



August 20, 2020

**DIRECTIVE: JOB CORPS PROGRAM INSTRUCTION NOTICE NO. 20-05**

**TO:** ALL JOB CORPS NATIONAL OFFICE STAFF  
ALL JOB CORPS REGIONAL OFFICE STAFF  
ALL JOB CORPS CENTER DIRECTORS  
ALL JOB CORPS CENTER OPERATORS  
ALL FOREST SERVICE JOB CORPS CENTERS  
ALL NATIONAL TRAINING AND SUPPORT CONTRACTORS  
ALL OUTREACH AND ADMISSIONS CONTRACTORS  
ALL CAREER TRANSITION SERVICES CONTRACTORS  
ALL CENTER USERS

**FROM:** DEBRA A. CARR                      **DEBRA CARR**      Digitally signed by  
Acting National Director                      DEBRA CARR      DEBRA CARR  
Office of Job Corps                                      Date: 2020.08.20  
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**SUBJECT:** Unauthorized Absence Flexibility During Virtual Operating Status for COVID-19

- 1. Purpose. To provide guidance and instruction on enhanced flexibilities for the unauthorized absence duty status during Job Corps’ virtual operating status for COVID-19.
- 2. Background. Job Corps established a spring break for all Job Corps centers on March 16, 2020, in light of COVID-19 concerns and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines. On May 11, 2020, Job Corps transitioned to virtual operating status and with students participating in various aspects of the program virtually under a “present for duty, off-center” status. This has allowed students to remain connected to the program by engaging in distance learning activities.

As described in PIN 19-17 issued on April 24, 2020, in accordance with contract requirements and Chapter 3 of the Job Corps Policy and Requirements Handbook (PRH), center operators must ensure the efficient and effective delivery of training to students through distance learning. Contract and PRH requirements remain effective, including attendance and leave accountability. As such, compliance with those requirements is necessary to help ensure the successful delivery of training to students.

PRH Section 6.1 and Exhibit 6-1 provide that a student is in an unauthorized absence (UA) status if the student fails to return or report within two hours after the student’s required attendance time, whether on or off-center (e.g. the start of a training day). Exhibit 6-1 further explains that if a student is in an unauthorized absence status in excess of six consecutive unauthorized absence training days or in excess of 12 nonconsecutive unauthorized absence training days in the prior 6 months, the student will be separated from the Job Corps program.

Job Corps is primarily a residential living and training program at physical Job Corps centers. As such, in a normal onsite program operating status under PRH Section 6.1 each center must have a system for tracking students' attendance that includes the following elements:<sup>1</sup>

- Conducting a morning attendance check no later than one hour after a student's scheduled training day start time to establish present-for-duty status for all students.
- Maintaining attendance records in Job Corps' Center Information System (CIS) for all scheduled career development activities, including on- and off-center academic and career technical training (CTT) classes, group activities, and off-center trips.
- Developing a procedure to document student arrivals to and departures from the campus.
- Conducting, at a minimum, two bed checks each night for residential students.
- Developing a process for new enrollees, transfer students, nonresidential students, and students returning from off-center status, to sign in and alert appropriate center staff to their presence immediately upon their arrival on center.

During virtual operations, students are not at Job Corps centers and many of the ways described above for tracking student attendance in the program are not feasible. In virtual operations, students engage online or by mail and they have individualized learning schedules that start at different times of the training day to accommodate family and work demands. Additionally, Job Corps recognizes that students face a variety of challenges in attempting to remain engaged in distance learning. These challenges may make it more difficult for students to maintain consistent, daily contact with the center; log-on to their center's distance learning platform; or respond to mailed packets, if participating in distance learning via correspondence. Finally, CIS was not originally designed for virtual operations and center operators now need flexibility in their daily student accountability procedures during virtual operating status.

Consequently, Job Corps is providing additional flexibility to centers for reporting student participation in training. Likewise, students are granted more flexibility related to the accumulation of unauthorized absences while centers are in virtual operating status. The details are more particularly set forth below.

3. Action. This guidance is effective retroactively to May 11, when virtual operations began. If students were separated for unauthorized absence prior to this guidance, centers can reinstate those students with regional office approval. Centers must submit written requests for reinstatement to the Regional Director for approval, who will review the request and provide a written decision within 2 business days of receipt. The center must upload the Regional Director's approval in the student's E-Folder, and the separation will be annotated in CIS as an error. Students will be retroactively placed on paid leave from the date of their unauthorized absence separation until their status is

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<sup>1</sup> See PRH Chapter 6, Administrative Support Services, 6.1. Leaves and Absences, R1 & R2.

changed in CIS to “present for duty” status.

### **Unauthorized Absences: Nonparticipation in Academic Training and CTT during Virtual Operating Status**

A student’s nonparticipation in academic training and, where applicable, CTT during virtual operations will result in one or more unauthorized absences. In distance learning, students have individualized schedules that include the expected time commitment for each assigned activity. For example, a weekly student schedule might include online math class for five hours, essay writing for three hours, independent reading assignments for five hours, CTT virtual classes for ten hours, independent living skills activities for two hours, and five hours of other specific instruction.

Although student participation in distance learning is tracked daily consistent with each student’s learning plan, CIS will be updated to fully address the needed flexibilities of virtual operating status, and reporting student participation in distance learning in CIS may be done weekly. Student nonparticipation in distance learning must be noted in CIS case notes and a student’s failure to participate, consistent with his or her learning plan, may result in one or more unauthorized absences.

### **Separation for Unauthorized Absences during Virtual Operating Status**

Job Corps is providing the following guidance regarding separations for unauthorized absences while in virtual operating status. This guidance changes the number of unauthorized absences in Exhibit 6-1 for each category of distance learning, both online and via correspondence, as defined below.<sup>2</sup>

- Online distance learning category: online web-based courses, mobile learning, webcasts, podcasts, video learning, computer-based instruction for those students who have access to the Internet.
- Correspondence distance learning category: mailed correspondence and lessons for those students who do not have access to the Internet.

Consistent with the need to provide flexibility during this challenging time, students in online distance learning are given an additional five unauthorized absences before they will be separated. Correspondence distance learning students, because of potential mail time delays, are given an additional 10 unauthorized absences before they will be separated. The student will stay in UA status for those days that the student did not participate pursuant to the student’s learning plan unless the center validates that the student participated in distance learning.

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<sup>2</sup> Exhibit 6-1 currently provides that unauthorized absences in excess of 6 consecutive training days (not including weekends, holidays, winter break, or other center non-training days, for example) will result in separation from the program 2 hours after student’s scheduled training day start time on the 7th training day, with the separation date being the 7th training day. Unauthorized absences in excess of 12 nonconsecutive training days (not including weekends, holidays, winter break, or other non-training days, for example) in the prior 6 months will result in separation from the program 2 hours after student’s scheduled training day start time on the 13th training day, with the separation date being the 13th training day, unless the student resigns.

- Online Distance Learning: If a student did not participate pursuant to the student's learning plan, the center will separate the student on the 12th consecutive training day of UA **or** the 18th nonconsecutive training day of UA in a six-month period.
- Correspondence Distance Learning: If the student did not participate pursuant to the student's learning plan, the center will separate the student on the 17th consecutive day of UA **or** the 23rd nonconsecutive training day of UA in a six-month period.

If a student contacts the center with a credible and verifiable explanation for the unauthorized absence, the student's status may be changed to the appropriate leave category, effective the date of the emergency, if the emergency prevented the student from contacting the center in a timely manner.<sup>3</sup> Centers must document attempts to make contact with the student for each unauthorized absence counted and make the appropriate case notes entry in CIS.

Centers must report student duty status for each day of the individualized distance learning plan (the reporting week begins Monday and ends Sunday). If there was no participation by a student on a given day or days required in the student's individualized distance learning plan, that student will be placed in UA status the following Monday for those days while reporting in CIS is done weekly. CIS will be updated to fully address the needed flexibilities of virtual operating status.

Centers are reminded that they still have an obligation to maintain contact with students, beyond documenting participation in distance learning for UA purposes, to determine their general welfare and identify whether additional center services and support are needed.

4. Expiration Date. This instruction notice is effective until a center transitions from virtual operating status and resumes physical operations. This guidance supersedes any previous guidance on these issues.
5. Inquiries. Inquiries should be directed to the appropriate Job Corps Regional Director.

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<sup>3</sup> See PRH Chapter 6, Administrative Support Services, 6.1. Leaves and Absences, R4.b.