

Overview

Attendance and Truancy

In this section of the Education Toolkit, you will find information and resources regarding the current regulations, policies, and guidance in the District of Columbia and Maryland as they pertain to school attendance, as well as interventions and consequences for students and their parents for truancy.

Children in DC and Maryland are required to attend school every day unless they have a valid excuse for being absent, such as a medical illness. In DC, children are required to attend school daily from ages five (as of September 30th of the current school year) to eighteen. In Maryland, the mandatory age of school attendance was recently raised to age seventeen (and will become eighteen on July 1, 2016). Schools are required to provide a range of interventions to children who fail to attend school regularly and their parents in an attempt to curtail truant behavior. Such interventions may include school meetings and conferences, attendance intervention plans, and referrals for various services. If such interventions do not lead to the student's improved attendance, however, schools must refer the student's parent to the court for educational neglect or the student to the Juvenile Justice system as a Person in Need of Supervision ("PINS"), depending on the student's age.

Attorneys and advocates should be aware of recent revisions to the DC Truancy Regulations made in September 2013 pursuant to the "Attendance Accountability Amendment Act of 2013." The Act mandates that schools (1) refer any student ages 5-13 to the Child and Family Services Administration (CFSA) when that student accumulates ten unexcused absences and (2) refer any student ages 14-17 to Court Social Services and to the Office of the Attorney General within a few days of the student's accumulation of his 10th-15th absences. See D.C. Code § 38-201 *et seq.*

This section provides information and resources regarding how attendance and truancy are defined in DC and Maryland, including the Prince George's County policies on attendance, and a truancy guide developed by the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) for DC students (DCPS and charter school students). This section also provides a tip sheet on how to address truancy and advocate for students who may be struggling to attend school regularly.

Legal Resources & Policies

- DC
 - D.C. Code §-38-2013 *et seq.* (compulsory school attendance regulations)
 - 5 D.C.M.R. § A-2100 *et seq.* (compulsory school attendance regulations)
- MD
 - PGCPs Administrative Procedure on Student Attendance, Absence and Truancy

CLC Tip Sheet

Attendance and Truancy in the District of Columbia

Who is Responsible for Making Sure Children Attend School?

- ◆ The parent, guardian or legal custodian
- ◆ Under the Attendance Accountability Amendment Act of 2013, consequences for failure to attend school are applied as follows:
 - Children aged 5-13 – school refers a student to the Child and Family Services Administration (CFSA) after he has accumulated ten unexcused absences.
 - Children aged 14-17 – school refers a student to Court Social Services and Office of the Attorney General after he has accumulated fifteen unexcused absences.

What is an Absence?

- ◆ Missing any part of a school day without a valid excuse is presumed to be an unexcused absence. 5 DCMR §A2102.1.

How Can I Get an Absence Excused for My Child?

- ◆ Under DC regulations (see 5 DCMR §§ A2102.2 and A2102.3), each educational institution should have its own list of what constitutes an excused absence, which should be published and made available to parents and students.
 - Ex: For DC Public School students, a valid excuse is an illness or medical appointment, and an invalid excuse is oversleeping.
See <http://dcps.dc.gov/DCPS/Files/downloads/Learn-About-Schools/First%20Day%20of%20School/Attendance%20Brochure%20English.pdf>
- ◆ Parents/guardians are required to indicate in writing the reason(s) for a student's excused absence, in advance if possible. 5 DCMR § A2102.4,
 - But even if the parent/guardian has not already provided written reasons for a student's absence they can still provide the reason(s) after the absence and request that the school change the absence from unexcused to excused.

Attendance Record

- ◆ All teachers are required to keep an accurate daily attendance record for students. DC Code § 38-203(a). Schools/private instructors are required to report to the Board of Education any absences exceeding 2 full days or 4 half days "in any school month," along with reasons for the absences. DC Code § 38-203(b).

Legally Permissible Consequences for Students with Multiple Unexcused Absences

- ◆ Students may be referred to CFSA for educational neglect or the Juvenile Justice System for 10-15 unexcused absences (see above).
- ◆ Students may be required to participate in the creation of an Attendance Intervention Plan or regular meetings with the school to discuss their attendance issues.
- ◆ Students may permissibly receive certain disciplinary sanctions for attendance issues. For instance, “unexcused lateness for school or class” is listed as a “Tier 1” behavior in DCPS’s disciplinary scheme, which includes behaviors that are “insubordinate or cause minor disruptions to the academic environment but do not involve damage to property, self, or others.” 5 DCMR § B2502.1(a).
- ◆ Students in non-public placements may lose their funding and placement if they miss ten days or more of school and do not follow through with appropriate attendance interventions.

Unlawful Consequences for Students with Multiple Unexcused Absences

- ◆ Out of school suspensions for unexcused absences; and/or
- ◆ Automatic removal from a school program or placement without notice and before any interventions have been attempted.

Is a PINS Case Such a Big Deal? What is the Worst that Can Happen?

While the services available to PINS youth and the charges in a PINS case may be different, the Court has very similar authority to the powers it holds in any other juvenile case. Students charged with PINS cases can be removed from their home and detained at the Youth Services Center (a juvenile detention facility) or placed in group homes if they do not comply with probation conditions – in fact, youth can even be committed to the care and custody of the Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services (“DYRS”) if a youth is not compliant with probation conditions (which almost always include regular school attendance).

Do’s and Don’ts for Working with Students with Attendance Issues

- **DO** make sure the student and parent are aware of the consequences for unexcused absences and remind them regularly!
- **DON’T** let a student sign an Attendance Contract without reviewing it. **DO** (where you have been given the opportunity to review the contract) include provisions regarding interventions the school should provide.
- **DO** make sure students returning from or being placed in out-of-state placements are aware that the compulsory age for attendance in DC still applies to them.
- **DON’T** assume, however, that out-of-state facilities are aware of how the compulsory school age in DC may vary from their own jurisdiction. How does this relate to truancy? For instance, if the compulsory age of school attendance in State X is 16 (and students can take the GED at 16), a 16 year old DC student may return to the District having passed the GED but still be subject to DC’s mandatory attendance law.
- **DON’T** be shy about asking to see documentation of a school’s efforts to provide truancy intervention, especially where a court referral is being contemplated.



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DESKTOP REFERENCE

Student Attendance and Reporting Requirements

Including Requirements of the 2012 South Capitol Memorial Amendments Act

Introduction

Chronic absenteeism and truancy adversely impact student achievement beginning as early as kindergarten. This document summarizes the District's attendance, reporting and intervention requirements, including requirements of the 2012 South Capitol Memorial Amendment Act, on the following subjects:

1. **Compulsory Attendance Requirements**
2. **Absences [revised per South Capitol Act]**
3. **Absenteeism Protocol [revised per South Capitol Act]**
4. **Attendance Monitor [new with South Capitol Act]**
5. **School Based Student Support Teams [new with South Capitol Act]**
6. **Record and Reporting Requirements [revised per South Capitol Act]**
7. **Definitions [revised per South Capitol Act]**
8. **OSSE Technical Assistance and Additional Information**

1. **Compulsory Attendance Requirements**

Student Age. Each school-age child who is a resident of the District of Columbia must attend a public, independent, private, or parochial school or shall receive private instruction from five (5) years of age (by September 30 of the current school year) through seventeen (17) years of age.¹ A school-age child and his or her parents or guardians shall be deemed to have met the District of Columbia's compulsory education requirements when the child is enrolled in a nonpublic school whose elementary and secondary program has been approved by OSSE.

Exemption. A school-age child and his or her parents or guardians shall be exempt from compulsory school attendance requirements if the child:

- Has earned a high school diploma or its equivalent; or
- Participates in a home schooling program that complies with all District of Columbia laws and regulations.

School Year and Instruction Time. A school year includes a minimum of one hundred eighty (180) regular instructional days; including an instructional day of six (6) hours, unless otherwise approved by OSSE pursuant to its approval of nonpublic educational institutions. An instructional day shall be at least six (6) hours in length for students, including time allotted for lunch periods, recess, and class breaks.

¹ District of Columbia Official Code, Title 38; and District of Columbia Municipal Regulations (DCMR) Title 5, subchapter A, chapter 21. Homeschooling is addressed in DCMR Title 5, subtitle E, chapter 52.



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However, the six (6) hour instructional day is not applicable to evening school, prekindergarten, or kindergarten programs.

2. Absences [revised per South Capitol Act Requirements]

An educational institution must publish and make available to parents and students the list of valid excused absences.

Excused Absences include the following occurrences:

- Illness or other bona fide medical cause experienced by the student;
- Exclusion, by direction of the authorities of the District of Columbia, due to quarantine, contagious disease, infection, infestation, or other condition requiring separation from other students for medical or health reasons;
- Death in the student's family;
- Necessity for a student to attend judiciary or administrative proceedings as a party to the action or under subpoena;
- Observance of a religious holiday;
- Lawful suspension or exclusion from school by school authorities;
- Temporary closing of facilities or suspension of classes due to severe weather, official activities, holidays, malfunctioning equipment, unsafe or unsanitary conditions, or other condition(s) or emergency requiring a school closing or suspension of classes;
- Employment or other volunteer work approved by the school, provided that the student is seventeen (17) years of age, and provided further that any excused absences under this paragraph shall not adversely impact the student's academic performance or timely graduation;
- Failure of the District of Columbia to provide transportation in cases where the District of Columbia has a legal responsibility for the transportation of the student;
- Medical or dental appointments for the student;
- Absences to allow students of military to visit with their parent or legal guardian immediately before, during, and after deployment, as appropriate;
- An emergency; or
- Other set of circumstances approved by an educational institution.

Suspension and Expulsion. All attendance protocols and absentee reporting requirements apply to "in school" suspensions, which will be coded as suspension-related absences. In the event a student is subject to expulsion during the school year, the educational institution must report as part of the periodic reporting to OSSE, the student's daily attendance during the time enrolled during the school year and provide information with regard to the placement of the student at another educational institution. All local education agencies should engage with the student and parents to provide assistance in identifying and enrolling the student in another appropriate placement; and report the expelled student as such, until such time as the student is officially enrolled in another educational institution.

Withdrawal. If an enrolled student fails to appear for the first day of school, the educational institution is responsible for tracking the student's attendance (or lack thereof) and should proceed to locate the student or make a referral as appropriate. An educational institution is responsible for transferring student records to the new school, and must make every effort to confirm that the student enrolls in the school identified



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at time of withdrawal. Until the student is confirmed enrolled in another educational institution, the student should be coded as absent, not withdrawn.

3. Absenteeism Protocol [revised per South Capitol Act Requirements]

Each Local Education Agency (LEA) shall incorporate evidence-based practice into an absenteeism protocol and make the protocol available to parents and students. The absenteeism protocol should include, without limitation, the following:

- Description of valid excused absences consistent with applicable rules;
- Process for informing, training, and educating school staff, students, parents, guardians, and the community with regard to enhancing school attendance, addressing chronic absenteeism, implementing truancy reduction methods, and related collaborative services; procedures for monitoring, reporting, addressing, and evaluating attendance and absences;
- Procedures to make personal contact with the parent or guardian of a student, each time a student has the equivalent of one (1) day of unexcused absence and 10 or more excused absences; with daily follow-ups as necessary;
- Continuum of school practices and services including meaningful supports, incentives, intervention strategies, and consequences for dealing with absenteeism and consultation with parents or guardians, both at the onset of absenteeism and in those circumstances where chronic absenteeism persists, which continuum shall not include off-site suspension and/or expulsion as intervention strategies;
- Process including specific due process procedures, for a parent, guardian, or student to appeal any attendance violation decisions made by the educational institution; and
- Process to ensure that the LEA maintains complete, accurate, and contemporaneous records of the work of the school-based student support team to reduce unexcused absences.

4. Attendance Monitor [new South Capitol Act Requirement]

All educational institutions are now required by law to appoint an Attendance Monitor. OSSE has proposed rules outlining a monitor's responsibilities and has issued guidance for LEAs on data management.² OSSE recommends the following procedures:

- Ensure that the school Attendance Monitor is familiar with the District of Columbia attendance laws, regulations, and policies applicable to his/her respective school;
- Establish a reliable procedure for recording a student's attendance, including partial day absences and late arrival for each class throughout the school day;
- Collect daily attendance records for each student, to be recorded and submitted by each classroom teacher/homeroom teacher etc.;
- Submit to OSSE, the attendance described in paragraphs DCMR Title 5A, Section 2101.3 (a)-(g);
- Correct within five (5) business days of submission, the accuracy of attendance data submitted to OSSE via an automated, electronic feed; and
- Report the name and contact information of the designated Attendance Monitor(s) to OSSE.

² OSSE Attendance and Reporting Guidance (2013) is available on OSSE's website for more detailed guidance.



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5. School Based Student Support Teams [revised per South Capitol Act Requirement]

An educational institution is required by law to implement an absenteeism protocol, as described in #3, focusing on the prevention of unexcused absences, including academic and behavioral interventions, to address respective student needs.

School Based Student Support Team (SST). The law requires an educational institution to have a school based SST to support the individual student by developing and implementing action plans and strategies that are school based or community based, to enhance the student's success with services, incentives, intervention strategies, and consequences for dealing with absenteeism. OSSE recommends :

- Training team members and the attendance monitor using evidence based absenteeism and truancy intervention strategies and best practices; providing access to arrange for services to ameliorate the causes of absenteeism and truancy
- Core school-based student support team membership should typically include the following:
 - General education teacher; School nurse; psychologist, counselor, and/or social worker, if applicable; and a school administrator with decision making authority
- Selection of additional members of a team should be guided by the needs of the particular student, such as:
 - IDEA/Section 504 coordinator and/or special education personnel;
 - Early learning/Head Start teacher;
 - Bilingual or English as a second language teacher;
 - Representatives of CFSA and/or Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services (DYRS);
 - McKinney-Vento homeless liaison; and/or
 - Guardian *ad litem*.

6. Record and Reporting Requirements [revised per South Capitol Act Requirements]

Each educational institution is required to maintain an accurate, contemporaneous, and daily attendance record for each student enrolled in the educational institution in accordance with OSSE's OSSE Data Collection Handbook. An educational institution must maintain the following information in student attendance files:

- Date(s) of enrollment;
- Daily legible or machine-readable record of daily attendance, noting the student as present or absent for a full or partial school day;
- Determination of the nature of each absence as excused, unexcused, suspension-related, or expulsion-related;
- Date of withdrawal from the educational institution or confirmed transfer to another educational institution, including the name and location of the educational institution to which the student transferred and follow up notation(s) to confirm the child's new placement;
- Dates and numbers of referral to the school-based student support team, the Child and Family Services Agency ("CFSA"), the Court Social Services Division of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia ("Court Social Services"); or the Office of the Attorney General Juvenile Section ("OAG-Juvenile Section") related to absenteeism or truancy (See "Reporting" Section for guidance on the timing and submission requirements for these referrals);



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- Dates of marking periods;
- Daily late arrival time with an explanation from parents or guardians, if provided;
- Dates and times of early dismissals from the school day;
- Date and brief description of communications with student, parent(s) or guardian(s) with regard to school attendance and absences
- Underlying causes for student's absenteeism or truancy as determined by the school-based student support team;
- Action plans and strategies implemented by the school-based student support team to eliminate unexcused absences; and
- Services utilized by the student to reduce unexcused absences; and

Annual Report. Within sixty (60) calendar days after the end of each school year, educational institutions must submit aggregated student information to OSSE as described in D.C. Official Code § 38-203(i).

Student Absences. All educational institutions are required to report to OSSE each student absence of 2 full days or 4 half days in a school month, along with a statement of reasons for the absence.

Educational Neglect Referral. All educational institutions are required to report any cases of suspected educational neglect.

LEA Truancy Referral. LEAs must refer students ages five (5) through thirteen (13) CFSA no later than two (2) school days after an accrual of ten (10) unexcused absences within one school year and/or completion of truancy protocols specified in OSSE Rule Section 2103.3 (DCMR Title 5, subtitle A; chapter 21). Until the 2014-15 school year, LEAs are to refer students age fourteen (14) and over to the Court Social Services and to the Office of Attorney General-Juvenile Section no later than two (2) school days after the accrual of twenty-five (25) unexcused absences at any time within one (1) school year. Beginning with the 2014-15 school year, such referral shall be made after the accrual of twenty (20) or more unexcused absences.

Referral Documentation. Appropriate documentation for referrals to an appropriate agency, including the Child Family Services Agency, Court Social Services Division, or Office of Attorney General, includes:

- If applicable, documentation of suspected educational neglect;
- Student's attendance and absence record;
- Any prevention and intervention plans in place;
- Documentation related to referrals and the outcome of such referrals;
- Documentation representing evidence of communications, services, and attendance-related interventions employed by the school;
- Documentation of personal contacts with, and written notification to, parents or guardians, with regard to the unexcused absences; and
- If applicable, the student's Individualized Education Program with any supporting evaluations or assessments.

Parent Notice. An educational institution shall publish and make available to parents and students the attendance policies and procedures, including without limitation, a list of valid excused absences.



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7. Definitions [revised per South Capitol Act Requirements]

“*Chronic Absenteeism*” --The accumulation within one school year of ten (10) or more school days on which a student is marked absent, including excused and unexcused absences.

“*Chronically Truant*”- A school aged child is chronically truant when absent from school without legitimate excuse for ten or more days within a single school year.

“*Educational neglect*” --The failure of a parent or guardian to ensure that a child attends school consistent with the requirements of the law including, without limitation, the failure to enroll a school-age child in an educational institution or provide appropriate private instruction; permitting chronic absenteeism from school; inattention to special education needs; refusal to allow or failure to obtain recommended remedial education services; or the failure to obtain treatment or other special education services without reasonable cause.

“*Truant*” --A school aged child who is absent from school without legitimate excuse.

“*Truancy rate*” --The number of students who are absent without valid excuse as defined by 5 DCMR A2102 on ten (10) or more occasions within a single school year divided by the total number of students enrolled for a single school year as determined by the final enrollment audit conducted by OSSE pursuant to D.C. Official Code § 38-203. Truancy rate may be calculated and reported at the school, LEA, and state levels.

“*Unexcused Absence*” --An absence that does not meet the criteria for an excused absence is considered unexcused for attendance accounting purposes.

8. OSSE Technical Assistance and Additional Information

- *General Information: Guidance and Technical Assistance*
Sheryl Hamilton
Elementary and Secondary Education
202-741-6404 (Office)
sheryl.hamilton@dc.gov
- *Data Submission to OSSE: Technical Assistance; Content; Format*
Jeffrey Noel, Director of Data Management
Data Management & Reporting
202-724-7874 (Office)
jeffrey.noel@dc.gov
- *Additional information, including OSSE oversight responsibilities is also available at:*
www.osse.dc.gov.



ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE

STUDENT ATTENDANCE, ABSENCE, AND TRUANCY

5113

Procedure No.

July 1, 2007

Date

- I. **PURPOSE:** To establish procedures for the reporting and confirming of absence and to indicate steps to be taken in preventing truancy.
- II. **POLICY:** All students are expected to attend school regularly in accordance with state laws and regulations. (Board Policy 5113)
- III. **DEFINITIONS:**

Attendance

Students shall be considered in attendance at school when participating in school-sponsored activities during the school day, and when that participation is approved by the local superintendent of schools or the school principal or any persons duly authorized by the superintendent or principal. Students shall be considered in attendance in an alternative program setting when participating in activities during the day sponsored by the alternative program, and when that participation is approved by the director of a licensed child care center, registered family day care home, or head start 5-year old program.

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*, not given an “excused absence.” This also implies that no penalties, such as denial of opportunity to make up work and/or a lower grade, would be permitted under this provision.

Lawful Absence

Absence from school, including absence for any portion of the day, of students who are presently enrolled in public schools shall be considered lawful only under the following conditions:

- A. Death in the immediate family. Immediate family means a parent or guardian, brother, sister, grandparent, or anyone who has lived regularly in the household of the student.
- B. Illness of the child. The principal shall require a physician’s certificate from the parent or guardian of a child reported continuously absent for illness. A continuous absence is an absence of three or more continuous days.
- C. Court summons.



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- D. Hazardous weather conditions. Hazardous weather conditions shall be interpreted to mean weather conditions that would endanger health or safety of the student when in transit to and from school.
- E. Work approved or sponsored by the school, the Prince George's County school system, or the State of Department of Education, accepted by the Superintendent of Schools or the school principal, any persons duly authorized by the superintendent or principal, as reasons for excusing the student.
- F. Observance of a religious holiday.
- G. State emergency.
- H. Suspension.
- I. Lack of authorized transportation. This shall not include students denied authorized transportation for disciplinary reasons.
- J. 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.

Unlawful Absence

Unlawful absence and/or truancy is defined as the act of a student being absent from school for a day or any portion of a day or from an individual class or any portion of a class for any reason other than those defined as a lawful excuse for absence from school. This definition applies to students over 16 years of age as well as students under 16 years of age.

Truancy

An instance of truancy is an occasion upon which a student is found to have engaged in conduct amounting to an unlawful absence for any number of days or for a portion of a day.

A continued truancy is an unlawful absence extending without interruption after the student and parent(s) or guardian(s) have been notified of the truancy in accordance with these procedures.

A truant is a student who is absent without lawful cause from the attendance for a school day or portion of it.



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A habitual truant is a student who is unlawfully absent from school for a number of days or portion of days in excess of 10 percent of the school days within any marking period, semester, or year.

IV. **PROCEDURES:**

A. Reporting Absences – Recognizing the responsibility of administrators and teachers for developing and maintaining a system of recording and reporting student absences (lawful and unlawful), the following procedures are to be considered as minimum for each school (elementary, middle, and high):

1. Teachers will maintain a daily attendance record of each student's attendance, tardiness, or absence from school or class.
2. A student's tardiness or absence from school will be reported to the school office and pupil personnel worker daily.
3. Teachers will record a student's absence from an individual class and report it to the school office and pupil personnel worker as it occurs.
4. Upon returning to school from an absence, a student is required to bring a written note from his or her parent or guardian stating the reason for absence.
5. Each course grade received by a secondary school student will include a report of his or her absence(s) for that course.

B. Confirming Absence

1. Parents or guardians must notify the school when their child is absent. If the school has not received notification from the parent(s) or guardian(s), school personnel (instructional or supporting, or a school volunteer) will immediately contact the parent or guardian by telephone, e-mail, fax, or automated communication system. If a school uses an automated system to notify parents of student trancies and absences, that system shall be the system currently approved by PGCPs for such purpose.
2. If the school is unable to contact the parent or guardian by telephone immediately after three days of absence or after one instance of suspected truancy, a certified letter, home visit, or other



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approved method should be used to contact the parent(s) or guardian(s). This action should be included in the student's file. (Attachment 1)

C. Procedures for Students on Suspension or Under Court Supervision

1. Suspended Students

Students on suspension, including in-school suspension, must be offered make-up work assignments for days of suspension unless other educational alternatives are provided. Completed assignments will be averaged with other daily grades.

2. Detained and Incarcerated Students

A student who is charged with either a juvenile or adult offense and is detained awaiting adjudication (temporarily held at a secured facility with an educational program) is withdrawn from PGCPS with a code of T-22.

A student who has been either incarcerated (charged and convicted as an adult) or committed (charged and found involved as a juvenile), and placed in a state institution with an educational program, is withdrawn from PGCPS with a code of T-22. A student ordered to an institution without an educational program is withdrawn with a code of W-38.

D. Preventing Truancy

Each school shall include in the school improvement plan both the strategies it shall use to prevent truancy and methods it will use to monitor the effectiveness of these strategies. Such plans will include, at a minimum, all steps outlined in this procedure.

Additionally, by the fifth business day of each month, pupil personnel workers shall report to the supervisors of pupil personnel the names of students who have been truant the previous month, the strategies utilized to prevent further truantries, and the results of such interventions.

1. Proactive Approaches Prior to Truancy

The most effective approach to increase attendance and prevent truancy is proactive, with school, family, and community working



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together to foster exemplary attendance for all students. The following steps shall be taken to promote regular attendance for all students.

a. Identify At-Risk Students Early

Students often exhibit behaviors which, without intervention, can lead to truancy. To prevent unlawful absences, it is crucial to initiate positive and supportive interventions as soon as a student begins to exhibit such indicators. Some student warning symptoms, among others, may include:

- (1) Changes in behavior or behavior difficulties;
- (2) Changes in friendships or having no friends;
- (3) Poor or decreased academic performance;
- (4) Bullying or being bullied;
- (5) Listlessness or lack of focus;
- (6) Agitation or withdrawal;
- (7) Behaviors inappropriate for the age of the child.

Additionally, a history of sibling truancy may also negatively impact student attendance.

b. Refer at-risk students to administrators, professional school counselor, the pupil personnel worker, or other school professional or school team for appropriate assessment and intervention.

The parent is to be notified of the concerns. Additional interventions may include individual or group counseling, and, if warranted, encouragement for the parent to consult outside medical or psychological resources. (PGCPS may not mandate that the student participate in outside services as a condition of attendance.)

2. Incoming Students: Articulation and Orientation

The following steps are to occur during articulation between elementary and middle school and middle and high school.

a. Principals and/or their designees will transmit attendance information to receiving schools for all students and



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- highlight students for whom the sending schools have attendance concerns.
- b. Information Technology will create for each school an interactive report that will allow online access with the names and lawful, unlawful, and total absences for the prior year for each student transitioning from elementary to middle and middle to high schools.
 - c. During the orientation process each year, school personnel are to discuss attendance issues with all incoming and returning students and their parents. For students, this may be done as part of the initial orientation assemblies or in special attendance assemblies, during classroom activities, and/or in other programs or communications. Parents are to be informed at back to school nights, PTA/PTSA/PTO meetings, school conferences, and other activities. The importance of regular school attendance is to be reiterated throughout the school year in PA and TV announcements, classroom visits, school newsletters, and other appropriate formats.
 - d. School personnel will discuss attendance issues with individual incoming students who have been identified as having substandard or unsatisfactory attendance and their parent(s)/guardian(s).

During regular registration for transfer students, professional school counselors and other appropriate personnel will discuss the importance of regular attendance.

For transfer students, professional school counselors will specifically note attendance as they review records of incoming students. The professional school counselor, pupil personnel worker, parent liaison, or other appropriate staff member will contact parents of students whose attendance has been unsatisfactory and hold conferences to develop an individual attendance plan for these students with the students and their parents.

3. Attendance Committee
 - a. Each school will develop an Attendance Committee with membership to include:
 - (1) Principal or designee



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- (2) Pupil personnel worker (chair)
 - (3) Parent liaison
 - (4) Professional school counselors
 - (5) Attendance secretary
 - (6) School nurse/nursing assistant
 - (7) Instructional staff member(s)
 - (8) Other staff as appropriate
 - b. By the end of the first month of school, the Attendance Committee will hold meeting(s) with all students who have been identified as having missed 10% or more of the school days during the prior year and their parents/guardians. Schools are encouraged to provide traditional and nontraditional meeting times (morning, evening, weekend) to make meetings available to all parents. In the meetings, committee members may:
 - (1) Discuss the importance of regular school attendance;
 - (2) Provide strategies for improving attendance;
 - (3) Meet individually with each family to develop specific strategies, based upon the student's individual needs, to ensure regular school attendance for the student; and
 - (4) Develop an attendance plan (Attachment 3), signed by student, parent(s)/guardian(s), and school personnel, outlining specific steps for promoting regular attendance, and provide copies for the family, pupil personnel worker, and the student's cumulative folder.
 - c. The pupil personnel worker will monitor the attendance of these students.
4. Ongoing
- Information Technology will create an online interactive attendance report, updated daily, that includes current attendance information for each student in the school. This report shall be available to principals, pupil personnel workers, and other personnel designated by the principal to monitor student attendance and alert staff to students with incipient attendance concerns.
- E. Truancy Intervention and Remediation



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STUDENT ATTENDANCE, ABSENCE, AND TRUANCY

5113

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The following steps apply to all instances of truancy or continued truancy occurring within one school year and are generally the same for all students. However, there are differences in the ages and levels of maturity of students that must be recognized when attempting to remediate truancy. In chronic attendance cases, steps that can be taken are different for students who are under 16 years of age and those 16 years of age and older. For this reason, the following steps are outlined into two categories.

1. Student Under 16 Years of Age
 - a. First Instance of Truancy – Parent(s) or guardian(s) is notified of the truancy by the school and appropriate services are provided by the professional school counselor or pupil personnel worker and/or disciplinary action is taken.
 - b. Second Instance of Truancy – If a student continues to be absent for suspected unlawful reasons, the principal or designee shall contact the parent directly by telephone, email, home visit, or other appropriate means and also send a letter by United States mail to the parent(s) or guardian(s) to notify him or her of the absence(s) and schedule a conference with the parent/guardian and child.

At the conference with parent(s) or guardian(s), school personnel, including the professional school counselor, should discuss the total adjustment of the student, as well as his or her attendance, and attempt to identify the reason(s) for his or her absence in order to take appropriate action to improve the student's adjustment and attendance. Referral to school counseling services and the attendance committee or other school teams (SIT, SST, IEP team, Section 504 team, or other appropriate team) may be appropriate depending upon the needs of the individual student.

If absences are confirmed to be unlawful, the parent(s) or guardian(s) should be advised of the dates and times of all absences, and that this information will be recorded on the student's records. An attendance plan for the student shall be created or, if already in place, modified, to address the reasons for absence. The parent(s) or guardian(s) should be informed that continued unlawful absences could result in court action if the student is under the age of 16.



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- c. Third Instance of Truancy – If the steps above have been followed by the school with no response from the parent(s) or guardian(s), or if the student is still suspected of being unlawfully absent from school, the pupil personnel worker shall review the case and take appropriate actions to resolve the issues impeding regular attendance. At this time, such services and/or actions may include: a pupil personnel worker attendance letter; a home visit; referral to the school instructional team (SIT), IEP team meeting, supplemental services team (SST), Section 504 team, or other school team; referral to the court liaison for a court letter or conference; referral to the interagency council on school attendance or juvenile services; recommendation for counseling or other medical/mental health services through an outside agency; and other services as appropriate.
 - d. Fourth Or Further Instance Of Truancy – If the steps above have not eliminated truancy, additional instances of truancy shall be met with increasing levels of intervention, including referral by the pupil personnel worker for court action.
2. Student 16 Years of Age or Older
 - a. First Instance of Truancy – Parent(s) or guardian(s) is notified of the truancy by the school and appropriate services are provided by the professional school counselor or pupil personnel worker and/or disciplinary action is taken.
 - b. Second Instance of Continued Truancy – If a student continues to be absent for suspected unlawful reasons, the principal or designee shall contact the parent directly by telephone, e-mail, home visit, or other appropriate means and also send a letter by United States mail to the parent(s) or guardian(s) to notify him or her of the absence(s) and to schedule a conference with the parent/guardian and child.

At the conference with parent(s) or guardian(s), school personnel, including the professional school counselor, should discuss the total adjustment of the student, as well as his or her attendance, and attempt to identify the reason(s) for his or her absence in order to take appropriate action to improve the student's adjustment and attendance. Referral to school counseling services and the attendance committee or other school teams (SIT, SST, IEP team, Section 504



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team, or other appropriate team) may be appropriate depending upon the needs of the individual student.

If absences are confirmed to be unlawful, the parent(s) or guardian(s) should be advised of the dates and times of all absences, and that this information will be recorded on the student's records. An attendance plan for the student shall be created or, if already in place, modified, to address the reasons for absence. The parent(s) or guardian(s) should be informed that continued unlawful absences could result in the student's withdrawal from the regular school program.

- c. Third Instance of Continued Truancy – If the steps above have been followed by the school with no response from the parent(s) or guardian(s), or if the student is still suspected of being unlawfully absent from school, the pupil personnel worker shall review the case and take appropriate actions to resolve the issues impeding regular attendance.

At this time, services and/or actions may include: a pupil personnel worker attendance letter; a home visit; referral to the school instructional team (SIT), IEP team meeting, supplemental services team (SST), Section 504 team, or other school team; referral to juvenile services; recommendation for counseling or other medical/mental health services through an outside agency; and other services as appropriate.

- d. Withdrawal from School for Truancy – A student 16 years of age or older may be withdrawn from school after unsuccessful attempts have been made to improve the student's attendance. If a student is to be withdrawn from school for truancy, the parent(s) or guardian(s) is notified by the principal, in writing, with one copy of the letter given to the professional school counselor and one to the pupil personnel worker.

Additionally, a notification of student withdrawal form (PS 105) must be completed. Concurrently, the professional school counselor or pupil personnel worker will offer, in writing, as part of the withdrawal letter an exit interview with the student and parent(s) or guardian(s) to discuss again the student's options for continuing his or her education (Attachment 2).



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- e. Appeal for Withdrawal Due to Attendance for Students 16 and Older - If the parent(s) or guardian(s) protests such a withdrawal, the parent may appeal to the regional assistant superintendent. The student shall remain withdrawn from the regular school program during the appeal process. Upon re-enrollment based upon a successful appeal of the withdrawal, the school, parent/guardian, and student shall develop an attendance contract. Failure by the student to adhere to the conditions of the contract shall result in withdrawal.

If an appeal by the parent/guardian is upheld, the student shall be offered all make up work in all classes for the period during which the student had been withdrawn.

- f. Continuing Education After Withdrawal for Truancy – Notwithstanding any of the above, the withdrawal due to truancy shall not preclude the withdrawn student from enrolling in:

- (1) Evening High School
- (2) Summer School

If appropriate, special school or class placement, e.g., Croom Vocational, Tall Oaks Vocational, Career Technology Education, etc.

Neither shall the above preclude the suspended or withdrawn pupil from obtaining assistance with respect to:

- (1) Community-Based Classroom
- (2) G.E.D. Preparation Program
- (3) Possible reentry to the regular day school at a later date.

- g. Withdrawal of Special Education Student – The withdrawal of a special education student, regardless of age, must be in compliance with special education procedures. Such a withdrawal usually mandates a parent's or guardian's signature on the appropriate forms.

F. Grades and Absence

1. Unlawful absence



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- a. At all grade levels, students with unlawful absence(s), including so-called “cut days,” shall receive a zero for any day(s) of such absence(s). The zero(s) will be averaged with other daily grades.
 - b. Teachers are not required to provide make-up work for students when their absences are unlawful.
2. Lawful Absences
 - a. At all grade levels, students with lawful absences must complete make-up work for missed time, or they shall receive a zero for any day(s) of such absence(s). The zero(s) will be averaged with other daily grades.
 - b. Teachers are required to provide make-up work when requested for a student who is lawfully absent if the student does not qualify for home teaching.
 3. Exceptional Attendance

Schools shall develop and utilize positive rewards for students with exceptional attendance and substantially improved attendance during any one grading period and/or for the school year.
- G. Police Cooperation with Truants
- The Prince George’s County Police have agreed to stop and question children at large in the community who appear to be under 16 years of age and truant during regular school hours.
- If such children do not have verification, such as an early departure slip, a release time card, or other authorization showing they are legitimately out of school, the police may document such children, take them to school, and release them to the appropriate school administrator. Students are responsible for securing from the school officials such verification.
- When the police take a student to school, the principal and/or the designated school official will admit the student to school, notify the parent(s) or guardian(s) of the circumstances, and take appropriate disciplinary action in accordance with this Administrative Procedure 5113 and Administrative Procedure 10101, Code of Student Conduct.
- Principals should encourage store managers who call regarding loitering of school-aged children to contact the police. A conference that includes the



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police, principal, and store manager to discuss the details of the situation may be appropriate should a particular shopping center or store have significant problems with truants.

This agreement with the Prince George's County Police does not exclude any cooperative agreements schools may have with local community police to pick up truants, providing such agreements have the approval of the Chief Administrator for Student Services.

- V. **DISSEMINATION OF PROCEDURES:** The principal and pupil personnel worker at each school will collaborate to take the necessary steps to ensure that parents, guardians, students, and staff members are aware of the procedures contained herein. Such measures may utilize student handbooks, PTA discussions, faculty meetings, etc. Students should be warned particularly of possible penalties when identified as truant.
- VI. **RELATED PROCEDURES AND REGULATIONS:** Administrative Procedure 5121, Examinations and Grading for Elementary and Secondary Schools; Administrative Procedure 5124, School Instructional Team (SIT), Supplemental Services Team (SST), and Student Staff Services Team (SSST); Administrative Procedure 10101, Code of Student Conduct; and Administrative Procedure 10301, Court Proceedings; Maryland Annotated Code, Education Articles, §7-301 and 7-302; Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) 13A.08.01.01.07.
- VII. **MAINTENANCE AND UPDATE OF THESE PROCEDURES:** The Division of Student Services will have the responsibility for maintaining, evaluating, and updating these procedures.
- VIII. **CANCELLATIONS AND SUPERSEDURES:** This Administrative Procedure cancels and supersedes Administrative Procedure 5113, dated August 31, 1994.
- IX. **EFFECTIVE DATE:** July 1, 2007.

Approved by:
John E. Deasy
Superintendent of Schools

Attachments: 1 – Example of Attendance Postcard or Letter
2 – Suggested Letter of Withdrawal
3 – Attendance Improvement Contract
4 – Preventing Truancy Checklist

Distribution: Lists 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 10, 11, 12, and 13



ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE

WITHDRAWAL OF PUPILS FOR NONDISCIPLINARY REASONS

5114.1

Procedure No.

December 1, 2002

Date

- I. **PURPOSE:** To permit the withdrawal of certain pupils who are of compulsory school age for other than disciplinary reasons.
- II. **POLICY:** Annotated Code of Maryland, Education Article, Section 7-301, provides that a county Chief Executive Officer, with the advice of the school Principal and Pupil Personnel Services Supervisor, and with a written recommendation of a licensed physician or State Department of Education certified or licensed psychologist may permit the parent(s) or guardian(s) of a pupil to withdraw him/her from the public school for as long as his/her attendance in a public school would be detrimental to his/her progress, or his/her presence in school would present a danger of physical harm to others.
- III. **DEFINITIONS:** The following definitions apply to the contents of this Administrative Procedure.

Compulsory Attendance Each child who resides in this state and is 5 years old or older and under 16 shall attend a public school regularly during the entire school year unless the child is otherwise receiving regular, thorough instruction during the school year in the studies usually taught in the public schools to children of the same age.

Pupil Any person properly registered as a student in a public school in Prince George's County.

Psychologist Refers to the Maryland State Department of Education certified psychologist assigned to the school or special education center involved, or to a licensed psychologist.

- IV. **PROCEDURES:** When the withdrawal of a pupil from school is being considered, the following is to be accomplished.
 - A. Prior to recommending a pupil's withdrawal, every effort will be made by school-based personnel and the Department of Pupil Services personnel to provide adequately for the pupil's needs; e.g., program reassignment, referral to appropriate community and/or private resources.
 - B. When it has been agreed upon by the school-based personnel (principal and guidance counselor) and Pupil Services personnel (pupil personnel worker and psychologist) that a pupil should be withdrawn from school



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Procedure No.

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for reasons other than disciplinary, an initial conference is held with the pupil's parent(s) or guardian(s) and will focus on the reasons for which the pupil's withdrawal is being recommended. Participants in this conference must include: school principal, pupil personnel worker, and psychologist. Other appropriate school-based personnel may participate. Personnel from community agencies may be included also; e.g., representatives from the Department of Juvenile Services or from the Department of Social Services.

C. Appeal: If the pupil's parent(s) or guardian(s) do not accept the decision reached at the initial conference to withdraw the pupil, they shall be advised that they may appeal that decision in writing to the appropriate supervisor/assistant supervisor of Pupil Personnel Services. However, if the pupil's behavior warrants disciplinary action, the provisions contained in the Code of Student Conduct should be followed and appropriate action taken.

D. Preparation of Form PS-105, Notification of Pupil Withdrawal (W-42): After the appeal to the appropriate supervisor/assistant supervisor of Pupil Personnel Services, the parent(s) or guardian(s) may either accept or reject the final recommendation concerning withdrawal. In either case, the pupil personnel worker prepares Form PS-105, (see attachment) and attaches a written statement from the psychologist or licensed physician to this form.

Psychologist's Statement: The psychologist (or licensed physician) prepares a written statement recommending the pupil's withdrawal. The statement is reviewed and countersigned by the supervisor of Psychological Services and forwarded to the pupil personnel worker. This statement is attached to Form PS-105, Notification of Pupil Withdrawal.

E. Following the sequence listed below, the completed Form PS-105 is then forwarded for review and recommendation to:

1. Regional Executive Director
2. Assistant Supervisor of Pupil Personnel Services
3. Supervisor of Pupil Personnel Services
4. Director for Pupil Services
5. Chief Executive Officer



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The Chief Executive Officer returns all copies to the Supervisor of Pupil Personnel Services for dissemination.

- F. **Reenrollment Conditions:** If the pupil's condition improves to the degree that he/she could benefit from school enrollment, he/she might be reenrolled on a trial basis. The decision to reenroll a pupil shall be made in a conference, which would include the principal, guidance counselor, pupil personnel worker, psychologist, parent(s) or guardian(s), and the pupil.
- G. A pupil who has been withdrawn from school by his/her parent(s) or guardian(s) will be offered continuing services by the pupil personnel worker, psychologist, or guidance counselor. The goal of this service is to help the parent(s) or guardian(s) formulate and carry out plans for the pupil, which seem to be appropriate for his/her needs.
- V. **RELATED PROCEDURES, POLICIES, LAWS, AND BYLAWS:** Administrative Procedures 5113, 5121, 6150, 10101; Board Policies 5113, 5114.1; Annotated Code of Maryland, Educational Articles, Sections 7-301, 7-302, 7-304; Maryland Bylaws 13A.08.01.01, 13A.08.01.02, 13A.08.01.03, and 13A.08.01.06.
- VI. **CANCELLATIONS AND SUPERSEDURES:** This Administrative Procedure cancels and supersedes Administrative Procedure 5114.1, dated September 2, 1986.
- VII. **MAINTENANCE AND UPDATE OF THESE PROCEDURES:** This Administrative Procedure originates with the Department of Pupil Services and will be updated as necessary.
- VIII. **EFFECTIVE DATE:** December 1, 2002.

Approved by:
Iris T. Metts
Chief Executive Officer

Attachment: Form PS-105, Notification of Pupil Withdrawal

Distribution: Lists 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 10, 11, 12, and 13