

THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PHILADELPHIA

SECTION: 200 Pupils

TITLE: Attendance

ADOPTED: September 22, 2010

REVISED: October 19, 2017

204. ATTENDANCE

Purpose

The School Reform Commission recognizes that attendance is an important factor in educational success, and supports a comprehensive approach to identify and address attendance issues.[1]

Definitions

Compulsory school age - shall mean the period of a child's life from the time the child's parents/guardians elect to have the child enter school, and which shall be no later than six (6) years of age until the child reaches seventeen (17) years of age. The term does not include a child who holds a certificate of graduation from a regularly accredited, licensed, registered or approved high school.[2]

Habitually truant - shall mean six (6) or more school days of unexcused absences during the current school year by a child subject to compulsory school attendance.[2]

Truant - shall mean having incurred three (3) or more school days of unexcused absences during the current school year by a child subject to compulsory school attendance.[2]

Person in parental relation - shall mean a:[2]

1. Custodial biological or adoptive parent.
2. Noncustodial biological or adoptive parent.
3. Guardian of the person of a child.
4. Person with whom a child lives and who is acting in a parental role of a child.

This definition shall not include any county agency or person acting as an agent of the county agency in the jurisdiction of a dependent child as defined by law.[3] ___

School-based or community-based attendance improvement program - shall mean a program designed to improve school attendance by seeking to identify and address the

underlying reasons for a child's absences. The term may include an educational assignment in an alternative education program, provided the program does not include a program for disruptive youth established pursuant to Article XIX-C of the Pennsylvania Public School Code.[2]

Authority

Attendance shall be required of all students during the days and hours that school is in session, except that authorized district staff may excuse a student for temporary absences upon receipt of satisfactory evidence of mental, physical, or other urgent reasons that may reasonably cause the student's absence.[4][5][6][7][8][9]

The SRC shall establish and enforce attendance requirements, in accordance with applicable laws and regulations, SRC policy and administrative procedures.

Compulsory School Attendance Requirements

All students of compulsory school age who reside in the district shall be subject to the compulsory school attendance requirements.[4]__

A student shall be considered in attendance if present at any place where school is in session by authority of the SRC; the student is receiving approved tutorial instruction, or health or therapeutic services; the student is engaged in an approved and properly supervised independent study, work-study or career education program; or the student is receiving approved homebound instruction.[4][7][10][11][12][13][14][15]

The following students shall be excused from the requirements of attendance at district schools, upon request and with the required approval:

1. On certification by a physician or submission of other satisfactory evidence and on approval of the Pennsylvania Department of Education, children who are unable to attend school or apply themselves to study for mental, physical or other reasons that preclude regular attendance.[5][6][16]
2. Students enrolled in nonpublic or private schools in which the subjects and activities prescribed by law are taught.[4][17]
3. Students attending college who are also enrolled part-time in district schools, to include dual enrollment and middle college.[18]
4. Students attending a home education program or private tutoring in accordance with law.[4][13][19][20][21][22]
5. Students fifteen (15) or sixteen (16) years of age whose enrollment in private trade or business schools has been approved.[4]

6. The School District will honor any exceptions to compulsory school attendance permitted by law under the School Code.

Excused/Lawful Absence

The following conditions or situations constitute reasonable cause for absence from school:

- Excused Absence or Other Urgent Reasons
- Excused Early Dismissal
- Illness, including if a student is dismissed by designated district staff during school hours for health-related reasons.[\[5\]\[8\]](#)
- Quarantine
- Recovery from Accident
- Required Court Appearance
- Death in Family
- Educational Trip/Tour with approval
- The parent/guardian submits a written request for excusal prior to the absence.
- The student's participation has been approved by the Superintendent or principal.
- The adult directing and supervising the tour or trip is acceptable to the parents/guardians and the Superintendent.
- College tours, trade school tours, career and technical training program tours, community college tours, or tours of other non-school district schools, with prior approval.
- The district may limit the number and duration of non-school-sponsored educational tours or trips for which excused absences may be granted to a student during the school year.
- Observance of a religious holiday observed by bona fide religious group, upon prior written parental request.[\[23\]](#)
- Authorized school activities, including athletic events.
- Excused Lateness
- Out of School Suspension
- Family emergency.
- Participation in a project sponsored by a statewide or countywide 4-H, Future Farmers of America (FFA) or combined 4-H and FFA group, upon prior written request.[\[1\]\[5\]](#)

Temporary Excusals -

The following students may be temporarily excused from the requirements of attendance at district schools:

1. Students receiving tutorial instruction in a field not offered in the district's curricula from a properly qualified tutor approved by the Superintendent, when the excusal does not interfere with the student's regular program of studies.[\[4\]](#)[\[10\]](#)[\[13\]](#)
2. Students participating in a religious instruction program, if the following conditions are met:[\[23\]](#)[\[25\]](#)
 - a. The parent/guardian submits a written request for excusal. The request shall identify and describe the instruction, and the dates and hours of instruction.
 - b. The student shall not miss more than thirty-six (36) hours per school year in order to attend classes for religious instruction.
 - c. Following each absence, the parent/guardian shall submit a statement attesting that the student attended the instruction, and the dates and hours of attendance.
3. School age children unable to attend school upon recommendation of the school physician and a psychiatrist or school psychologist, or both, and with approval of the Secretary of Education of the Pennsylvania Department of Education.[\[16\]](#)

Unexcused/Unlawful Absences

For purposes of this policy, absences which do not meet the criteria indicated above shall be considered an unexcused/unlawful absence.

An out-of-school suspension may not be considered an unexcused absence.[\[2\]](#)

Unexcused Lateness
Unexcused Absence
Unexcused Early
Dismissal

Delegation of Responsibility

The Superintendent or designee shall annually notify students, parents/guardians, staff and the Philadelphia Department of Human Services or the Philadelphia Juvenile Court about the district's attendance policy by publishing such policy in student/parent handbooks, on the district website, and through other efficient communication [methods](#).[\[1\]](#)[\[26\]](#)

The Superintendent or designee, in coordination with the district office of Attendance and Truancy, shall be responsible for the implementation and enforcement of this policy.

The Superintendent or designee shall develop administrative procedures necessary for

the implementation of this policy which:

1. Govern the maintenance of attendance records in accordance with law. [27][28]
2. Detail the process for submission of requests and excuses for student absences.
3. Detail the process for written notices, School Attendance Improvement Conferences, School Attendance Improvement Plans, and referrals to a school-based or community-based attendance improvement program, the local children and youth agency, or the appropriate judge.
4. Ensure that students legally absent have an opportunity to make up work.

Mandatory Regulatory Procedure

Student is Habitually Truant -

When a student under fifteen (15) years of age is habitually truant, district staff:[30] ____

1. Shall refer the student to:
 - a. A school-based or community-based attendance improvement program; or
 - b. The local children and youth agency.
2. May file a citation in the office of the appropriate judge against the person in parental relation who resides in the same household as the student.[30] ____

When a student fifteen (15) years of age or older is habitually truant, district staff shall:[30] ____

1. Refer the student to a school-based or community-based attendance improvement program; or
2. File a citation in the office of the appropriate judge against the student or the person in parental relation who resides in the same household as the student.

Regardless of age, when district staff refer a habitually truant student to the local children and youth agency or file a citation with the appropriate judge, district staff shall provide verification that the school held a School Attendance Improvement Conference.[30]

Special Needs and Accommodations

If a truant or habitually truant student may qualify as a student with a disability, and require special education services or accommodations, the Director of Special Education shall be notified and shall take action to address the student's needs in accordance with applicable law, regulations and SRC policy.[32][33][34][35]

For students with disabilities who are truant or habitually truant, the Individual Education Plan team shall be notified and shall address the student's needs in accordance with applicable law, regulations and SRC policy.[32][33][35]

Discipline

The district shall not expel or impose out-of-school suspension, disciplinary reassignment or transfer for truant behavior.[29]

Legal References

1. 22 PA Code 11.41
2. 24 P.S. 1326
3. 42 Pa. C.S.A. 6302
4. 24 P.S. 1327
5. 24 P.S. 1329
6. 24 P.S. 1330
7. 22 PA Code 11.23
8. 22 PA Code 11.25
9. 22 PA Code 12.1
10. 22 PA Code 11.22
11. 22 PA Code 11.28
12. Pol. 115 - Career and Technical Education
13. Pol. 116 - Tutoring
14. Pol. 117 - Homebound Instruction
15. Pol. 118 - Independent Study
16. 22 PA Code 11.34
17. 22 PA Code 11.32
18. 22 PA Code 11.5
19. 24 P.S. 1327.1
20. 22 PA Code 11.31
21. 22 PA Code 11.31a
22. Pol. 137 - Home Education Programs
23. 22 PA Code 11.21
24. 22 PA Code 11.26
25. 24 P.S. 1546
26. 24 P.S. 510.2
27. 24 P.S. 1332
28. 24 P.S. 1339
29. 24 P.S. 1333
30. 24 P.S. 1333.1
31. 24 P.S. 1333.2
32. Pol. 103.1 - Nondiscrimination-Qualified Students With Disabilities/Protected Handicapped Students
33. Pol. 113 - Special Education
34. Pol. 113.3 - Screening and Evaluations for Students With Disabilities
35. Pol. 114 - Gifted Education
- 22 PA Code 11.24
- 22 PA Code 11.8