

**STUDENT ATTENDANCE - AR**

- I. **Who Must Attend:** 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. **Attendance Defined:** 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.
- III. **Daily Attendance Record:** A record of the daily attendance of each student shall be kept in accordance with regulations of the State Board of Education and the Maryland Student Records System, Manual of Instructions, (2011), which is incorporated by reference in COMAR 13A.08.02.01 and County policy/procedures.
- IV. **Attendance Reports:** Reports of enrollment, attendance, and withdrawals (monthly and annual) will be made in accordance with the "Maryland Student Records System, Manual of Instruction."
- V. **Lawful Cause of Absence (Regulation 13A.08.01.03)**  
Absence from school, including absence for any portion of the day, of students who are presently enrolled in public schools shall be considered lawful only under the following conditions:
  - A. Death in the immediate family - Mother, father, guardian, grandparent, siblings, or other permanent household members.
  - B. Illness of the student. The principal shall require a physician's certificate from the parent or guardian of a student reported continuously absent for illness. (See "Absence Criteria")
  - C. Court summons.
  - D. 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.

- E. Work approved or sponsored by the school, the local school system, or the State Department of Education, accepted by the local Superintendent of Schools or the school principal, or their designees as reason for excusing students.
- F. Observance of a religious holiday.
- G. State emergency.
- H. Other Emergency or set of circumstances which, in the judgment of the Principal, Superintendent or designee, constitutes a good and sufficient cause for absence from school.
- I. Health Exclusion.
- J. Suspension.
- K. Lack of authorized transportation. This does not include students denied authorized transportation for disciplinary reasons.

**VI. Unlawful Cause of Absence (Regulation 13A.08.01.04)**

An Absence for any reason other than those cited as lawful are presumed as unlawful and may constitute truancy.

**Truant student** is a student (K through 12<sup>th</sup> grade) who is absent without lawful cause as defined in COMAR 13A.08.01.03 from such attendance for more than:

- A. 8 days in any quarter
- B. 15 Days in any semester or
- C. 20 Days in a school year

**VII. Truant Student**

Each truant student attending kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade shall immediately be referred to Student Services for active intervention.

**VIII. Absence Definitions**

- A. Present for a full day: student is in attendance four hours or more of the school day
- B. Present for a half day: student is in attendance for at least two hours of the school day, but less than four hours

- C. Absent whole day: present for 119 minutes or less of the school day
- D. Tardy to school: absent less than 120 minutes in the morning
- E. A student enrolled for less than a full day is to be counted present based on the amount of time he/she is scheduled. Any student maintaining a less than full academic schedule must be present for more than half of that time period to be considered present for a full day.
- F. A student is counted present if at school or at a school sponsored activity supervised by a member(s) of the school staff.
- G. A student is considered absent from any classes when they arrive more than halfway through the period or leave before half of the class has been completed.

**IX. Definitions of Absent and Present During Emergency School Closures**

During times when schools are closed due to emergencies like a natural disaster or a global pandemic, students will be considered present in school if they regularly engage in communication with a 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 home visit.

**X. Tardiness Definition**

For the purpose of this policy, tardiness is defined as any absence of a student at the time a given class begins, provided that the student is in attendance before the close of that class.

- A. Lawful and unlawful tardiness is determined by applying the same criteria as absence.
- B. Six (6) unlawful tardies less than 120 minutes equals 1 unlawful absence.

**XI. Early Dismissal Definition**

For the purpose of this policy, early dismissal is defined as leaving school at any time during the last 120 minutes of the school day.

- A. Lawful and unlawful early dismissal is determined by applying the same criteria as absence.
- B. Six (6) unlawful early dismissals less than 120 minutes equals one (1) unlawful absence.

## **XII. Student Absences – Administrative Procedures**

- A. Written excuses for lawful absences by parent, guardian, medical, court, or social agency notes shall be required on the day the student returns to school. After 5 school days, any unlawful absence can not be changed to a lawful absence. Notes from parents will be accepted up to the allowable limit of five (5) absences for a semester or 10 absences for a year. After which doctors' notes will be required. In addition, when a student exceeds 5 illegal absences for the year, a doctor's note is also required.
- B. 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.
- C. 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.
- D. Any student absent for a half or whole day shall be ineligible to participate in any extra curricular activity scheduled on that day unless previously excused by the Principal or the Principal's designee.
- E. 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.
- F. 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 2 days per school year. Students in grades 11 & 12 will be permitted 5 days per school year. Additional days beyond the noted limits will be counted as unexcused.

## **XIII. Administrative Action for Unlawful Absenteeism**

- A. Three (3) unlawful absences Parent(s)/guardian(s) is notified of the unlawful absence by mail or email with attached attendance policy. Appropriate services will be provided. Such services and/or action are determined by the school principal/designee.
- B. Five (5) unlawful absences If a student continues to be absent for suspected unlawful reasons, the principal/designee will hand deliver or send a letter by certified mail (return receipt requested) to the parent(s) or guardian(s) notifying him/her of the absence(s) and requesting he/she contact the school to schedule a conference. The school must make every effort to hold a conference.

At the conference with parent(s) or guardian(s), school personnel including the school counselor, should discuss his/her attendance, grades and behavior and attempt to identify the reason(s) for his/her absences. The attendance policy will also be reviewed. Referral to the multi level intervention team should be made, with documentation of the date and time of the parent/guardian conference.

- C. Six (6) unlawful absences If steps above have been followed and documented by the school with no response from the parent(s) or guardian(s) or if the student becomes truant; the principal/designee will refer the case to the Student Services Worker assigned to the school so that the causes may be studied and a solution can be developed.
- D. The parents of students under the age of 18, grades K - 12, with more than ten (10) unlawful absences will be referred to District Court by the Office of Student Services.

#### **XIV. Incentive Programs**

- A. In accordance with Maryland Regulation (COMAR) 13A.08.01.05.B(7) each principal will implement an incentive program in his/her school for the purpose of promoting regular school attendance.
- B. Perfect attendance will only be awarded to student who have missed zero days of school. Any absence excludes a student from this recognition, regardless of the reason for the absence.

#### **XV. Appeal Process For Unusual Or Extenuating Circumstances**

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

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

The appeal conference shall require the presence of the parent or guardian and the student as well as professional personnel involved.

NOTE: If a conference is used as the basis of parent and student notification, then this should be noted in writing in the student's files or records.

#### **XVI. Record-Keeping Procedures**

Attendance will be taken by each school at the beginning of the school day. Each homeroom and/or classroom teacher shall maintain a daily attendance and tardiness record. This documentation will be forwarded to the attendance officer who will handle computer entry. The resulting absentee list must be signed and dated by the homeroom and/or classroom teacher indicating agreement. Schools will retain the logs maintained to record the arrival of tardy students.

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.

When a teacher determines that a student has repeatedly missed his/her class for unexplained reasons during a marking period, the teacher is encouraged to contact the parent/guardian by telephone and/or letter. The principal/designee should also be notified.

All entrants and withdrawals with appropriate dates and codes must be maintained in the school in hard copy as well as entered in the system-wide database (subject to future review).

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