

**Columbus City Schools
Parent/Guardian
Student Attendance
Frequently Asked Questions**

Why did I receive a letter regarding my child's absences?

Your child's school has reported that there are numerous unexcused absences on your child's record that may classify him or her as habitually or chronically truant, according to the State of Ohio. That means that your child's school has marked him or her absent multiple times without documentation of a legally acceptable reason.

What is considered a legally acceptable reason to be absent from school?

Generally, absence from school is considered lawful, or an excused absence, for the following legally acceptable reasons (**a signed parent or guardian note is required**):

- Personal illness or quarantine.
- Illness or death in the immediate household.
- Emergencies or any other occurrences or situations which, in the judgment of individual principals, may necessitate absence from school as a last resort.
- Religious holiday.
- Superintendent's designation.

NOTE: Students in grade 12 may be excused from attendance for a maximum of three days for college/university visits.

What is an unexcused absence?

Unexcused absences are those absences that do not meet the above listed criteria.

What should I do if my child is absent from school?

Parents and guardians must call the school to report a student's absence before 9:30a.m. for each day the student is absent. The parent or guardian must supply the school with a written excuse signed by the parent within two days of the student's return. If no report of absence or written excuse is received, the absence is considered an unexcused absence, which may result in a referral to juvenile court for educational neglect or truancy.

What happens if I forget/fail to send in an excuse note?

By policy, if we do not receive a signed note by the parent/guardian indicating the reasons for a student's absence within 48 hours, the absence will be classified as unexcused. Contact your student's school for assistance.

Who do I talk to if I have a concern about an absence, tardy, or late in a class?

Contact your student's classroom teachers and administrators as your starting points. The school counselor and other student support staff may also assist.

Is my 5 or 6 year old kindergarten student subject to the Ohio Compulsory Attendance Law?

Yes, once your student is enrolled in school, compulsory attendance is applicable. SECTION 3321.13 (B) (1), OHIO REVISED CODE

My child has chronic health problems and they will need to be absent. What do I do?

If your child has a chronic health problem such as asthma, diabetes, a seizure disorder or sickle cell anemia that causes frequent absences from school, please work with the school nurse to explore possible options.

Will the school let me know when my student is absent?

Yes, many attempts are made but they depend on the accuracy of the information you provide to the school. You are notified of your student's absences through an automated calling system, teacher telephone calls, attendance letters from the principal and calls and/or home visits by the school social worker.

I do not agree with the absences on record for my child. Who should I contact?

Disputes must be handled at the school. Please contact your child's school immediately and inquire about his or her attendance record.

I send my child to school and he/she chooses to go somewhere else or not to attend classes. Am I still responsible?

Parents/guardians are legally obligated by Ohio's State Compulsory Attendance Law to ensure that children between the ages of 5 and 18 attend school regularly. Not attending school or being truant from school and class is not the problem—it's an indicator of other problems. It is important, for parents and school personnel alike, to get to the root of the problem. Understanding that truancy is an *indicator* is a first step in approaching the problem. Contact your student's school and request assistance in determining how you can help your child attend school daily.

What does it mean to be truant from school?

A "habitual" truant is any child of compulsory school age who is absent without a legitimate excuse for five or more consecutive school days, seven or more school days in one month or twelve or more school days in a school year. A "chronic" truant is any child of compulsory school age who is absent without legitimate excuse for seven or more consecutive school days, ten or more school days in one month or fifteen or more school days in a school year.

What happens if my child is truant?

The district may file a complaint in juvenile court jointly against the child and the parent. The complaint must state that the child is an "unruly child" by virtue of being a "habitual truant", and that the parent has violated the school attendance law.

Regarding “chronic” truants, if the parent fails to get the child to school and the child is considered a “chronic truant”, the district shall file a complaint in the juvenile court jointly against the child and the parent. The complaint must state that the child is a “delinquent child” by virtue of being a “chronic” truant, and that the parent has violated the school attendance law.

What can happen if the student’s parent/guardian is found guilty?

The person or persons responsible for the student may be fined up to \$500, required to perform up to 70 hours of community service, or both. The repeated failure to make sure a truant student attends school also may result in criminal charges, a misdemeanor in the first degree, for contributing to the delinquency of a student. In addition, if a child is adjudicated unruly or delinquent for habitual or chronic truancy, the juvenile court may require the parent, guardian or custodian to participate in a community service or truancy prevention mediation program and either a parental education or training program.

What consequences are there for students who drop out or are habitually truant?

Ohio state law also imposes a direct consequence on a student by suspending the driving privileges of any student who drops out of school or is habitually absent. When a student withdraws from school entirely for any reason other than a change of residence and is not attending any other school, the school district is obligated to report this fact to the Registrar of Motor Vehicles and the juvenile court. The Registrar will then suspend the student’s driver’s license or permit or deny issuance of a license or permit if it has not been issued yet. This suspension will be in effect until the student turns 18 or until the superintendent informs the Registrar that the student is now attending school.

Is the school required to provide make-up work when my child is absent, including when my is suspended?

Yes. Work should be requested by the parent or student as soon as possible. Most schools require a 24 hour period to allow the teacher to gather materials to send home.

How can I get a copy of my student's attendance record?

You may request a copy of your student's attendance record in the school office at any time.

If I am requested to provide a doctor's note to excuse an absence, does this violate HIPAA law?

If you are requested to provide a physician's statement, you need only provide documentation that the student was seen by the doctor and the date(s) covered. No confidential medical information is needed.

What if my student is absent due to a suspension from school?

Suspensions are excused absences and do not count against your student under the Ohio

Compulsory Attendance Law. Students may only be suspended from school after a due process hearing.

How can I excuse my child's early dismissal from school?

A note from a parent/guardian must be turned in to the main office before your student exits the building. Any student who leaves without a valid note will be considered as an unexcused absence.

What happens when the school bus is late?

When the school is responsible for students being late, they will not be marked tardy. Those students should check-in with the Main Office to receive a pass to class.

Can 18 year old students excuse their own absences?

Students who are 18 years old legally may write absence notes for themselves.

Can I take a vacation during the school year?

The school calendar includes school "holidays" or vacation time. Whenever possible, family vacations should align with school vacation days. Vacation is not an approved reason for absence in the state of Ohio. If the absence is for educational purposes; the parent/guardian will need to contact the school prior to the absence to obtain work assignments that must be completed upon the student's return to school.