

SAN DIEGO

Parental OK for medical visits out

By Maureen Magee

STAFF WRITER

Teenage students attending San Diego public schools will no longer need parental consent to leave campus for confidential medical appointments — including those for pregnancy, abortion and drug counseling — under a revised policy adopted by the Board of Education last night.

Without any opposition or debate on the usually charged issue, the board voted unanimously to augment the San Diego Unified School District's controversial policy on the matter.

The revisions bring the district in sync with state law, state attorney general opinions and practices already in place at many schools throughout the district, said Marge Kleinsmith, who oversees sex education for the district.

"Some school nurses and staff have been allowing students to be released for these kind of appointments — could be for suicide counseling, could be for an STD test, could be for pregnancy, could be for a lot of things — because they knew state law said they could," Kleinsmith said. "Others have been strict about not letting students do this. This gives us much-needed clarity."

The former San Diego Unified policy called for parental permission before a student could leave campus for confidential medical services. In addition, employees were required to alert parents if they learned that a student was pregnant or considering abortion. The updated policy also defines pregnancy and other sensitive medical matters as confidential.

Under state law, schools can allow students to leave for specific appointments without notifying parents. Efforts to update the San Diego Unified policy have been brewing for years and were stalled for various reasons by previous administrations.

Last night's meeting, held dur-

SEE **Consent, B4**

CONSENT

CONTINUED FROM B1

Vote to change the policy taken over spring break

ing spring break, when schools are closed and many families are out of town, drew only two speakers, both of whom backed the changes.

Vince Hall, a spokesman for Planned Parenthood in San Diego and Imperial counties, said most parents strive to develop open communication with their children that would keep them abreast of the medical issues they face. But he said some minors are more vulnerable.

"I hear from my own 14-year-old daughter about kids who for very legitimate reasons would not go to their family with these problems," he said.

Most California school districts have policies that reflect the law, Hall said. However, the Vista Unified school board voted last year to stand by its practice of requiring parental notification before a student can leave campus for any confidential medical service.