving school and to consider alternative education or other placements.*

*The superintendent or a designee shall convene a team of school personnel, such as the principal, guidance counselor, teachers, attendance officer and other relevant school staff, to participate in the exit interview with the student and the parent or guardian of the student. During the exit interview, the student shall be given information about the detrimental effects of early withdrawal from school, the benefits of earning a high school diploma and the alternative education programs and services available to the student.*

The purpose of this protocol is to provide a *sample* process for Massachusetts high schools to use with all students who are considering or planning to exit school prior to graduation, regardless of the student’s age or the number of credits obtained. This model protocol incorporates the statutory requirements for school districts to conduct an exit interview described in [Acts of 2012, Chapter 222](https://malegislature.gov/Laws/SessionLaws/Acts/2012/Chapter222).

It is important for every student to talk to one or more educators who are knowledgeable about the ramifications of dropping out of school, and who will work closely with the student and his/her family to attempt to prevent the student from making the decision to drop out of school.

Many schools have staff members (e.g., guidance counselors) and/or a student intervention group (e.g., Student Support Team) already in place to address the needs of students likely to drop out of school. These existing staff and structures can be adapted to meet the statutory requirements for student exit interviews, as well as meet the recommendations in the model protocol outlined below.

While this model protocol was created with high schools as the primary users, this protocol may be easily adapted for use at the middle school and elementary school levels.

This model protocol includes two main sections:

1. **Foundation for Supporting Students**: Setting up school and district structures to efficiently and effectively identify and intervene with individual students.
2. **Support Process for Individual Students**: Hosting an *Exit Intervention Interview*, creating or revising an *Individual Learning Plan*, and conducting an *Exit Survey*.

Following these two sections is a sample list of guiding questions for a student *Exit Intervention Interview* and a sample Exit Survey Form.

Setting a strong foundation for conducting successful Exit Intervention Interviews with students includes two main parts: (1) staffing a school-based Exit Intervention Team and (2) identification of students considering or planning to drop out.

1. **Staffing a School-Based Exit Intervention Team**

The Exit Intervention Team is responsible for identifying and supporting students who appear to be contemplating or planning to drop out of school. This team of school personnel builds on other existing school teams, such as a Student Support Team. Exit Intervention Team members may vary but should reflect a diverse set of perspectives and a range of expertise, and possess the authority to make decisions about students. Whether the school team is integrating dropout intervention work into an existing committee, team, or group, or forming a brand new team, it will be important for the team to function effectively, efficiently, and professionally to accomplish the team’s goals. The overarching goals of the team are to identify students that may be considering dropping out, meet with individual students to hear their concerns and needs (Exit Intervention Interview), and to implement supports and resources to keep the student engaged in school.

* 1. Building on existing team structures and staff responsibilities, the superintendent or a designee identifies personnel who will have an ongoing responsibility to identify and support individual students who are at-risk of dropping out. The personnel include staff members such as the principal, guidance counselors, and teachers.
     1. **Main Facilitator:** At least one designated, trained staff member per school facilitates the entire exit intervention process (hosting an *Exit Intervention Interview* with the team; or expansion developing an *Individual Learning Plan* with the team; and conducting an *Exit Survey*, if needed).This designated facilitator ensures that each potential dropout receives an Exit Intervention Interview. The facilitator should be knowledgeable about viable education alternatives, services, and support options.
     2. **Team Members:** Team members that include a variety of expertise that are included in the *Exit Intervention Interview* and may also play a role in assisting students in refining or developing an *Individual Learning Plan*.
     3. **Administrative Support:** An individual to provide logistical and administrative support to the team.
  2. Prior to the first Exit Intervention Interview, identified personnel discuss and decide on protocols for identifying students most likely to drop out of school, how to host a productive Exit Intervention Interview, and how to make decisions and suggestions about appropriate resources and interventions. The group draws on the expertise of internal staff, but may also include key community partners and consultants.

1. **Identification of Students Considering or Planning to Drop Out**
   1. The school embraces a multifaceted approach to identifying students who are considering or planning to drop out of school that includes, but is not necessarily limited to, the use of:
      1. Student data, such as unexcused absences and the Massachusetts EWIS (Early Warning Indicator System)
      2. Student self-reports/referrals
      3. Teacher and other staff reports about student disengagement
   2. Identified school staff members are knowledgeable about how to best review student data and talk to teachers and other staff to identify students who may be considering dropping out[[1]](#footnote-1).
   3. There is a clear and efficient process established for any school staff – teacher, nurse, counselor, administrator, etc. – to refer a student to a designated person on the Exit Intervention Team.

The main part of the support process for individual students is the *Exit Intervention Interview*. The purpose of the Exit Intervention Interview is to have a discussion to learn more about the student’s concerns and needs that can be better addressed to keep the student engaged in school – and ultimately prevent them from dropping out. During and following the Exit Intervention Interview the student’s strengths, needs, and challenges are documented, as well as an action plan for providing the student appropriate resources and supports. This documentation is ideally maintained as part of a Individual Learning Plan for the student.

If the student decides to leave school prior to graduation, despite having an Exit Intervention Interview and being offered appropriate resources and supports, then an exit survey is conducted*.*

1. **Host an *Exit Intervention Interview***

The school hosts an “Exit Intervention Interview” with *any* student planning to drop out of school **regardless of the student’s age or the number of credits obtained**. These target students include, but are not limited to, students with ten consecutive unexcused/unexplained absences. The purpose of the Exit *Intervention* Interview is to have a discussion to learn more about the student’s concerns and needs that can be better addressed to keep the student engaged in school. The Exit Intervention Interview staff members ensure that each potential dropout’s story is heard and the school staff members make every effort to keep the student in school and support his/her needs, providing interventions to help the student succeed.

*Note: this portion of the model protocol (Exit Intervention Interview) incorporates all elements of the exit interview requirements outlined in Section 8 of the* [*Acts of 2012, Chapter 222*](https://malegislature.gov/Laws/SessionLaws/Acts/2012/Chapter222)*. See the excerpt of the law in the Introduction above for details of the requirements.*

1. The school administrator provides a written notice and follow-up phone call within five days of the student’s tenth consecutive unexcused/unexplained absences[[2]](#footnote-2), or within five days of identification of a student who is considering dropping out of school.
   1. The notice is provided in both the primary language of the parent or guardian, to the extent practicable, and English.
   2. The notice offers at least two dates and times for an Exit Intervention Interview.
   3. The suggested dates, times of day, and location options for the Exit Intervention Interview are intentionally selected to maximize potential participation by the student, identified staff members, the student’s family, and other important adults in the student’s life (e.g., evening hours at a library or community organization).
   4. The notice includes contact information for scheduling the Exit Intervention Interview and indicates that:
      * The parties shall agree upon a date and time for the discussion, and that interview shall occur within ten days after the sending of the notice.
      * The time for the discussion may be extended at the request of the parent or guardian and no extension shall be for longer than 14 days.

* 1. In the notice and during the follow-up phone call, the student is asked which adults should be invited to the Exit Intervention Interview, such as the student’s guardian, coach, mentor, employer, and/or teacher.

1. The superintendent, or a designee, proceeds with any such student interview without a parent or guardian if the superintendent, or a designee, makes a good faith effort (e.g., multiple forms of communication – mail, email, phone) to include the parent or guardian.
2. The superintendent or a designee convenes the school-based Exit Intervention Team to participate in the meeting with the student.
3. The Facilitator of the Exit Intervention Team ensures that all designated staff members, and other adults identified by the student, are notified of the selected date, time, location, and purpose of the student’s Exit Intervention Interview. If the student is involved with any governmental agencies (e.g., Department of Children and Families, Department of Youth Services) the student’s main contact with the agency is also invited to the discussion. If the student has an IEP, then the Special Education Coordinator in the building or the district’s Director of Special Education should be invited to attend the interview.
4. The Exit Intervention Interview includes at a minimum:
   1. A demonstration/explanation of the shared concern for the student’s well-being and success by school staff and other key adults.
   2. Hearing from the student about why they are considering or planning to leave school. *(Sample guiding questions are included below, which may be asked directly to the student or provided to the student in written survey form.)*
   3. Providing the student and the student’s family, and other important adults in the student’s life with information about the detrimental effects of early withdrawal from school, the benefits of earning a high school diploma, and the education programs and services available to the student.[[3]](#footnote-3)
   4. Discussing potential school or community-based interventions and supports (e.g., alternative education programs, tutoring, mental health counseling, flexible schedule, opportunities to earn credit through work-based learning experiences) that may address the student’s concerns and needs. All possible alternatives to the student dropping out of school are to be explored at this time.
5. **Create or Revise an Individual Learning Plan (ILP)**

The Individual Learning Plan (ILP) is a student-directed, multi-year planning tool designed to increase students’ understanding of the connections and relevance of what they do now to their future success. The ILP engages a student along with key adult stakeholders in a process that empowers the student to own his/her future. Through identification of interests and goals along with an acknowledgement of any barriers to success and supports necessary to overcome those barriers, the ILP maps the academic plan, personal/social skill attainment, and workplace readiness activities required for post-secondary success.

For students contemplating dropping out, the ILP can be the communication vehicle that drives open, honest conversation with school and family members about a student’s needs and goals so to map a course of action that will not only keep the student in school but also engaged and on-track to success.[[4]](#footnote-4)

* 1. Based on the discussion during the *Exit Intervention Interview*, an ILP for the student is created or revised to reflect the student’s goals, strengths, interests, and challenges. The ILP also documents the resources and supports identified for the student to help them remain engaged in school and ultimately graduate.
  2. The ILP specifies the staff member(s), student, family, and outside partner responsibilities to ensure that the resources and supports are fully implemented within the determined timeframe.
  3. A date is set, and staff person responsible identified, for reviewing and revising the student’s ILP.

1. **Conduct an Exit Survey (as needed)**

If the student decides to leave school prior to graduation (drop out) – despite having an *Exit Intervention Interview* and being offered appropriate resources and supports through and Individual Learning Plan – then an exit survey is conducted *(sample below).*

1. The exit survey is provided in person or via a phone interview. If the student does not agree to an in-person or phone survey, then the survey is mailed to the student’s address with a pre-paid postage envelope and/or the student is provided a link to an online survey.
2. If the exit survey occurs in-person or via phone, the staff member discusses the student’s post-exit plans.

*The following is a list of sample questions that can be use or adapted for the Exit Intervention Interview with the student, student’s family and/or other caring adults external to the school, and school and district staff.*

1. Are you considering leaving school? If so, why? If not, do you know why staff are concerned that you may be considering leaving school?
2. Why are you considering leaving school? Why now?
3. When did you begin to think about leaving school?
4. What do you plan to do if you leave?
5. Has anyone in your family dropped out of school? If so, who?
6. Are there adults at school who you feel close to, can trust, and would feel comfortable talking with about your personal goals or barriers to staying in school? If so, who?
7. Do you have any positive connections with students at this school/while in school? If yes, what did you like most about those students?
8. Do you feel that you have helpful support from your classroom teachers/staff? Why or Why Not?
9. Do you feel that you have proper support from your School Counselors? Why or Why Not?
10. Do you feel that you have proper support from your school Administration? Why or Why Not?
11. Do you have opportunities/channels to communicate your feelings about: Relationships? Academics? School Activities?
12. What school programs/classes did you enjoy *most* and why?
13. What school programs/classes did you enjoy *least* and why?
14. If you had to name one thing that would make a positive difference in changing your mind about leaving – what would that be?
15. Are you aware of any supports, programs, or staff that you could see as potentially being beneficial to keeping you in school?
16. What are the most positive aspects of school for you? Are there aspects of school that make you feel connected and supported? Have you been out of school for a period of time previously? If so why? And what motivated you or brought you back to school?

*The following is a sample exit survey form that can be use or adapted if the student decides to leave school prior to graduation (drop out), despite having an Exit Intervention Interview and being offered appropriate resources and supports.*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Date:** |  |
| **Student’s name:** |  |
| **SASID:** |  |
| **Name of school from which the student is exiting:** |  |
| **Name of person conducting survey:** |  |
| **Title of person conducting survey:** |  |
| **Phone and email of person conducting survey:** |  |
| **Best way to reach the student (phone/ email/ address):** |  |

1. When did you begin to think about leaving school?
2. Have you left school previously?
3. What are the top three reasons why you are leaving?

1 –

2 –

3 –

1. Why are you choosing to leave school *now*?
2. What would have improved your chances of staying in school? (*Check all that apply*.)

* More interesting and meaningful classes
* Opportunities for real-world learning (ex: internships, service-learning)
* More class elective options and extracurricular opportunities (ex: art, music, sports)
* Better teachers
* Smaller classes
* More individualized instruction in classes
* Better communication with your teachers
* Better communication with your parents
* More individualized support from school staff
* Opportunities for a flexible school schedule
* Increased parental/guardian involvement
* More support and supervision from parents, school officials, and other adults
* More opportunities to see friends and meet new people
* A safer school environment
* Teachers who cared about your academic and personal well-being
* Better discipline policies or practices
* More help with catching up on credits
* If I didn’t need a job/income
* If my friends stayed in school
* If school didn’t feel so overwhelming
* Other, please describe:

1. Which statement best describes your future plans?

* Leaving school for a short time and returning next year
* Enrolling in an training/apprenticeship program
* Enrolling in a GED preparation program
* Taking the GED exam without enrolling in a preparation program
* Looking for full time work
* Taking care of my kid(s)
* I don’t have a plan

1. Would you be interested in receiving support on developing a post-exit plan?

Student Signature: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Signature: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

(if student is under 18 years of age)

School Personnel Signature: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education is publishing a guide on the use of the EWIS data in summer 2014, which may be a helpful tool for helping staff identify and assisting students that are at-risk for dropping out. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Section 7 of the [*Acts of 2012, Chapter 222*](https://malegislature.gov/Laws/SessionLaws/Acts/2012/Chapter222) specifies requirements for a pupil absence notification program. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The “Impact of Dropping Out Student Flyer” and the “Education Options Overview” documents created by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education may be used or adapted for this portion of the conversation. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. A guide for districts and schools on (ILPs) will be published by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education in summer 2014. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)