

**I. GENERAL REGULATIONS AND DEFINITIONS:**

- A. Allegany County Public Schools recognizes that there are many factors which contribute to student attendance and will make every effort to work with the student and his/her parent/guardian to ensure the student is in compliance with the attendance expectation. When a student accumulates a total of twenty (20) absences, with at least fifteen (15) of those absences being unlawful, or ten (10) consecutive unlawful absences, the student and his/her parent/guardian may face punitive action – up to and including, referral to the State’s Attorney and/or Juvenile Services for violation of compulsory attendance laws.
- B. **Make-up Work:** All students are expected to make up all work missed when a lawful absence occurs. Students tardy or late to class for lawful reasons will be given the same opportunity to make up work. There shall be no requirement to provide make-up work for students who are unlawfully absent (special cases may be evaluated by the principal).
- C. **Tardiness:** Students not in school/classroom when the day/period begins. Tardiness shall be treated in a similar manner as lawful or unlawful absences.
- D. **School-sponsored activities:** Any student who participates during the school day in a school-sponsored activity which is approved by the local superintendent of schools or the school principal, or any persons duly authorized by the superintendent or principal, shall be considered in attendance at school. This means that when a student is involved in an approved school-sponsored activity during the day, he or she is to be counted “present” and not coded as lawfully absent.
- E. **Monitoring Period:** The duration of the monitoring period is concurrent with the school year.
- F. **Lawful Absence:** Students presently enrolled in public schools are considered lawfully absent from school, including absence for any portion of the day, under the following conditions. (COMAR 13A.08.01.03)
  - 1. **Death in the immediate family.** The local school system shall determine what relationships constitute the immediate family. (01)
  - 2. **Illness of the student.** The parent/guardian shall submit a personal note to document the lawful absence of a child for up to twelve (12) days per current school year. If the student accumulates more than twelve (12) absences during the current school year, the principal shall require further documentation such as a certificate from a physician or other qualified health professional. (02)
  - 3. **Illness of the student documented by a physician’s certificate.** (03)
  - 4. **Court summons.** (04)
  - 5. **College Visit.** (05)
  - 6. **Vacation approved by school administration.** (06)
  - 7. **Hazardous Weather Conditions.** Hazardous weather conditions shall be interpreted To mean weather conditions that would endanger the health or safety of the student when in transit to and from school. (07)

8. 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. (08)
  9. Observance of a religious holiday. (09)
  10. State emergency. (10)
  11. Pregnancy/Parenting. (11)
  12. Other emergency or set of circumstances which, in the judgment of the superintendent or designee constitutes a good and sufficient cause for absence from school. (13)
  13. Health Exclusion. (17)
  14. Suspension. (18)
  15. Lack of authorized transportation. This shall not include students denied authorized transportation for disciplinary reasons. (19)
  16. Behavioral health needs of the student. The parent/guardian shall submit a personal note to document the lawful absence of the child for up to twelve (12) days per current school years. If the student accumulates more than twelve (12) absences during the current school year, the principal shall require further documentation such as a certificate from a physician or other qualified behavioral health professional. (17)
  17. Behavioral health needs of the student documented by a physician's or other qualified behavioral health professional's certificate. (17)
- G. Unlawful Absence: An absence, including absence for any portion of the day, for any reason other than those cited as lawful are presumed as unlawful and may constitute truancy. (COMAR 13.08.01.04)
1. Truancy - A student is truant who is absent without lawful cause as defined in COMAR 13A.08.01.03 from such attendance for a school day or portion thereof. (20)
  2. Habitual Truancy - A student is a habitual truant if the student has been in membership in a school for 91 or more days in a school year and is unlawfully absent from school for a number of days or portion of days in excess of 20% of the school days within any marking period, semester, or year.
  3. Other unlawful absence (No note from parent or physician). (21)

## **II. ATTENDANCE PROCEDURES**

### **A. School Procedures**

Recognizing administrators' and teachers' responsibility for developing and maintaining a system to record and report pupil absences (lawful and unlawful), the following procedures are minimal for all schools:

1. Teachers will maintain daily attendance records for all students and report tardiness and absence information as well as suspected trancies.

2. All students' report cards will report numbers of days absent from school.
3. School personnel should contact the parent/guardian/caretaker when a student is absent or when an instance of truancy from school or class is suspected.
4. A note from the parent/guardian, or physician, or a qualified behavioral health professional explaining the absence/tardiness of a student should be received by the school within two school days following the student's return or the absence/tardiness will be coded as unlawful. When a doctor's certificate for chronic illness is required and not provided within two school days following the student's return, the absence/tardiness will be coded as unlawful until the note is submitted.
5. When school personnel receives notification of an absence for a student's behavioral health needs, school personnel shall provide the student or the student's parent/guardian information about school or community behavioral health resources that are available to the student.

#### B. Students Leaving Early From School

##### 1. Regular Procedures

All students leaving prior to the regular dismissal time may only do so with prior written permission from the parent/guardian. All early dismissal students must be dismissed from the building via the school office. The parent/guardian who is seeking the early dismissal will receive the child in the main office following procedures which will include the signature of the parent/guardian or a preauthorization letter from the parent/guardian. The parent/guardian must also provide the time and reason for early dismissal, which shall be entered on the school early dismissal log. Dismissals will be considered excused or unexcused in accordance with section I.F. or I.G. of this regulation.

Students driving to school also require written permission from a parent/guardian for early dismissal. A school official will contact the parent/guardian to confirm the early dismissal, prior to releasing the student.

##### 2. Emergencies

The school administrator may make exceptions to the early dismissal procedures in emergency situations. In emergency situations in which the parent/guardian has not submitted prior permission and/or the parent/guardian is unable to be the one who picks the student up from school, the following rules will apply:

- a. The school official will verify the identity and authority of the person making the request.
- b. If the identity and authority of the person making the request does not match the parental information from the student data base, the school official will make attempts to contact the parent/guardian or another individual listed on the student's emergency contact list.
- c. If verification of the dismissal cannot be achieved through this process, the student may not leave as requested and is required to stay until verification is obtained.

##### 3. Miscellaneous

- a. The school reserves the right to request picture ID from anyone not known to office personnel who are picking up a student for dismissal.

- b. Students leaving school prior to the half-day mark will be eligible for extra-curricular activities at the discretion of the school administration.
  - c. If a parent/guardian wishes for a student to be transported off of school property by a driver under the age of 18 and/or another student driver, the written permission must indicate that the parent/guardian has provided this permission, by indicating the name of the individual transporting the student from school.
4. Monitoring Problems/Consequences of Absenteeism
- a. The school system will be responsible for notifying parents/students of accumulated absences and possible actions as specified below. However, when the principal or his/her designee has knowledge of the student's illness, principals are advised to forward the communication to the parent with an appropriate addendum referencing the principal's knowledge of the circumstances. No part of this section shall be applicable to students who are participating in Home and Hospital Instruction.
    - i. When a student accumulates five (5) days of unlawful absences, parents/students will be notified by written communication from the school system. The case will be referred to the school attendance/discipline committee which shall be composed of the principal or his/her designee, the school's pupil personnel worker and other staff members assigned by the principal. The committee may invite the student's parents to come to the school for a conference and to determine available courses of action to improve attendance.
    - ii. Should unlawful absences continue, the parent will be notified by written communication from the school system, no later than the ninth (9) day of unlawful absence. Within this written communication, the parent will be asked to schedule a conference with the school administration and or the school pupil services team.
    - iii. Should unlawful absences continue, the parent will be notified again by the school system in writing, no later than immediately after the twelfth (12th) day of unlawful absence. The school system will send written communication, by mail. A conference with the parent and/or the student will be held.

At the conference, the principal or designee may indicate one or more of the following outcomes as a result of the conference:

1. Establishing a probationary period with verbal agreement
2. Developing a written contract (to be signed by the parent)
3. Removing school privileges
4. Restricting extracurricular activities
5. Explanation given to the parent of the criteria for, and the services provided to a student who may qualify for Home and Hospital Services, if appropriate, given the situation surrounding the student's absences.
6. Written notification to the parent will be immediately mailed to the parent, confirming the above action(s) taken

- iv. When a student accumulates a total of twenty (20) absences, with at least fifteen (15) of those absences being unlawful, or ten (10) consecutive unlawful absences, the school's PPW may file charges with the State's Attorney's Office against the parent/guardian and/or the student for non-attendance. This action will be confirmed in a letter written by the PPW to the parent/guardian. The letter will also indicate additional consequences issued by the school which may include:
  1. Retention in the grade (grades K through 8).
  2. Referral to an appropriate agency for assistance.
  3. Assignment to additional days of attendance (not included in regular school year).
  4. Referral to GED services for those students beyond the compulsory attendance age.
  5. Withdrawal as a student not accessing educational services (**Only to be used for a student who has been absent for ten (10) consecutive days, as per the 2020 Maryland Student Records Manual**).
- v. The student's rights to be due process will not be abridge in administering these regulations (refer to III. APPEALS PROCESS).

### III. APPEALS PROCESS

Parents and/or students who wish to appeal attendance violation decisions may:

- A. Contact the Supervisor of Student Services if the problem is not resolved to the parent's satisfaction at the school level. The request for a hearing must be in writing and forwarded to the Student Services Office within ten (10) days of the parent receiving written notification from the school administration, regarding the action taken at the school level. In cases of attendance violations, the Superintendent designee is the Supervisor of Student Services. Decisions of the Supervisor of Student Services may be reviewed by the Superintendent pursuant to the provisions of policy BEE before being released to the parents/guardians.
- B. Appeal the decision in Step A (above) to the Elected Board of Education if the problem is not resolved to the parent's satisfaction by the Supervisor of Student Services. The request must be in writing and forwarded to the Superintendent's Office within ten (10) days of receiving written notification of the action taken by the Supervisor of Student Services.

The decision of the Elected Board of Education will be final.

### IV. ATTENDANCE MOTIVATION SUGGESTIONS

Schools may:

- A. Develop and utilize positive rewards for pupils with exceptional attendance records during any one grading period and/or for the school year.
- B. Send quarterly commendation letters to students and parents for perfect attendance and improved attendance.
- C. Conduct school-wide orientation assemblies at the beginning of the school year to review the attendance policy and promote the idea that good attendance is a student responsibility and a life-skill worth cultivating.
- D. Develop school-wide incentive programs and individualize student contracts to improve attendance.

**V. IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

An effective student attendance policy must be understood by the people who are affected by the application or the utilization of the policy, including school staff, students, parents, and school community and business community members.

Procedures may include:

- A. Policy and procedures distribution to the students with adequate explanation of recent changes.
- B. Inclusion in the schools’ handbook, newsletters, announcements, bulletin boards, web page, etc.
- C. Articles and news releases in local newspapers, radio, and television.

Students and parents will be provided information concerning the Student Attendance Policy/Procedures on or before the opening week of each school year.

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| <b>Board Reviewed</b><br>06/11/2024 | <b>Superintendent Approved</b><br>06/11/2024 |
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