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## **General Laws of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations**

### **Education**

#### **CHAPTER 16-19 Compulsory Attendance**

[§ 16-19-1 Attendance required.](#) – (a) Every child who has completed or will have completed six (6) years of life on or before September 1 of any school year and has not completed sixteen (16) years of life shall regularly attend some public day school during all the days and hours that the public schools are in session in the city or town in which the child resides. Every person having under his or her control a child as described in this section shall cause the child to attend school as required by this section, and for every neglect of this duty the person having control of the child shall be fined not exceeding fifty dollars (\$50.00) for each day or part of a day that the child fails to attend school, and if the total of these days is more than thirty (30) school days during any school year, then the person shall, upon conviction, be imprisoned not exceeding six (6) months or shall be fined not more than five hundred dollars (\$500), or both; provided, that if the person so charged shall prove that the child has attended for the required period of time a private day school approved by the commissioner of elementary and secondary education pursuant to § 16-60-6(10), or a course of at-home instruction approved by the school committee of the town where the child resides, or that the physical or mental condition of the child was such as to render his or her attendance at school inexpedient or impracticable, or that the child was excluded from school by virtue of some general law or regulation, then attendance shall not be obligatory nor shall the penalty be incurred.

(b) Every child enrolled in school who completes or has completed sixteen (16) years of life and who has not yet attained eighteen (18) years of age shall regularly attend school during all the days and hours that the public schools are in session in the city or

town in which the child resides unless the person having control of the child withdraws the child from enrollment in accordance with § 16-67.1-3. Provided, however, that nothing in this subsection or in subsection (a) of this section shall prohibit or limit cities or towns from enacting programs of early intervention and/or mediation in an effort to address the problems of students who are habitually late or absent from school.

(c) Nothing in this section shall be deemed to limit or otherwise interfere with the rights of teachers and other school employees to collectively bargain pursuant to chapters 9.3 and 9.4 of title 28 or to allow any school committee to abrogate any agreement reached by collective bargaining.

**§ 16-19-2 Approval of private schools – Requirements – Review.** – For the purposes of this chapter a private school or at-home instruction shall be approved only when it complies with the following requirements: (1) that the period of attendance of the pupils in the school or in the home instruction is substantially equal to that required by law in public schools; (2) that registers are kept and returned to the school committee, the superintendent of schools, truant officers, and the department of elementary and secondary education in relation to the attendance of pupils, and are made the same as registers kept by the public schools; (3) that reading, writing, geography, arithmetic, the history of the United States, the history of Rhode Island, and the principles of American government shall be taught in the English language substantially to the same extent as these subjects are required to be taught in the public schools, and that the teaching of the English language and of other subjects indicated in this section shall be thorough and efficient; provided, however, that nothing contained in this section shall be construed or operate to deny the right to teach in private schools or in at-home instruction any of the subjects or any other subject in any other language in addition to the teaching in English as prescribed in this section; provided, further, that any interested person resident in any city or town aggrieved by the action of the school committee of the city or town either in approving or refusing to approve at-home instruction may appeal the action to the department of elementary and secondary education. The department of elementary and secondary education, after notice to the parties interested of the time and place of a hearing, shall examine and decide the appeal without cost to the parties. The commissioner of elementary and secondary education shall also grant a hearing to any party aggrieved by a refusal to approve a private school pursuant to § 16-60-6(10). The decision of the board of regents for elementary and secondary education shall, if an appeal is made to the board, be final.