

PENNSYLVANIA COMPULSORY ATTENDANCE LAW

Compulsory school age begins when a parent/legal guardian enrolls a child in school, but no later than the age of six (6). Compulsory school attendance is required until the age of eighteen (18), or unless legitimately excused from attending as outlined by the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) and existing school laws.

Once a student is enrolled in kindergarten, attendance is mandatory, and the school attendance laws apply to that student.

Students who are eighteen (18) years of age or older, and have not graduated, may not be asked to leave school merely because they have reached their eighteenth birthday, provided they are fulfilling their responsibilities as students.

Students who are sixteen (16) years of age or older and are employed full-time (35-40 hours a week) during school hours and hold a lawfully issued employment certificate may be excused from the requirements of attendance.

Pennsylvania Compulsory Attendance Law mandates that school districts are responsible for a student's attendance. Consequently, school administrators will determine the validity of a student's absence.

Not every case can be covered in this policy. Administrators will interpret the policy with common sense and exercise good judgment in unusual cases. With this in mind, the following rules are provided as a guide in dealing with student absenteeism and tardiness:

ABSENCES

Absence from school is defined as the non-attendance by a student on a day when school is scheduled. A student who is absent from school must present a note written and signed by his/her parent/legal guardian explaining why the student was absent. Absences shall be treated as unexcused until the written excuse is submitted to the homeroom teacher upon entering school. If a student fails to produce such a note within three school days, the day(s) missed will remain "illegal/unexcused".

Excused/legal absences:

The following is a list of, but not all inclusive, of excused/legal absences:

1. Illness/Medical
2. Death in the student's immediate family
 - a. Parent/Legal Guardian
 - b. Sibling
 - c. Grandparent
 - d. Aunt/Uncle
3. Legal and exceptionally urgent reasons that may affect the child
 - a. Unsafe and hazardous road conditions
 - b. Quarantine of the home
 - c. Death in the family other than an immediate family member such as a close friend or relative
 - d. Suspension from school
4. Educational trips (see below requirements)

Unexcused/illegal absences:

The following is a list of, but not all inclusive, of unexcused/illegal absences:

1. Failure to wake up for school
2. Missing a scheduled school bus or not having a ride to school
3. Absence without a parent/legal guardian's knowledge
4. Caring for a sibling in a non-emergency situation/babysitting
5. Running errands and/or shopping
6. Pursuing a talent or skill without the administrator's prior approval
7. Temporary employment during school hours
8. Going on a vacation without the administrator's prior approval
9. Failure to provide a medical practitioner's excuse when requested or required
10. Failure to attend school either before or after a scheduled medical appointment.
(For example: a dentist appointment, medicine check, court appearance, etc.)
11. School refusal
12. Failure to remedy head lice within three days

PROCEDURES FOR EXCUSED/LEGAL ABSENCES

Absences shall be treated as unexcused until a written excuse is submitted to the homeroom teacher upon entering school. The excuse must be written and signed by the parent/legal guardian, explain why the student was absent, and submitted within three days of the absence. Failure to comply will result in the absence remaining as an illegal or unexcused absence.

Three or more consecutive days:

If a student is absent **three or more** consecutive days, the absence must be justified by a written excuse from a medical practitioner. The medical practitioner must have seen the student or the parent/legal guardian must have had communication with the medical practitioner in regards of medical advice or medication. If the student does not present a medical note, all consecutive absences will remain illegal/unexcused.

Ten cumulative days:

If a student is absent **ten** cumulative days, a written notification will be issued to the parent/legal guardian stating the amount of total absences and that a medical practitioner's excuse will be required for each subsequent absence. Each absence will remain illegal/unexcused if there is failure to comply.

PENALTIES FOR UNEXCUSED/ILLEGAL ABSENCES**Three unexcused/illegal absences:**

The student is considered truant and a "Notice of Truancy" will be issued to the parent/legal guardian by the Home and School Visitor.

Six unexcused/illegal absences:

The student is considered habitually truant. The parent/legal guardian and the student will be invited to participate in a School Attendance Improvement Plan meeting (SAIP) with Administration, Home and School Visitor, & a representative from the LEA in attendance. Failure to attend this meeting will result in a plan being made without any parental input.

If there is no cooperation and/or the student continues to be absent without an excuse following the SAIP, a Summary Citation will be filed with the local magistrate's office where the proposed SAIP will become court ordered. Failure to comply with this court order may result in a maximum fine, approximately \$300.00 plus court costs, community service, and/or loss of driver's license.

The case will also be sent to Luzerne County Truancy Court.

If it is determined that the student has been absent for ten or more consecutive days without justification which includes, but not limited to: unable to locate family, unoccupied residence, student is beyond compulsory age of attendance, the student will be dropped from school roll.

