

STUDENT ABSENCES AND EXCUSES

ABSENCES

A. Excused Absences

Excused absences are exceptions to compulsory attendance. They include the following (asterisked items are specified in Colorado law):

1. A student who is temporarily ill or injured or whose absence is approved by the administrator of the school of attendance.*
2. A student who is absent for an extended period due to physical, mental or emotional disability.*
3. A student who is pursuing a work-study program under the supervision of a public school.*
4. A student who is participating in any school-sponsored activity, or a student who has advance approval by the administration to attend an activity of an educational nature.
5. A student whose presence in school, on a doctor's written advice, may constitute a danger to his or her health or will seriously expose other students to a health hazard (such as a student under quarantine).
6. A student who has a death in his or her immediate family.
7. A student whose presence is required in court.
8. A student who is in the custody of a court or law enforcement authorities.*
9. A student who is being instructed at home by a certified teacher or under a system of home study pursuant to state law and State Board of Education rules.*
10. A student who has the written approval of the building principal based on special family circumstances.
11. A student to whom a current age and school certificate or work permit has been issued pursuant to state law.*
12. A student who is participating in an observance of his or her religion.
13. A students who has been suspended from school.

As applicable, the district may require suitable proof regarding the above exceptions, including written statements from medical sources.

If a student is in out-of-home placement (as that term is as defined by C.R.S. 22-32-138(1)(e)), absences due to court appearances and participation in court-ordered activities shall be excused. The student's assigned social worker shall verify the student's absence was for a court appearance or court-ordered activity.

B. Unexcused Absences

Any absence that is not covered by one of the situations described above is an unexcused absence. These include the following:

1. Expulsion
2. Leaving school or a class without permission of the teacher or administrator in charge.
3. Not reporting to school or a class unless the absence is excused in accordance with the school's policy.
4. Any absence that is not excused within 48 hours.

The maximum number of unexcused absences a student may incur before judicial proceedings are initiated to enforce compulsory attendance is 10 days during any calendar or school year or four days in one month.

C. Medical Absences

The school, in its discretion, may require a student who is absent for medical reasons to provide a note from his or her doctor. In such cases, a student who does not provide the required note shall be considered absent without excuse.

RESPONSIBILITIES FOR SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

A. Student Responsibility for School Attendance

1. To attend school on all days of the established school calendar.
2. To appear in class on time, prepared to learn.
3. To contact teachers immediately upon return from absences and arrange for completion of make-up work.
4. To complete work as assigned by the teacher when a preauthorized absence has been requested.
5. To check the absence list regularly and take steps to correct errors in attendance recording.

B. Parent/Guardian Responsibility for School Attendance

1. To encourage the student to develop good attendance habits and communicate that any absence or tardy, regardless of cause, may have a detrimental effect on achievement.
2. To be familiar with the school's attendance policies and procedures and follow them.
3. To contact the school regarding absences, in accordance with the school's policies, and to provide the school with written documentation within 48 hours.
4. To contact the school and request a conference with the appropriate administrator or teacher upon notification from the school that attendance is a concern.
5. To furnish the school with a telephone number or other means of contacting them during the school day.

C. Teacher Responsibility for School Attendance

1. To inform parents/guardians and students at the beginning of each year, semester or term about classroom attendance expectations and any penalties that may be imposed for tardies or absences.
2. To take attendance daily and maintain accurate attendance records according to school policy and regulations.
3. To apply the attendance policy consistently to all students.
4. To notify students of tardies, absences, and academic penalties through procedures specified by the school.
5. To notify parents/guardians of attendance concerns.
6. To provide quality learning experiences that encourage regular attendance.

D. Principal Responsibility for School Attendance

1. To supervise the implementation of attendance policy and procedures.
2. To provide parents/guardians with information about the school's attendance procedures and their child's attendance records.
3. To inform parents/guardians of absences.
4. To facilitate the use of available resources for students who exhibit attendance problems.

The school shall establish a system of monitoring individual absences, both excused and unexcused. When a student fails to report on a regularly scheduled school day and school employees have

received no indication that his or her parent/guardian is aware of the absence, school employees or volunteers under the direction of school employees shall make a reasonable effort to notify the parent/guardian by telephone.

CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM

When a student has an excessive number of absences, these absences negatively impact the student's academic success. For this reason, a student who has 10 total absences in a school year, whether the absences are excused or unexcused, may be identified as "chronically absent" by the principal or designee. Absences due to suspension or expulsion shall not be counted in the total number of absences considered for purposes of identifying a student as "chronically absent."

If a student is identified as "chronically absent," the principal or designee shall develop a plan to improve the student's attendance. The plan shall include best practices and research-based strategies to address the reasons for the student's chronic absenteeism. When practicable, the student's parent/guardian shall participate in the development of the plan.

Nothing herein shall require the principal or designee to identify a student as "chronically absent" prior to declaring the student as a "habitual truant" and pursuing court proceedings against the student and his or her parents/guardians to compel the student's attendance with state law.

TARDINESS

A tardy student is a student without a valid excuse who is not in the classroom at the time the teacher expects. A student detained by another teacher or staff member shall not be considered tardy provided that the staff member gives the student a pass to enter the next class. Elementary students will be considered tardy if they arrive more than five minutes after class has started; secondary schools will determine their definitions and consequences for tardiness. Penalties for tardiness will be equated with penalties for unexcused absences. An unexcused tardy exceeding 30 minutes will be counted as a half day unexcused absence in elementary and middle schools.

The classroom teacher, counselors and/or administrators will work with tardy students to discuss the undesirable consequences or tardiness, explore the reasons for the tardies, work mutually with the student to identify how to avoid future tardies, and point out the consequences of further tardies. Tardiness may be excused if a parent/guardian, legal custodian or school staff member communicates with the teacher about the tardiness within 24 hours. In elementary and middle school, after 30 minutes an unexcused tardy will be counted as a half day unexcused absence.

TRUANCY/HABITUAL TRUANCY

If a student is absent without a signed parental excuse or if the student leaves school or a class without permission of the teacher or administrator in charge, the student shall be considered truant. An "habitual truant" shall be defined as a student of compulsory attendance age who has four unexcused absences from school or from class in any one month or 10 unexcused absences during any year. Absences due to suspension or expulsion shall not be counted in determining whether a student is an habitual truant.

When a student is declared habitually truant, the school shall, in cooperation with the student and parent/guardian or legal custodian, develop a plan to assist the child to remain in school.

In order to reduce the incidence of truancy, parents/guardians of all students shall be notified in writing at the beginning of each school year of their obligation to insure that all children of compulsory attendance age attend school.

DROPOUT

Any student who has been absent from class for six consecutive weeks or more in any one school year, except for reasons of expulsion, excused long-term illness or death, is considered to be a “dropout” and shall be reported as such to the Department of Education. However, if the student is in attendance at the end of the school year or enrolled in another school, home study course or on-line program, he or she is not considered a dropout and shall not be reported as such.

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