

CHARLESTON COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT

# Education Thrives When You Keep it Under Five



## Days of Absences

### Consequences of Missing School

- Drop-out—Students who are chronically absent typically fall behind in grade level and drop out of school.
- Negative Behaviors—Students who are chronically absent are at-risk for other behaviors, such as alcohol and drug abuse, teenage pregnancy, and violence.
- Low Academic Performance—Students who are chronically absent usually receive lower grades and perform poorly on standardized tests.

**Did You Know?** The Department of Alternative Programs and Services (DAP) can help you achieve your educational goals if you choose to remain in school? For more information, contact: DAP @ 843.745.7150 or [dap@charleston.k12.sc.us](mailto:dap@charleston.k12.sc.us)

Links for Additional resources:

<http://www.truancyprevention.org/>

<https://www.education.com/reference/article/truancy-fact-sheet/>

## School Achievement Begins With Regular Attendance

**Parents/guardians** have the responsibility to ensure that all school-age children in their care are in school and on time every day.

**Students** have the responsibility to be on time and attend all classes. Students are expected to attend school 180 days.

**Lawful Absences** (excused) shall include but are not limited to:

- absences caused by a student's own illness and whose attendance in school would endanger his or her health and the health of others
- absences due to an illness or death in the student's immediate family; the principal shall require a physician's certificate from the parent/legal guardian of a student reported continuously absent for illness.
- absences due to a recognized religious holiday of the student's faith
- absences due to activities that are approved in advance by the principal
  - Approved activities include the following:
    - state and national competitions
    - ceremonies honoring outstanding students
- work approved or sponsored by the school, the school district or the state department of education, accepted by the associate superintendent or school principal or designee as reason for excusing the student
  - out of school suspension
  - in school suspension
  - field trips approved by the principal or designee
- absences for students whose parent/legal guardian (a) is an active duty member of the uniformed services, and (b) has been called to duty for, is on leave from, or has immediately returned from deployment to a combat zone or combat support posting, upon presentation of appropriate military orders - student will be granted up to five days of excused absences to visit with his/her parents/legal guardians upon principal approval

### Absences Due to Illness (Fever, Diarrhea, and Vomiting)

- According to the SC Department of Health and Environment Control (DHEC) Exclusion Laws, if a student has a fever, that student must be fever free for 24 hours before returning to school (this means without the use of fever reducing medications). Fever is defined as a temperature of 100.0 or greater.
- If a student has diarrhea, that student must be diarrhea free for 24 hours before returning to school (this means without the use of diarrhea suppressing medication). Diarrhea is defined as 3 or more episodes of loose stools in a 24 hour period.
- A student must not come to school if vomiting 2 or more times in a 24 hour period.
- Therefore, attendance that was excused because the nurse sent a student home with one of the above reasons should be for the day of dismissal and the next day. However, after 24 hours, if symptoms of diarrhea, fever, or vomiting are still occurring, the student should see a physician. Only the day of dismissal and the next day are excused; days after that would require a physician or parent note.

Please refer to the following links from DHEC for additional information:

- <https://www.scdhec.gov/sites/default/files/Library/CR-010752.pdf>
- <https://www.scdhec.gov/sites/default/files/Library/CR-011634.pdf>

**Unlawful Absences** include but are not limited to:

- absences of a student without the knowledge of his or her parents
- absences of a student without acceptable cause with the knowledge of his or her parents
- absences due to out of town trips/vacations

### **Chronic Absenteeism**

As defined by the Office of Civil Rights (OCR), chronically absent students are those absent 10 percent or more school days during the school year. According to the OCR, an absent student is one who misses 50 percent of the instructional day for any reason and regardless of whether the absence is excused or unexcused. In other words, students who are absent for any reason - including suspension, illness, and death in the family - AND miss 10 percent or more of the school year will be considered chronically absent.

### **Documentation of Absences**

All absences require a written explanation from the parent/guardian within three (3) school days of return from the absence. Written explanation of absences must include the student's name, parent/guardian's full name, parent/guardian's signature, date(s) of absence(s), and documentation of the reason for absence(s). **Text messages and emails are not acceptable documentation for student absences.** All documentation required by the school is subject to review and must be approved by the principal. Absences in excess of ten days per year will not be considered excused with a parent/guardian note unless they are accompanied by official medical or legal documentation.

### **Tardiness**

A student who is tardy is defined as one who arrives after the start time of the instructional day or class period as based on the CCSD bell schedule. Schools must follow the school's tardy policy.

Parents of students ages 3-17 must come into the school to sign their children in if they are late to school.

**LAWFUL TARDIES:** In order for a tardy to be excused, written documentation must be provided.

1. Doctor or dentist appointment
2. Late bus arrival
3. Teacher, guidance or administrator conference
4. Observance of a religious holiday
5. Court appearance or court ordered activity

**UNLAWFUL TARDIES:**

1. Illness on part of the student without a written excuse
2. Oversleeping
3. Traffic / Car trouble
4. Personal reasons
5. Missed bus / Carpool trouble

### **Early Sign-Outs**

When students are signed out early on an ongoing basis, their academic performance may be negatively impacted. The school system strongly encourages parents to ensure their student is in school for the full school day every day.

Students shall not be released within the final 30 minutes of the school day unless the principal or designee determines that it is an emergency, or the student has a medical, dental, or court appointment that cannot be reasonably scheduled at another time.

### **Late Pick-Ups**

Students are required to leave campus at dismissal unless they have permission to stay for an official school activity.

Continued late pick ups will result in school-based and district level interventions and/or consequences.

## South Carolina Compulsory Attendance Law

### **South Carolina Code of Laws Section 59-65-10 (as amended) reads:**

All parents or guardians shall cause their children or wards to attend regularly a public or private school – of this State – from the school year in which the child or ward is five years of age before September 1st until the child or ward attains his seventeenth birthday or graduates from high school. All children are required to attend a public or private kindergarten beginning at age five. If parents choose not to send their children to kindergarten, they must sign a waiver, which may be obtained at the local school.

### **South Carolina Code of Laws of Section 59-65-20**

Any parent or guardian who neglects to enroll his child or ward or refuses to make such child or ward attend school shall, upon conviction, be fined not more than fifty dollars or be imprisoned not more than thirty days; each day's absence shall constitute a separate offense; provided, the court may in its discretion suspend the sentence of anyone convicted of the provisions of this article.

### **South Carolina Code of Laws of Section 59-65-70**

If the court determines that the reported absence occurred without the knowledge, consent, or connivance of the responsible parent or guardian or that a bona fide attempt has been made to control and keep the child in school, the court may declare such a child to be delinquent and subject the provisions of the law in such cases.

### **South Carolina Code of Laws of Section 16-17-510**

It is unlawful for a person to encourage, entice, or conspire to encourage or entice a child enrolled in any public or private elementary or secondary school of this State from attendance in the school or school program or transport or provide transportation in aid to encourage or entice a child from attendance in any public or private elementary or secondary school or school program. A person who violates the provisions of this section is guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon conviction, must be fined not more than one thousand dollars or imprisoned not more than two years, or both.

## Truancy: Three Levels

**Truant:** A child, at least 6 but not yet 17 years old, who has accumulated three consecutive unlawful absences or a total of five unlawful absences

**Habitual Truant:** A child, at least 12 but not yet 17 years old, who (1) fails to comply with the intervention plan developed by the school, the child, and the parents or guardians, and (2) accumulates two or more additional unlawful absences

**Chronic Truant:** A child, at least 12 but not yet 17 years old, who (1) has been through the school intervention process; (2) has reached the level of a habitual truant and has been referred to family court and placed under an order to attend school; and (3) continues to accumulate unlawful absences

**Truancy Intervention Procedures**

1. The School Level Truancy Intervention Team must communicate positive attendance challenges to the parent/guardian beginning with the first unlawful absence. The school will notify the parent by telephone or mail.
2. When a student accumulates three (3) consecutive or a total of five (5) unlawful absences the principal or designee will complete a truancy investigation.
3. A conference is required with student and parent or guardian to develop a truancy intervention plan designed to improve student attendance and eliminate unlawful absences.
4. A written truancy intervention and attendance contract should be signed by all participants with a copy provided to the parent and student.
5. When a student accumulates 2 or more additional unlawful absences the school will update the truancy intervention plan, indicate why the plan was unsuccessful, and make amendments as needed.
6. If the student continues to accumulate unlawful absences and after exhaustive interventions, a referral will be made to the Department of Alternative Programs and Services.
7. The referral will be reviewed to determine if further interventions are needed or it will be forwarded to the district's truancy hearing panel. If the referral is forwarded to a truancy hearing, parent and student will be required to attend the hearing to remedy the attendance problem. If the unlawful absences continue following the meeting with the truancy hearing panel, the case may be referred to the Department of Social Services, the Ninth Judicial Circuit Solicitor's Office for participation in Family Court, or other actions.

Note: Suspensions are not counted as unlawful for truancy purposes. A deadline will be imposed for the work to be made-up and the responsibility for getting and completing assignments will be on the student.

## Attendance Requirement for Promotion and/or Credit

All students previously enrolled in the District and those residing in the state who are entering for the first time shall be counted unlawfully absent for each day missed due to late enrollment.

All absences are defined as lawful or unlawful. Students having a lawful absence shall be permitted to make up work missed during the absence. Absences determined as unlawful will not entitle a student to make up work missed during the time of the absence. Principals may use discretion in permitting students to make up work.

High school students will be counted absent for a full period if they miss more than half of the class period. The principal may determine the lawful or unlawful nature of the absences. Students in grades nine through twelve must attend:

- Quarter Course                      42 out of 45 Days
- Semester or 4 x 4 Course        85 out of 90 Days
- Year Long Course                    170 out of 180 Days