

STUDENTS

Attendance

Absence Definitions

To establish common attendance practices within and across all school levels, the following definitions set forth in [WAC 392-401-015](#) will determine the appropriate category for absence reporting.

Absent

1. A student is absent when they are:
 - a. Not physically present on school grounds; and
 - b. Not participating in the following activities at an approved location:
 - (i) Instruction;
 - (ii) Any instruction-related activity; or
 - (iii) Any other district or school approved activity that is regulated by an instructional/academic accountability system, such as participation in district-sponsored sports.
2. Students shall not be absent if:
 - a. They have been suspended, expelled, or emergency expelled pursuant to [Chapter 392-400 WAC](#);
 - b. Are receiving educational services as required by [RCW 28A.600.015](#) and [Chapter 392-400 WAC](#); and
 - c. The student is enrolled in qualifying “course of study” activities as defined in [WAC 392-121-107](#).
3. A full day absence is when a student is absent for 50% or more of their scheduled day.
4. A school or district shall not convert or combine tardies into absences that contribute to a truancy petition.

Excused and Unexcused Absences

Excused Absences

Absences due to the following reasons must be excused:

1. **Illness, health condition or medical appointment** (including, but not limited to, medical, counseling, dental, optometry, pregnancy, and in-patient or out-patient treatment for chemical dependency or mental health) for the student or person for whom the student is legally responsible.

- A. Extended illness or health condition. If a student is confined to home or a facility for an extended period of time, the school will arrange for the accomplishment of assignments at the place of confinement whenever practical. If the student is unable to do their schoolwork, or if there are academic requirements of a particular course which cannot be accomplished outside of class, the student may be required to take an incomplete or withdraw from the class without penalty.
 - B. Excused absence for chronic health condition. Students with a chronic health condition that interrupts regular attendance may qualify for placement in a limited attendance and participation program. The student and the student's parent/guardian will apply to the principal or counselor, and a limited program will be written following the advice and recommendations of the student's medical advisor. The recommended limited program will be reviewed and approved or denied by the principal. If the recommended limited program is denied, the principal will work with the student, their parent/guardian and medical advisor to revise the program for approval. Staff will be informed of the student's needs, though the confidentiality of medical information will be respected at the parent's/guardian's request.
2. **Family emergency** including, but not limited to, a death or illness in the family.
 3. **Religious or cultural purpose** including observance of a religious or cultural holiday or participation in religious or cultural instruction.
 4. **Court, judicial** proceeding, court-ordered activity, or jury service.
 5. **Post-secondary, technical school or apprenticeship program** visitation, or scholarship interview.
 6. **State-recognized search and rescue activities** consistent with [RCW 28A.225.055](#).
 7. Absence directly related to the student's **homeless or foster care/dependency** status.
 8. Absences related to **deployment activities of a parent or legal guardian** who is an active duty member consistent with [RCW 28A.705.010](#).
 9. Absences due to **suspensions, expulsions or emergency expulsions** imposed pursuant to [Chapter 392-400 WAC](#) if the student is not receiving educational services and is not enrolled in qualifying "course of study" activities as defined in [WAC 392-121-107](#).

As required by law, students who are removed from a class or classes as a disciplinary measure, or students who have been placed on short-term or long-term suspension, will have the right to make up assignments or exams missed during the time they were denied entry to the classroom if the effect of the missed assignments will be a substantial lowering of the course grade.
 10. Absences due to student **safety concerns**, including absences related to threats, assaults, or bullying;
 11. Absences due to a student's **migrant status**; and
 12. An approved activity that is consistent with district policy and is **mutually agreed upon** by the principal or designee and a parent/guardian or emancipated youth.

A school principal or designee has the authority to determine if an absence meets the above criteria for an excused absence.

With the exception of item 9, the parent/guardian is expected to contact their student's school attendance office in writing or by phone to provide an explanation for a student absence within thirty (30) calendar days from the date of the absence.

If an absence is excused, the student will be permitted to make up all missed assignments outside of class under reasonable conditions and time limits established by the appropriate teacher; where reasonable, if a student misses a participation-type class, they can request an alternative assignment that aligns with the learning goals of the activity missed.

An excused absence will be verified by a parent/guardian or an adult, emancipated or appropriately aged student, or school authority responsible for the absence. If attendance is taken electronically, either for a course conducted online or for students physically within the district, an absence will default to unexcused until such time as an excused absence may be verified by a parent/guardian or other responsible adult. If a student is to be released for health care related to family planning or abortion, the student may require that the district keep the information confidential. Students thirteen (13) and older have the right to keep information about drug, alcohol or mental health treatment confidential. Students fourteen (14) and older have the same confidentiality rights regarding HIV and sexually transmitted diseases.

To Contact the School in Writing

Parents/guardians may contact the school in writing to provide an explanation for a student absence. Such parent/guardian written contact can be in the form of a hand-written note, sent from the parent/guardian email address, or sent by fax. The written note should contain the following information:

- Student ID number and/or student name
- Date(s) of the absence
- Reason for the absence
- Parent/guardian name
- Parent/guardian signature (for hand-written notes)
- Parent/guardian phone number

To Contact the School by Phone

Parents/guardians may contact the school by phone to provide an explanation for a student absence. Such parent/guardian contact will be recorded in writing by school office staff to excuse the absence. Parents/guardians needing language assistance to provide a written note may use the district's Communication Line for Non-English Speaking Families by calling 425-385-4011.

Unexcused Absences

Any absence from school is unexcused unless it meets one of the criteria for an excused absence set forth above ([WAC 392-401-020](#)).

A student will receive an unexcused absence when:

1. The parent/guardian or adult student submits an excuse statement that does not constitute an excused absence as set forth above;
2. The parent/guardian or adult student fails to submit any type of excuse statement, whether by phone, fax, email or in writing, for an absence; or
3. The parent/guardian or adult student submits an excuse statement more than thirty (30) calendar days after the absence.

Length of Absence

The length of a student's daily absence per the definitions below determines if the absence will be recorded as a tardy, a partial day absence or a full day absence.

Tardy

Students are expected to be in their classrooms, in their seats, and ready to participate at the beginning of each class. Students are tardy if they arrive after the published start time or leave before the published end time for school or class. A student who is marked tardy to class is not absent unless the student otherwise meets the criteria for an absence.

Partial Day or Period Absence

Elementary (Kindergarten through Fifth Grade)

At the elementary level, a *tardy* becomes a *partial day absence* if the student has missed more than thirty (30) minutes and less than 50% of their school day.

Secondary (Middle and High Schools)

At the secondary level, if the student arrives late to class or leaves early they will be marked as tardy. A *tardy* becomes a *period absence* if the student has missed 50% or more of the instructional minutes of the period.

Full Day Absence

A full day absence is defined as a student missing 50% or more of their scheduled school day.

Elementary

At the elementary level, a student's attendance will be recorded as a full day absence when the student has missed 50% or more of their scheduled school day. On a regularly scheduled school day, there are 6.5 total hours per day.

Secondary

At the secondary level, a student's attendance will be recorded as a full day absence when the student has missed 50% or more of their scheduled periods for that school day. On a regularly scheduled school day, there are seven (7) periods in middle school and six (6) periods in high school.

Prearranged Absences for Vacations or Travel

Families should not schedule vacations or travel while school is in session. If a family vacation or travel must occur while school is in session, it must be prearranged prior to the absence and approved by the principal or designee pursuant to item 12 above. The principal or designee may excuse up to five (5) school days for a prearranged absence per student each school year. Assignments requested for a prearranged absence will be provided to the student or parent/guardian if requested five (5) school days prior to the absence.

Response to Student's Failure to Attend School

A. Notice to Parent/Guardian

If a student fails to attend school, the student's parent/guardian will be informed by a notice in writing or by telephone whenever the child has failed to attend school after one (1) unexcused absence within any month during the current school year. The school shall inform the parent/guardian of the potential consequences of additional unexcused absences. If the parent/guardian is not fluent in English, the school must make reasonable efforts to provide this information in a language in which the parent/guardian is fluent.

B. Required Conference for Elementary School Students

In the event that a student in elementary school is required to attend school under [RCW 28A.225.010](#) or [RCW 28A.225.015](#)(1) and has five (5) or more excused absences in a single month during the current school year, or ten (10) or more excused absences in the current school year, the district shall schedule a conference or conferences with the parent/guardian and student at a reasonably convenient time for all persons included for the purpose of identifying barriers to the student's regular attendance and the supports and resources that may be made available to the family so that the student may regularly attend school. The conference must include at least one (1) district employee such as a nurse, counselor, social worker, teacher, or community human services provider, except in those instances regarding the attendance of a child who has an individualized education program (IEP) or a plan developed under section 504 of the rehabilitation act of 1973, in which case the reconvening of the team that created the program or plan is required.

A conference is not required if:

- (a) Written notice of the prearranged excused absence was provided to the principal or designee; or
- (b) If a doctor's note was provided and an academic plan was in place to ensure the student did not fall behind while absent.

If a regularly scheduled parent-teacher conference day is to take place within thirty days (30) of the absences, the district may schedule the conference on that day.

C. Required Conferences for All Students relating to Unexcused Absences

After one unexcused absence within any month during the current school year, the school shall inform the student's parent/guardian by a notice in writing or by telephone whenever the student has failed to attend school and of the potential consequences of additional unexcused absences. If the parent/guardian is not fluent in English, the school must make reasonable efforts to provide this information in a language in which the parent/guardian is fluent.

After three (3) unexcused absences within any month of the current school year, the school shall hold a conference with the principal or designee, parent/guardian, and student to analyze the causes of the student's absenteeism. If a regularly scheduled parent-teacher conference is scheduled to take place within thirty (30) calendar days of the third unexcused absence, the district may schedule the attendance conference on the same day. If the parent/guardian does not attend the scheduled conference, the school may hold the conference with the student and principal. However, the school shall notify the parent/guardian of the steps to eliminate or reduce the student's absences.

At some point after the second and before the fifth unexcused absence, the district will take data-informed steps to eliminate or reduce the student's absences. In middle school and high school, these steps must include application of the Washington Assessment of the Risks and Needs of Students (WARNS) or other assessment by the district's designated employee.

For any student with an existing IEP or 504 plan, these steps must include convening the student's IEP team or 504 team, including a behavior specialist or mental health specialist where appropriate, to consider the reasons for the student's absences. If necessary, and if the student's parent/guardian gives consent, the district will conduct a functional behavior assessment and will complete a detailed behavior plan to explore the function of the absence behavior.

For any student who does not have an IEP or 504 Plan, but who is reasonably believed to have a mental or physical disability or impairment, these steps will include informing the student's parent/guardian of the right to obtain an appropriate evaluation at no cost to the parent/guardian to determine whether the student has a disability or impairment and needs accommodations, special education services, or related services.

This includes students with suspected emotional or behavioral disabilities. If the school obtains consent to conduct an evaluation, time should be allowed for the evaluation to be completed, and if the student is found to be eligible for accommodations, special education services, or related services, a plan will be developed to address the student's needs.

The district will designate a staff member to apply WARNS and, where appropriate, provide the student with best practice or research-based interventions consistent with WARNS. As appropriate, the district will also consider:

1. Adjusting the student's school, program or course assignments;
2. Providing the student more individualized or remedial instruction;
3. Providing appropriate vocational courses or work experience;

4. Requiring the student to attend an alternative school or program;
5. Assisting the student or parent/guardian to obtain supplementary services that might eliminate or ameliorate the causes of absence; or
6. Referring the student to a community truancy board.

D. After Five (5) Unexcused Absences

Not later than a student's fifth unexcused absence in a month, the district will:

1. Enter into an agreement with the student and parents/guardians that establishes school attendance requirements;
2. Refer the student to a community truancy board; or
3. File a petition with juvenile court (see below).

E. Petition to Juvenile Court

For students under the age of seventeen (17), **no later than the seventh (7th) unexcused absence within any month during the current school year, or upon the tenth (10th) unexcused absence during the current school year**, the district will file a petition and supporting affidavit for a civil action in juvenile court alleging violation of the State's school attendance laws.

The petition will contain the following:

1. A statement that the student has unexcused absences in the current school year;
2. An attestation that actions taken by the district have not been successful in substantially reducing the student's absences from school;
3. A statement that court intervention and supervision are necessary to assist the district to reduce the student's absences from school;
4. A statement that [RCW 28A.225.010](#) has been violated by the parent/guardian, student or parent/guardian and student;
5. The petition will include the student's name, date of birth, school, address, gender, race, and ethnicity, and the names and addresses of the student's parents/guardians, the languages in which the student and parent/guardian are fluent, whether there is an existing individualized education program (IEP), and the student's current academic status in school;
6. A list of all interventions that have been attempted, a copy of any previous truancy assessment completed by the student's current school/district, the history of approved best practices or research-based intervention(s) previously provided to the student by the district, and a copy of the most recent truancy information document provided to the parent/guardian;
7. Facts that support the above allegations; and
8. The relief requested.

Petitions may be served by certified mail, return receipt requested, but if such service is unsuccessful, personal service is required. At the district's choice, it may be represented by a person who is not an attorney at hearings related to truancy petitions.

If the allegations in the petition are established by a preponderance of the evidence, the court grants the petition and enters an order assuming jurisdiction to intervene for a period of time determined by the court, after considering the facts alleged in the petition and the circumstances of the student, to most likely cause the student to return to and remain in school while the student is subject to the court's jurisdiction.

If the court assumes jurisdiction, the school district shall periodically report to the court any additional unexcused absences of the student, actions taken by the school district, and an update on the student's academic status in school at a schedule specified by the court. The first report must be received no later than three (3) months from the date that the court assumes jurisdiction.

Students Found Dependent Pursuant to [RCW 13.34](#)

A district representative or staff member will review unexpected or excessive absences with a student who has been found dependent under the [Juvenile Court Act](#) and the adults involved with that student. Adults include the student's caseworker, educational liaison, attorney if one is appointed, parents/guardians, foster parents or the person providing placement for the student.

The purpose of the review is to determine the cause(s) of the absences, taking into account: unplanned school transitions, periods of running from care, in-patient treatment, incarceration, school adjustment, educational gaps, psychosocial issues, and the student's unavoidable appointments that occur during the school day. The district representative or staff member must proactively support the student's management of their school work so the student does not fall behind and to avoid suspension or expulsion based on truancy.

Migrant Students

If necessary, the district, parent/guardian and student are encouraged to work to create an Extended Absence Agreement with the school to decrease the risk of an adverse effect on the student's educational progress.

Students Six or Seven Years Old

Students six (6) or seven (7) years of age, who have been enrolled in the district, are required to attend school and their parents/guardians are responsible for ensuring that they attend. Parents/guardians who wish to withdraw their children before the age of eight (8), and against whom no truancy petition has been filed, may withdraw the students from school. When a six (6) or seven (7)-year-old student has unexcused absences, the district will follow the steps described above under Response to Student's Failure to Attend School.

Discipline and Corrective Action

Any student who presents false evidence, with or without the consent of their parent/guardian, in order to wrongfully qualify for an excused absence will be subject to the same corrective action that would have occurred had the false excuse not been used.

All sanctions imposed for failure to comply with the attendance policies and procedures will be implemented in conformance with state and district regulations regarding discipline or corrective action.

Student Transfers

In the case of a student who transfers from one district to another during the school year, the receiving district will include the unexcused absences accumulated at the previous district. The sending district will provide this truancy information for the current school year to the receiving district, together with a copy of the WARNS assessment, any truancy documentation previously provided to the parent/guardian, and any other truancy interventions previously provided to the student. The sending district will use the standard choice transfer form for releasing a student to a nonresident school district for the purposes of accessing an alternative learning experience program.

Community Truancy Board

A “community truancy board” means a board established pursuant to a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between a juvenile court and the district and composed of members of the local community in which the student attends school.

The district will designate and identify to the juvenile court and to the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction a staff member to assist in the recruitment of community truancy board members, coordinate district efforts to address excessive absenteeism and truancy, including outreach and conferences, establishing protocols and procedures with the court, coordinating training for members of the community truancy board, and sharing evidence-based and culturally appropriate promising practices. The district will also identify a person at each school to serve as a contact regarding excessive absenteeism and truancy.

Cross References: [Board Policy 3122](#) Attendance
 [Board Policy 3441](#) Release of Student during the School Day
 [Procedure 3441P](#) Release of Student during the School Day
 [Comprehensive Education Data and Research System \(CEDARS\) Data Manual](#)

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