

DODGELAND SCHOOL DISTRICT
Board Policy Manual

431 - Rule

STUDENT ATTENDANCE/TRUANCY PROCEDURES

A. School Attendance Officer

1. The principal or designee will serve as the school attendance officer for each school in the District and deal with all matters relating to school attendance and truancy.
2. Each school shall determine daily which students are absent from school and whether that absence is excused in accordance with state laws, Board policy and established procedures.
3. Annually, on or before June 15, each principal shall determine how many students were absent in the previous year and whether the absences were excused. This information will be submitted to the District Administrator.
4. The principal shall furnish student attendance information to appropriate agencies for purposes authorized by state law and the District's student records policy and procedures.

B. General Attendance Accounting Procedures

1. Attendance will be taken by the classroom teacher each period for all secondary grade levels. Absences will be recorded in the school office for each period. At the elementary level, attendance will be taken daily, in the morning and afternoon, with absences recorded in the school office. All attendance information will be maintained on the District's student data system and recorded as individual student progress records.
2. Parents/guardians are expected to notify the school office each time a child is absent as soon as practical. Failure to contact the school may result in the school office contacting the parent/guardian at home or at work. Upon return to school, students are required to present a written explanation of their absence from their parent/guardian if no prior written contact has been made. Without such verification, the student will have five school days to provide written verification from the parent/guardian, or the absence will be recorded as unexcused.

C. Excused Absences

1. Prior Parent-Excused Absences - A student who is excused in writing by his/her parent/guardian in advance of an absence will be excused from attendance at school. Parents/guardians are requested to submit such written verification to the office at least 2 days prior to the scheduled absence. A student may be excused by the parent/guardian under this provision for not more than 10 days during a school year. An excused student must complete the course work missed during the absence.
 - Medical appointments or other professional appointments that cannot be scheduled outside of school hours. Except for emergencies, parents/guardians are expected to make every effort to schedule such appointments when school is not in session. Students are expected to attend school before and/or after such appointments.
 - Family vacations. The parent/guardian must notify the school prior to the absence and arrange for appropriate make-up work. Since such absences may affect the student's academic progress, parents/guardians are expected to make every effort to schedule vacations when school is not in session.
2. District Excused Absences:

For any absence to be excused, the student's parent/guardian must contact the school office in writing indicating the reason for the absence in advance, on the day of the absence, or within five days following the absence. Absences shall qualify as excused for the following reasons:

 - a. Illness of the student. The District may request the parent/guardian to obtain a written statement from a physician or licensed practitioner as proof of the illness.

- b. Illness in the immediate family which requires the absence of the student because of family responsibilities. The District may require the parent/guardian to obtain a written statement from a physician or licensed practitioner as proof of need.
- c. Quarantine as imposed by a public health officer.
- d. Death in the immediate family, other family crisis, or funerals for close relatives or close friends.
- e. Religious observances and holidays.
- f. Court appearances or other legal appointments that require the attendance of a student.
- g. Participation in school-authorized activities or attendance at special events approved by the principal or designee.
- h. Serving as an election official. Students may be excused to serve as an election official provided they have at least a 3.0 grade point average or the equivalent and have the permission of their parents/guardians and the building principal.
- i. Sounding Taps. A student in grades 6 to 12 may be excused for the purpose of sounding "Taps" during a military honors funeral for a deceased veteran.
- j. Emergencies and other extenuating circumstances that show good cause with approval by the principal or designee.

Absence from school during a period of suspension or expulsion will also be treated as an excused absence for purposes of these procedures.

- 3. Eighteen year old students may provide their own excuses. However, if the school attendance officer finds that there is a pattern of excessive absences, the student may be asked to provide other supporting evidence on the reasons for the absences.

D. Unexcused Absences

Students who are absent from school for reason not listed above shall be considered unexcused. Examples of unexcused absences may include oversleeping and cutting/leaving school grounds without office approval.

E. Course Make-up Work

All students with absences, including suspensions, will be permitted to make-up examinations and other course work missed during the period of absence or suspension in accordance with the following guidelines:

- The student is responsible to make arrangements with the teacher(s) to make-up work in secondary grade levels. Parents/guardians are responsible to make arrangements with the teacher(s) to make up missed work in elementary grades.
- Students are allowed time for make-up work equal to the time of the absence.
- When an absence of four or more days is anticipated in advance, there must be a written parent/guardian verification of the absence in the school office in order for the student to make up work in advance of the absence.
- The District shall not deny a student credit in a course or subject solely because of absences. The student may be failed if he/she does not satisfactorily complete the make-up work missed due to the absence.

F. Tardiness

A pattern of tardiness on the part of any student will be brought to the attention of the student's parent/guardian. Excessive tardiness may be subject to disciplinary action and behavioral interventions in accordance with procedures outlined in the student handbook.

G. Excessive Absences

For the first five (5) unexcused full or partial absences and/or ten (10) accumulated excused absences of a questionable nature, the following actions will be taken:

1. An administrative review shall look for patterns of absence.
2. If the parent/guardian cannot be reached and no excuse is received, or excused absences are in question, a Truancy Letter will be sent to the parent/guardian.
3. A decision will be made to consider appropriate legal action as outlined in state statutes.
4. Contact will be attempted with the student and/or parent/guardian by the building principal or designee. The student may be discussed by a staff committee for early intervention options.
5. The attendance/school secretary will complete discipline forms and send copies to the principal and guidance counselor.
6. For unexcused absences additional actions include the following:
 - a. After-school detention or an in-school suspension will be assigned.
 - b. A student/parent/guardian conference will be scheduled.

H. Student Truancy and Habitual Truancy

1. Definitions

- a. "Truancy" means any absence of part or all of one or more school days during which the school has not been notified of the legal cause of such absence by the parent/guardian of the absent student, and also means intermittent attendance carried on for the purpose of defeating the intent of compulsory attendance law.
- b. "Habitual Truant" means a student who is absent from school without an acceptable excuse for part or all of five or more days on which school is held during a semester.

2. Truancy Procedure

- a. The principal or designee will notify the parent/guardian by telephone, mail, or personal contact, of which a written record is kept, as soon as a student's truancy is determined. This notice must be given to the parent/guardian before the end of the second school day after receiving a report of the unexcused absence. The parent/guardian will be directed to return the student to school no later than the next school day or to provide an excuse for the absence.
- b. Appropriate District staff may be requested to work with the student to identify causes for the truancy and develop solutions to the concerns.
- c. Detentions or an assignment to a supervised study area may occur as a consequence of a student's truancy. Students assigned these consequences will be given credit for the work completed during this time.

3. Habitual Truancy Procedure

The parent/guardian of a student who is a habitual truant shall be notified by certified or registered mail when the student initially becomes a habitual truant. The notice shall include the following:

- a. A statement of a parent's/guardian's responsibility to cause the student to attend school regularly.
- b. A statement that the parent/guardian or the student may request academic program or curriculum modifications for the student and that the student may be eligible for enrollment in a children at-risk program.
- c. A request that the parent/guardian meet with appropriate personnel to discuss the student's truancy. The notice shall include the name of the school personnel with whom the parent/guardian should meet, a date, time and place for the meeting, and the name, address and telephone number of a person to contact to arrange a different date, time or place. The date for the meeting must be within five school days after the date that the habitual truancy notice has been sent to the student/parent/guardian, however, the date for the meeting may be extended for an additional five school days. If a meeting between the school personnel and the parent/guardian is not held within 10 school days after the date the notice is sent, the

- parent/guardian may be prosecuted for failing to cause a student to attend school regularly, and municipal or juvenile court proceedings relating to the student may be initiated without the meeting between the parent/guardian and school personnel.
- d. A statement of the penalties which can be imposed on parents/guardians if they fail to cause a student to attend school regularly as required by state law.

4. Truancy Interventions

Interventions to correct a truancy problem may include one or more of the following:

- Meeting with parents/guardians.
- Referral to the building consultation team for consideration of alternatives for the student.
- Modification of the student's current academic program.
- Referral to appropriate school or community resources.
- Referral to Dodge County Human Services. This referral would occur after other in-district interventions have been unsuccessful.
- A high school student may be assigned to a period of assessment as a consequence of the truancy or upon the student's return to school from placement in a correctional facility, mental health treatment facility, alcohol and other drug treatment facility or other out-of-school placement. Written approval of the student's parent/guardian is required for the assessment. A student may not be assigned to an assessment if the District has an alternative education program available for the student appropriate to his/her needs.

During the period that the student participates in the assessment, the student will be considered to be in compliance with state attendance laws. The student may not be assigned to an assessment period for longer than the time necessary to complete the assessment and make the placement in an appropriate educational program or for eight weeks, whichever is less.

5. Procedure Toward Legal Referral

Prior to any proceedings being brought against a student for habitual truancy or against the student's parent/guardian for failing to cause the student to attend school regularly, the school administration must provide evidence that appropriate school personnel have, within the school year during which the truancy occurred, done all of the following:

- a. Met with the student's parent/guardian to discuss the student truancy or attempted to meet with the parent/guardian and received no response or been refused. This meeting is not required if it is not held within 10 days of the District's initial notice to the parent/guardian that the student is a habitual truant.
- b. Provided an opportunity for educational counseling to the student to determine whether a change in the student's curriculum would resolve the truancy and has considered curriculum modifications.
- c. Evaluated the student to determine whether learning problems may be the cause of the student's truancy and, if so, taken steps to overcome the learning problems, except that the student need not be evaluated if tests administered within the previous year indicate that the student is performing at his/her grade level.
- d. Conducted an evaluation to determine whether social problems may be the cause of the student's truancy, and, if so, taken appropriate action or made appropriate referrals.

The activities in items (b), (c) and (d) above need not be carried out if the principal provides evidence that appropriate school personnel were unable to carry out the activity due to the student's absences from school.

6. Legal Referral

If the above interventions have been unsuccessful and the procedures toward a legal referral have been completed, the following course of action may be taken:

- a. The principal will complete the required referral form and submit it to the juvenile intake officer of Dodge County. Special attention should be given to the reasons for referral under state law or county truancy ordinances.
- b. The juvenile intake officer will have 10 working days to review a truancy case. The juvenile intake officer acknowledges that expedience shall be of primary interest and will limit his/her time deadlines to five working days from the time the referral is made, provided proper documentation accompanies the referral.
- c. The case will be submitted to the Dodge County District Attorney who will have 10 working days to act. The District Attorney acknowledges that expedience shall be of primary interest and will limit his/her deadlines to five working days from the time the action is filed (or determination of non-filed) and services rendered. It shall not take more than two weeks for the student to appear in court, if appropriate.

7. Dodge County Juvenile Intake Officer Referrals Under County Ordinances

Habitual truancy referrals under Dodge County truancy ordinances shall be handled in accordance with the county plan and all applicable legal requirements.

- a. All habitual truancy referrals under Dodge County ordinances will be sent to the Dodge County juvenile intake officer on the required referral forms before any legal action can be taken. Documentation should accompany the referrals which clearly establishes that the student in question is "habitually truant" and that the school system has fully complied with requirements in the compulsory attendance law.
- b. The Dodge County juvenile intake officer will log-in and acknowledge receipt of all habitual truancy referrals. The juvenile intake officer will conduct an immediate desk review or screening of the referral for appropriateness and compliance. He/she will request additional information from school officials if necessary or return the referral to the District with an explanation as to why no legal action was initiated. If the referral is appropriate with full student attendance law compliance, the intake officer will refer the information immediately to the Dodge County District Attorney's Office for review, approval and issuance of a citation to appear before County Juvenile Court Commissioner for disposition of the habitual truancy ordinance citation. A law enforcement officer will personally serve notice to appear on appropriate persons in the matter. The Juvenile Court Commissioner may when appropriate, refer the matter back to the juvenile intake officer for C.H.I.P.S. (Children in Need of Protective Services) action.
- c. The Dodge County juvenile intake officer will notify school officials in writing regarding the results of the court disposition on each habitual truant referral. The Family Services Department will carry out the conditions of the dispositional order, such as participation in counseling, community services and supervised work programs.

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