



Wicomico County Board of Education

Student Attendance Procedure

Procedures for Policy Implementation and Standards for Regular Attendance at All Grades K – 12

This procedure is effective as of the start of the 2019-2020 school year. In order to ensure communication with all stakeholders and accurate implementation of all procedural steps, the first marking term (9/3/19-11/6/19) will be a “no fault” period during which time course grades will not be impacted.

I. Foundation

All students are expected to attend school regularly in accordance with state law, regulation and this procedure. Students may be excused from class or school only for reasons as specified in state law, regulation and this procedure. The actions taken when the standard is not met should reflect a continuum of interventions and consequences aimed at improving student attendance and achievement.

II. Scope

This procedure applies to all students in grades K-12 (For Pre-K and Evening High School students please refer to those specific policies and procedures). Parents and guardians are responsible for ensuring the proper attendance of their children in the Wicomico County Public School System. School administrators will be responsible for implementing any corrective actions necessary to ensure proper attendance.

III. Definitions

- A. **“Absence”** – the act of a student not being present in school/class or at a school-related activity during the school day.
- B. **“Attendance”** – the act of a student being present at school on a regular school day and includes participation in school-sponsored activities as specified in COMAR 13A.08.01.01(COMAR 13A.02.06.02A.5)
- C. **“Truant Student”** – any student (K through 12th grade) who is absent for a school day or portion thereof without lawful cause as defined in Education Article 7-302.2 for more than :
 - 1. 8 days in any quarter
 - 2. 15 days in any semester or
 - 3. 20 days in a school year

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- D. “Habitual Truant” – any student who has been unlawfully absent from school for a number of days or portion of days in excess of 20 percent of the school days within any marking period, semester or year. (COMAR 13A.08.01.04C)
- E. “Tardy” – not being in the classroom when the class period starts. For the purpose of this policy lawful and unlawful tardies are determined by applying the same criteria as lawful and unlawful absence.
- F. “Early Dismissal” – dismissal from school prior to the end of the regularly scheduled instructional school day. For the purpose of this policy, lawful and unlawful early dismissals are determined by applying the same criteria as lawful and unlawful absence.
- G. “School-sponsored Activity” – any school sponsored activity approved by the Superintendent of Schools or the school principal, or their designee.
- H. “Excessive Tardies” – For the purpose of this policy any student who has been late to school or class nine times within the school year is excessively tardy. This can be combined with early dismissals.
- I. “Excessive Early Dismissals” – for the purpose of the policy, any student who has been dismissed early by the parent or guardian nine times within the school year. This can be combined with tardies.
- J. “Lawful Absence” - equivalent to an excused absence as defined in COMAR 13A.08.01.03.
- K. “Unlawful Absence” – equivalent to an unexcused absence as defined in COMAR 13A.08.01.04.

V. Federal and State Regulations

A. Rules, Definitions, and Procedures for Policy Implementation

1. General Attendance Regulation (COMAR 13A.08.01.01)

- a. Compulsory school attendance is required of each child who resides within Wicomico County in accordance with COMAR 13A.08.01.01 et seq., as it now exists or is amended currently, COMAR 13A.08.01.01 states that each child shall attend a public school regularly during the entire school year unless the child is otherwise receiving regular, thorough instruction during the school year in the studies usually taught in the public schools to children the same age, or is exempted from attendance as provided by law.
- b. A student is considered in attendance at school when participating in school-sponsored activities during the school day, and when that participation is approved by the local Superintendent of Schools or the school principal, or their designees. Students shall be considered in attendance in an alternative program setting when participating in activities during the day sponsored by the alternative program, and when that participation is approved by the

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director of a licensed child care center, registered family day care, or Head Start 5-year-old program.

2. Lawful and Unlawful Absences are established and/or amended by COMAR 13A.08.01.03 and 13A.08.01.04 as they now exist or are amended. Currently, COMAR 13A.08.01.03 and 13A.08.01.04 state:
 - a. Lawful Absence - Students presently enrolled in public schools are considered lawfully absent from school, including absence for any portion of the day, only under the following conditions:
 - i. Death in the immediate family (defined as (step)parent, (step)brother, (step)sister, grandparents, a person(s) who is the primary care provider, anyone who lives regularly in the household of the student and others as determined by the school principal). The local school system shall determine what relationships constitute the immediate family.
 - ii. Illness of the student. The principal or a pupil personnel worker shall require a physician's certificate from the parent or guardian of a student reported continuously absent for illness.
 - iii. Pregnant and parenting students.
 1. Provision of a minimum of 10 days of excused absences for a parenting student after the birth of the student's child, for both mother and co-parent
 2. Allowance for parenting student to care for one's own child who has a medical appointment or has taken ill
 3. Allowance for a pregnant and parenting student to participate in legal appointments to pursue timely family law actions, such as adoption, custody, and visitation, in addition to the preexisting lawful absence of a court summons
 - iv. Court summons.
 - v. Hazardous weather conditions. Hazardous weather conditions shall be interpreted to mean weather conditions which would endanger the health or safety of the student when in transit to and from school.
 - vi. Work approved or sponsored by the school, the local school system, or the State Department of Education, accepted by the local

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Superintendent of Schools or the school principal, or their designees as reason for excusing the students.

- vii. Observance of a religious holiday.
 - viii. State emergency.
 - ix. Suspension. Suspension is a lawful/excused absence and the days of suspension status cannot be used when determining “habitual truancy.”
 - x. Lack of authorized transportation. A student may be excused when the school system authorized transportation is not available for reasons beyond the parent’s or student’s control (ex: students living in transition). This does not include students denied authorized transportation for disciplinary reasons.
- b. Unlawful Absence -An absence, including absence for any portion of the day, for any reason other than those cited as lawful is presumed to be unlawful and may constitute truancy. The school system may add specified criteria for unlawful absences to local board-approved policies.

VI. Additional Absences not covered by Federal and State Regulations.

1. Other Absences

- a. To be given consideration, a written request for vacation must be submitted at a minimum of 10 days in advance to the principal/designee. If approved, the maximum number of lawful days for family vacations and family trips for any school year must not exceed three (3) days.
- b. Such absences may not occur during exam or state-mandated testing periods unless authorized by the principal/designee.

2. Other Lawful Absences

- a. A number of activities or work situations that the principal/designee have full discretion to accept as lawful when approval for the absence has been requested in writing and in advance, from the parent/guardian are included below:
 - i. Visits to college campuses and participation in college orientation programs. (Juniors and Seniors only)
 - ii. Scheduled interview with prospective employers.

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- b. Students will only be considered for other lawful absences up to a maximum of three days, as long as the student has no previous unexcused/unlawful absences or exceeded a total of 5 excused/lawful absences in a marking term. For absences of this type (other lawful/excused absences) in excess of three days per year, or a pattern of continuous lawful/excused absences, the principal will determine whether the absences will be lawful/excused or unlawful/unexcused.

VII. Procedures

- A. Elementary, middle and high school students who are continuously absent, dismissed early or tardy shall be referred for appropriate interventions designed to increase attendance.
- B. Disciplinary consequences for unlawful/unexcused absences/tardies/early dismissals will be applied as outlined in the Wicomico County Code of Conduct. Students cannot be suspended or expelled solely for attendance related offenses.
- C. Students who meet or exceed 5 days of unlawful absence within the marking term must participate in an attendance intervention program or receive failing grades, for all courses, for the entire marking term.
- D. Students will be allowed one attendance appeal, or one attendance intervention plan per marking term. Once the attendance intervention plan has been completed, the student will recover any failing grades as a result of unexcused absences.
- E. The School Principal will have 30 school days to change the final marking term grade. Final grades for the year must also be changed within 30 business days.
- F. Attendance Monitoring Procedures and Compliance Record Keeping Format
 - 1. All schools will collect attendance data in terms of race, ethnicity, sex, and grade level. Attendance source documents will be retained in accordance with guidelines outlined in the Maryland Student Records System Manual.
 - 2. The following procedures shall be used to facilitate accurate attendance and accountability:
 - a. Student attendance will be recorded on a daily as well as period by period basis.
 - 1. Teachers will record daily attendance in the first class of the day.
 - 2. Teachers will record and maintain period by period attendance for all students including tardies, early dismissals and absences. Teachers will report suspected truancies to appropriate personnel. This information will be entered into the student information management system on a daily basis.
 - 3. School Office Personnel will record and maintain daily attendance records for all students including tardies, early dismissals, and absences.

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4. While the School Principal may appoint designees for the delegation of roles and responsibilities regarding attendance management, the School Principal maintains the highest level of responsibility for the currency and accuracy of all attendance records, as well as the administration of attendance intervention plans.
 - b. Students are counted present for a full day if they attend four hours or more of the day. Students are counted present for half of a day if they attend for at least two hours, but less than four hours of the school day. A student scheduled for less than a full day is to be counted present based on the amount of time he/she is scheduled to attend.
 - c. Students reporting late to school/class when the day/period begins are considered tardy. Leaving school/class before the day/period ends is considered early dismissal. School personnel will designate tardiness and early dismissal as lawful or unlawful and treat it under the same criteria as a lawful or an unlawful absence. Excessive tardiness and early dismissal are not accepted or excused and are addressed in the Wicomico County Code of Conduct.
 - d. The parent/guardian must submit requests for late arrivals or early dismissals. A student may not leave campus during the day without written consent from his/her parents and approval from the designated staff member. A student leaving school for medical or other appointments must present a written excuse from a parent/guardian. The attendance staff will attempt to verify all early dismissal laws prior to issuing the student an out-of-school pass.
 - e. The parent/guardian must submit the written explanation within five school days of the student's return to school from an absence. This written explanation does not constitute the basis for a lawful absence but can be used to assist in the determination process. Parents/guardians will be informed if the absence is determined to be unexcused/unlawful. Written explanations submitted beyond 5 school days from the student's return to school will be placed in the student's attendance file, however the absence will be coded as unlawful.
 - f. At every school level, an automated call system will be utilized to make parents/guardians aware of daily student absences.
 - g. On the first (1st) day of unlawful absence of the marking term, the parent will receive a call from the school.
 - h. On the second (2nd) day of unlawful absence of the marking term, the parent will receive a call from the school and a conference will be held with the student upon return to school.
 - i. Upon the third (3rd) day of unlawful absence of the marking term, the parent will receive a call from the school. The designated school staff member will also notify the parent/guardian in writing concerning the absent student and the impact on the student's grading.

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- j. Upon the fourth (4th) day of unlawful absence of the marking term the parent will receive a call from the school. The Home School Liaison and/or Student Advisor will also contact the parent and/or conduct a home visit as necessary. Actions will be recorded in the Attendance Journal.
 - k. Upon the fifth (5th) day of an unlawful absence of the marking term, the parent shall receive notification in writing and the procedure for remediating the absences (Attendance Intervention Plan) with a copy to the Pupil Personnel Worker for the school. The student will be recorded as failing the marking term until such time that the attendance intervention plan is completed.
 - l. Upon the sixth (6th) day of unlawful absence of the marking term, the parent will receive a call from the school. The Pupil Personnel Worker will also be made aware of the attendance concern and will record any actions in the Attendance Journal. The student will receive a failing grade for the marking term until the Attendance Intervention Plan is satisfied.
 - m. Upon the eighth (8th) day of unlawful absence of the marking term, the parent will receive a call from the school. The Student Services Team will also document the absence in meeting notes or Behavior Support Plan. The student will receive a failing grade for the marking term until the Attendance Intervention Plan is satisfied.
 - n. Upon the tenth (10th) day of unlawful absence of the marking term, the parent will receive a call from the school. A letter will also be sent from the school referring the matter to outside agencies through the Wicomico County Truancy Reduction Program. The student will receive a failing grade for the marking term until the Attendance Intervention Plan is satisfied.
 - o. Upon the twelfth (12th day) of unlawful absence of the marking term, the parent will receive a call from the school. A Pupil Personnel Worker will be made aware of the attendance concern and record any actions taken in the Attendance Journal. The student will receive a failing grade for the marking term until the Attendance Intervention Plan is satisfied.
3. Principals are responsible for informing students, staff and parents annually of the provisions of this procedure.
 4. Principals are responsible for assigning and overseeing personnel to record daily student attendance and reporting of student absences.
 5. The principal of each school shall establish an effective and accurate method of monitoring attendance data. At a minimum, this method of attendance monitoring shall:
 - a. Provide information that will permit a complete and accurate reporting of attendance to the Wicomico County Board of Education and to the Maryland State Department of Education.

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- b. Provide information on a daily, weekly and monthly basis that can be used to identify students with problematic attendance and tardiness/early dismissal patterns so corrective measures may be instituted.
- c. Provide information on students with patterns of truancy, habitual truancy, tardiness and early dismissal to the Department of Student and Family Services so that causes may be identified, and interventions applied to improve the attendance and punctuality of these students.

D. Penalties

1. Penalties exist as corrective action to promote good student attendance when excessive absence, early dismissal and tardiness are verified as unlawful or unexcused. Each penalty is applied in accordance with the Wicomico County Code of Conduct. The continuum reflects the age appropriate application of the disciplinary measure and is based on unexcused and/or unlawful absences, tardies, and early dismissals.
2. The penalties include:
 - a. Office detention
 - b. In-school intervention
 - c. School level student and parent conference
 - d. Central office student and parent conference
 - e. Removal of school privileges
 - f. Restriction of extracurricular activities

E. Make-up Work Requirements

1. Any student absent for reasons coded as lawful or unlawful will have the privilege of making up work for credit.
2. The make-up procedure for short-term (five days or less) absence will require the following:
 - a. The student/parent/guardian must request the missed assignments.
 - b. Teachers are responsible for providing make-up work upon request for students who are lawfully or unlawfully absent.
 - c. Students will be given the number of days equal to the number of days absent to turn in completed make-up work. When possible, assignments may be provided prior to a lawful absence if requested by the parent/guardian at least two weeks in advance of the absence and approved by the principal or designee. Submission of the makeup work provided prior to a lawful absence is due upon the return to school unless extenuating circumstances have been documented by the parent/guardian.
3. The make-up procedure for long-term (six days or more) absence will require the following:
 - a. The student/parent/guardian must request the missed assignments.
 - b. Teachers are responsible for providing make-up work upon request for students who are lawfully or unlawfully absent.
 - c. A reasonable timeline for the completion of the work will be established.

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F. Intervention Strategies and Procedures for Addressing Absenteeism

1. Schools in collaboration with the Department of Student and Family Services and outside agencies will develop and implement a continuum of interventions designed to support regular school attendance.
2. When patterns of increasing numbers of absences, tardies, and early dismissals are identified by the schools, the following strategies may be implemented to address the student’s attendance:
 - a. School administrators may meet to discuss a course of action.
 - b. School administrators, the school counselor, classroom teacher(s) and any other staff, as appropriate, may provide an opportunity for educational counseling.
 - c. A designated staff person at the high school level and the home school liaison at the elementary and middle school levels will document attempts to notify the parent/guardian and the student to address and resolve the attendance issue.
 - d. A referral to the school Student Services Team will be made to develop a plan to improve attendance including but not limited to:
 - i. An attendance intervention plan.
 - ii. A home visit by PPW and home school liaison and/or guidance counselor,
 - iii. Written communication from the PPW to the parent.
 - e. If the absences are related to a chronic health problem, it may be beneficial to have the school nurse, with proper documented parental consent, communicate with the student’s medical provider.
 - f. Students receiving home and hospital teaching will be maintained on the regular school rolls and counted as present except when students are not able to participate in scheduled home and hospital teaching, in which case they are marked absent.
3. After all school level intervention attempts are exhausted, a referral should be made to the Truancy Reduction Program for students under sixteen years old who are habitually truant.

G. Rewards and Incentives for Regular School Attendance

1. Positive Behavior Intervention Strategies
2. School assemblies focusing on the benefits of regular student attendance.
3. Recognition for exemplary and improved attendance
4. Other awards and incentives identified by the individual school.

Related Documents:

SFS-GEN-PL-019, WCBOE Student Attendance Policy

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Advance Request for Absence

Procedural Guidelines

- The *Advance Request for Absence* form must be completed for consideration of a lawful (excused) absence from school under INS-SFS-PR-002 Student Attendance Procedure.
- All requests should be submitted at least **two weeks in advance of the** time of absence to the principal. (Requests not received in advance may not be eligible for approval.)

Student Name: _____

Today's Date: _____

School Name: _____

Grade: _____

Parent/Guardian: _____

E-mail: _____

Mailing Address: _____

Street Number and Name

City, State and Zip Code

Phone Number

Reason for Absence: _____

Date(s) of Absence: _____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____

Principal Use Only

Disposition of Request: Approved

Disapproved

Comments: _____

Principal Signature: _____

Date: _____

C: File

Administrator/Supervisor

Parent/Guardian

Date Sent:

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