



PARENT'S GUIDE TO UNDERSTANDING STATE ATTENDANCE LAWS Chapter 28A.225 RCW- COMPULSORY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AND ADMISSION

The law requires that parents of children eight years of age (ages six and seven, if enrolled in school) and under eighteen years of age have their children in school every day. When a child is ill, or must be out of school, the absence needs to be excused by a parent or guardian in accordance with the district policy. When a child has unexcused absences, or excessive excused absences, the school must take steps to work with the child and parent/guardian in an attempt to improve the child's attendance. Whether excused or unexcused, absences from school can have long term effects on a child's ability to be successful in school and ultimately their chances of graduating.

DISTRICT POLICY

Absences

- At the elementary level an absence is defined as missing more than 75 minutes of either an a.m. or p.m. session. Any secondary student who misses ten (10) minutes or more of a class period is considered absent for that period.
- Upon returning to school following an absence, students must clear their absence with either a note or phone call by a parent/guardian stating the time and reason for the absence. Failure to clear this absence may result in the appropriate level of discipline and the filing of a BECCA petition.
- A student must arrange for all make-up work following an absence. After a student has been absent for three (3) days, the school office will assist in obtaining assignments. If this service is necessary, a request should be made to the office. Please allow at least 24 hours for teachers to prepare materials.

Excused absences

- Absences may not be excused when they meet the definition of unexcused. Permission to be absent from school for reason(s) other than illness may be granted when requested by the parent/guardian and agreed upon by the school authorities. Absences will be excused if they are for illness, medical/dental appointments, bereavement, religious observance, family emergency, related to student's pregnancy or parenting needs, court appearances, or if the student has received an approval by the school for a personal planned absence. School related activities, which require a student to miss class, count as excused absences. Students who leave during the school day for medical/dental appointments are expected to return to school when finished.
- These excuses become a part of the student's attendance record. School officials may request additional verification for an absence whenever they have reasonable grounds to believe the reasons stated in an excuse are not legitimate or a pattern of absenteeism exists. A doctor's note may be required. Failure to provide the required doctor note would result in unexcused absences.

Unexcused absences

- An absence will be considered unexcused if (a) no parent/guardian or caregiver phone call or written note is received by the office within a reasonable time, (b) the reason given does not meet the condition of an excused absence, or (c) in secondary, when a student misses ten minutes or more of a class period without teacher or office permission or fails to report to where he/she is directed. Unexcused absences will result in progressive disciplinary action. Every effort must be made to get students to school who missed their transportation. Arriving to school on time is a student/parent responsibility. Missed transportation, missed ride, traffic conditions, weather conditions or car problems may not always be a valid excuse for an absence or tardy.

WHAT CAN PARENTS DO?

If you are looking for strategies to support your child's improved attendance here are several things you can do:

- Partner with your child's school and work together to create an intervention plan
- Contact your child's school or district for community resources
- At home, be consistent with rules and set boundaries
- If you feel that your child's behavior is beyond your control and you feel you need court intervention, feel free to contact Pierce County Juvenile Court to inquire about an At Risk Youth petition. 253-798-7900

CONTACTS

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LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

EXCUSED ABSENCES- ELEMENTARY SCHOOL ONLY

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| <p>*ELEMENTARY ONLY* After the 5th EXCUSED absence in a month or 10th EXCUSED absence in a school year (unless prior notice approved by the school or doctor note and an academic plan is in place to ensure the child does not fall behind)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The parent is invited to an Attendance Conference to identify the barriers to attendance and create an intervention plan. The conference must include at least one school 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 IEP or Section 504 plan, in which case the reconvening of the team that created the program or plan is required. <p><i>*Note-If a regularly scheduled parent-teacher conference day is to take place within thirty days of the absences, the school district may schedule this conference on that day.</i></p> |
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UNEXCUSED ABSENCES

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| <p>Each Unexcused Absence</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The parent/guardian will receive notification of their child's absence via the district auto dialer |
| <p>After the 2nd Unexcused absence in a month</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The school will make an attempt to contact the parent/guardian to find out why the student has been absent. If the parent has reason, per the district and school policy to excuse the absence, it will be excused. ➤ If the absences are not able to be excused, the school will send a letter to the parent/guardian scheduling an attendance conference. The attendance conference is scheduled with the parent, student, and school administrator to discuss the barriers to school attendance and create an intervention plan. |
| <p>Attendance Conference</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ An administrator meets with the parent and student to discuss the barriers to school attendance and create an intervention plan. <p><i>*Note- If the parent is not present for the conference, the school may meet with the student for the conference if the child is 12 years of age or older. The signed "Attendance Intervention Plan and Agreement" will be sent home to the parent.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The school provides support to the student and parent/guardian based on the Intervention Plan created at the conference and continues to monitor attendance. |
| <p>After 5th Unexcused absence in a month</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ If attempts to substantially reduce a student's absences have not been successful, there is a signed Attendance Agreement in place, and the child is over the age of 5 and under the age of eighteen; a Stay petition will be filed with juvenile court. ➤ The school continues to provide intervention and support to the student and monitor attendance. |
| <p>No later than the 7th unexcused absence in a month or 10th unexcused absence in a school year</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ If attempts to substantially reduce a student's absences have not been successful and if the student is over the age of 5 and under the age of eighteen, a Stay petition must be filed with juvenile court, regardless of whether an "Attendance Intervention Plan and Agreement" is in place. ➤ The school continues to provide intervention and support to the student and monitor attendance. |
| <p>Stay Petition</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ A Stay petition is active for ninety days. During the ninety days, the school continues to work with the student and parent/guardian to improve school attendance and reports progress to juvenile court. The school continues to provide interventions to improve attendance and may include the scheduling of a Community Truancy Board. |
| <p>Community Truancy Board (CTB)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ A CTB is a board composed of local community members, school district employees and the juvenile court. CTBs are designed to support students and families by creating a plan to help eliminate or reduce unexcused absences in hopes of avoiding further involvement by Pierce County Juvenile Court. |
| <p>Full petition</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ When all attempts to substantially reduce a student's absences have not been successful, the school will file a Full petition with juvenile court. ➤ The court will notify parent and child of a court Truancy Workshop date. The parent and child will attend the Truancy Workshop and be given an opportunity to sign an order agreeing that the child will attend school without any additional unexcused absences. If the parent and child do not agree to sign the order, the court will move forward with a trial date. ➤ A child or parent/guardian who fails to comply with a court order to attend school may be found in contempt. The court can issue sanctions which may include fines of up to \$25 a day, community service hours, classes, and ultimately up to seven days in juvenile detention. |