

**STUDENT ATTENDANCE**

**I. GENERAL PROCEDURES**

Each child who resides in Talbot County and is at least five years old -by September 1 of the year of entry or under eighteen (18) 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 of the same age.

**II. DEFINITIONS**

- A. Daily Attendance Record - A record of the daily attendance kept in accordance with regulations of the State Board of Education and the current Maryland Student Records Manual, which is incorporated by reference in COMAR 13A.08.01 and County policy/procedures.
- B. Attendance Reports - Reports of enrollment, attendance, and withdrawals (monthly and annual) made in accordance with the current Maryland Student Records Manual.
- C. Present - Students shall be considered in attendance at school when participating in school-sponsored or approved activities during the school day. Such participation must be approved by the Superintendent of Schools or the school principal, or their designees.
- D. Present Full Day - A student is considered present for a full day if the student is in attendance for more than 50% of the school day.
- E. Present Half Day - A student is considered present for half day if the student is in attendance for 10% to 50% of the school day.
- F. Absent - A student is considered absent when not physically present on school grounds and/or not participating in instruction or instruction-related activities at an approved off-grounds location for more than 10% of the school day.
- G. Lawful Absence - Students presently enrolled in TCPS are considered lawfully absent from school, including absence for an portion of the day, only under the following circumstances:

1. Death in the immediate family
  2. Illness of a student
  3. Pregnancy of a student and/or a parenting student experiencing parenting concerns
  4. Court summons
  5. Hazardous weather conditions (does not apply if schools are open to all students)
  6. Work approved by the school administrator
  7. Observance of a religious holiday
  8. State emergency (must be formal announcement from State and/or local government)
  9. Other emergency, or set of circumstances, as approved by the school administrator and Director of Student Services or designee
  10. Health exclusion
  11. Suspension
  12. Lack of authorized transportation (this does not apply for students who miss a bus or are removed from a bus for disciplinary reasons)
- H. Unlawful absence - an absence, including any portion of the day, for any reason other than those listed above.
- I. Truant - a student who is absent without lawful cause for a school day, or portion of a school day.
- J. Chronic Absent - A student is chronically absent if they are absent from school for any reason (lawful and unlawful) that amounts to 10% or more of the school year.
- K. Habitual Truant - A student is habitually truant if they are unlawfully absent from school for more than 20% of the school days within any marking period, semester, or year.
- L. Tardy - any absence of a student at the time a given class begins, or the official start of instruction for the day, provided that the student is in attendance before

the close of the class or school day. Lawful and unlawful tardiness is determined by applying the same criteria used for absences.

- M. Early Dismissal - leaving class or school at any time prior to the end of the class or school day. Lawful and unlawful early dismissal is determined by applying the same criteria used for absences.

### **III. STANDARDS FOR DAILY ATTENDANCE**

- A. Each school shall maintain a record of daily attendance for every student enrolled.
- B. Reports of enrollments, attendance, and withdrawals shall be made in accordance with state regulations as outlined in COMAR.
- C. A student enrolled for less than a full day is to be counted present based on the amount of time they are scheduled, using the same criteria as a student with a full schedule (outlined in II. E - F).
- D. Every six (6) unlawful tardies and/or early dismissals shall be counted as an unlawful absence.
- E. Written excuses by a parent/guardian for lawful absences by parent, guardian, medical, court, or social agency notes shall be required on the day the student returns to school. After five (5) school days, any unlawful absence can not be changed to a lawful absence without approval from a student services worker or designee.
- F. Ten (10) lawful absences a year may be excused with a parent note. Absences beyond 10 days in a school year will require a doctors' note to be excused.
- G. If a student or the student's parent/guardian notifies the school that the student's absence was due to a behavioral health need, the school shall provide information to the student or the student's parent/guardian about school or community behavioral health resources that are available to the student.
- H. When a student exceeds five (5) unlawful absences for the year, a doctor's note will be required.
- I. Students are to make up work missed for both lawful absences and for unlawful absences. It is the student's responsibility to make up work. The teacher shall provide the student with necessary information concerning makeup work. Students shall be allotted two (2) school days for each lawful or unlawful day absent. These make-up absence days will begin the second day after the student

returns to school. This policy does not automatically extend due-dates for long-term assignments unless approved by the principal or designee.

- J. The school strongly discourages families scheduling vacations during the school year. If a student will be absent due to a vacation, the principal must be notified of the dates in advance. While those absences will still be coded unlawful, prior notification will eliminate them from being counted towards potential court action. This applies to five (5) days per school year as long as the student has not exceeded the attendance standards prior to the request.
- K. Any student absent for a half or whole day shall be ineligible to participate in any extracurricular activity scheduled on that day unless previously excused by the principal or the principal's designee.
- L. Students at the middle and high school levels with more than three (3) unexcused absences per marking period, and/or more than 18 tardies and/or early dismissals per marking period will be ineligible to participate in or attend any school-based extra-curricular activities for that current marking period. Coaches and club advisors may impose additional (but not less) criteria for student participation.
- M. When possible, students are encouraged to visit colleges on non-school days or weekends. College visits during school days are permitted and will be coded as an excused absence, provided documentation of the visit from the college is submitted to the school. Students in grades 9 – 10 are permitted two (2) days per school year. Students in grades 11 & 12 will be permitted five (5) days per school year. Additional days beyond the noted limits will be counted as unexcused.
- N. During times when schools are closed due to emergencies like natural disasters or a global pandemic, students will be considered present in school if they regularly engage in communication with the teacher and/or school staff. Engagement may include things such as: participation in synchronous learning, electronic submission of assignments, exchange of emails, telephone calls, written correspondence, or a home visit from school staff.

#### **IV. MONITORING AND TIERED INTERVENTIONS**

- A. School staff will regularly review each case in which a student has been absent for 10% or more of a quarter, semester, or school year.
- B. School staff will implement the following tiered interventions and supports for all students, and students who demonstrate issues and challenge with regular and on time attendance to school:
  - 1. Tier 1 (Universal Interventions & Supports)

- a. All students will receive prevention-oriented supports that promote and maintain good attendance that meets the acceptable standard as outlined in this regulation.
- b. In accordance with COMAR 13A.08.01.05.B(7), each school administrator will implement an incentive program for the purpose of promoting regular and on time school attendance.
- c. Perfect attendance will only be awarded to students who have zero absences.
- d. The awarding for perfect attendance may be suspended during times of a global pandemic or other health emergency so as not to encourage students to attend school when they are ill.
- e. When a student has repeatedly missed school (or class at the secondary level), the teacher shall make every effort to contact the parent to discuss the concern of lack of attendance.
- e. If a student accumulates three unlawful absences parents/guardians are notified by mail and/or email with a copy of this regulation. Appropriate services and supports are provided as needed.

2. Tier 2 (Supplemental)

- a. Individual, targeted supports, in addition to universal supports are provided to students who have a history of moderate chronic absence during the past or current school year, or who face a hardship that makes attendance difficult.
- b. If a student accumulates excessive lawful absences, school staff will closely monitor to determine if Home/Hospital Services are needed or if CHIPs (Chronic Health Impairment Program for Students) would be appropriate to support the student's academic success.
- c. If a student accumulates five unlawful absences, parent/guardians are notified by mail and/or email with another copy of the regulation and a request for an in person meeting with school staff.
- d. If the student continues to accumulate unlawful absences after all tier two interventions and supports have been implemented, then the appropriate school staff shall refer the

student to the Multi Tiered System of Supports Team (MTSS Team).

3. Tier 3 (Intensive)

a. Intensive, individualized supports, in addition to supplemental and universal supports are provided to students who have chronic or truant absences and/or face a hardship that presents a barrier to regular and/or on time school attendance.

b. The MTSS team will monitor all students referred to the team, and determine what intense services are needed to help students improve school attendance.

c. The MTSS team shall refer a student to the appropriate Student Services staff once the student has accumulated eight (8) unlawful absences in the school year. Additional support and interventions will be provided as appropriate and necessary.

d. Appropriate Student Services staff shall refer a parent/guardian to District Court when a student accumulates 10 unlawful absences in a school year. This is done as a last resort, after all interventions and support have been exhausted.

**V. APPEAL PROCESS FOR UNUSUAL OR EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES**

A. Extenuating circumstances for unlawful absences may be appealed in writing by the parent/guardian directly to the principal whose responsibility it is to assure that due process is maintained.

B. Appeals must be initiated by the parent/guardian within five (5) school days after the student and parent have been notified in writing of the unlawful absence(s).

C. An appeal conference shall require the presence of the parent/guardian, the student, and any other school staff the principal deems necessary.

**VI. RECORD KEEPING PROCESS AND REQUIREMENTS**

A. The absentee report/attendance register is maintained to meet the needs of the school and the requirements established by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE). MSDE sets forth the rationale and guidelines for the implementation of a continuous student accounting system. It allows for flexibility in the manner in which records are maintained in the schools by providing a means for centralized function in the school. Attendance shall be recorded daily by the teacher. Schools are accountable for

accurate reporting by creating an original source document, which is maintained in the school office for a period of three years.

B. The monthly and year-end reports will be compiled and printed by the system-wide computer attendance program. Year-end reports shall be forwarded to the Maryland State Department of Education. All documentation substantiating student attendance will be retained for three (3) years.

C. A record of all enrollments, transfers, and withdrawals shall be maintained in accordance with the current Maryland Student Records Manual and COMAR.

D. Schools shall provide all original source documents needed for any audit of student attendance, enrollments, transfers, and/or withdrawals.