As stated in the SUNY Canton Student Handbook, responsibility for class attendance and for completion of assignments rests with the student, who should be encouraged to assume this responsibility by communicating directly with the faculty member. The Health Center will not be involved in issuing excuses for student illnesses, except under unusual circumstances. A doctor’s appointment made for the sole purpose of obtaining documentation to excuse an absence involves the inefficient use of time and resources on both the part of the student and the health center, and serves no medical function. The student body is better served by having the limited number of appointments available for medically necessary visits. The following are the basis for which the Health Center policy has been developed.

First, the requirement of written excuses fosters a certain amount of distrust between faculty and students. The Student Code of Conduct addresses the need for students to be honest and trustworthy in their actions regarding all aspects of their education. Requiring a student to produce a note to “prove” they were ill goes against that trust; therefore, it is best when students and faculty collaborate to resolve these issues.

Second, it would create an enormous burden on the Student Health Service if we were to write excuses for everyone who is sick. Our facilities and resources are very limited. We currently see as many as 50 ill students a day who all require direct medical care which is critical to their health and well being. Therefore, we are just not physically able to accommodate the extra burden of seeing students searching for an excuse only.

Third, in many cases we have no firsthand knowledge of student illnesses. Requiring written excuses would make many students come to the Health Center only after they are better just to get a note for class. This would be wasteful of our already limited resources.

Finally, the CDC recommends that notes not be required to excuse ill students. Making students come to SHS for a note just exposes them (and others) to more infectious diseases while at SHS. This then becomes a public health issue. When sick, the best place to be is home, away from others in order to reduce the transmission of illnesses around campus. There should be no barriers that prevent students from being able to do so.

In the event of serious or prolonged illness or injury, we will work with a student to provide appropriate documentation for an excused absence. The Student Health Center staff can complete the excuse documentation section of an Excused Absence Request form and return it to the student to complete and the student will return it to the Dean of Students Office for an excused absence.