

PULASKI COUNTY ATTENDANCE PROTOCOL

As mandated by O.C.G.A. 20-2-690.0, a county-wide Attendance Protocol Committee is established and charged with ensuring the coordination and cooperation among officials, agencies, and programs involved in compulsory education issues, to reduce the number of unexcused absences from school, and to increase the percentage of students present to take tests that are required to be administered under the laws of the state. It is important for credibility within the community that all local schools operate under the same, consistent student attendance expectations and protocols. All mandated reporters shall assure that students suspected of being truant and reported to designated school officials, law enforcement, or the Department of Family and Children's Services. With those expectations, the following protocol is adopted.

I. Definitions:

A: Compulsory Education:

Every parent, guardian or other person residing within this state having control or charge of any child or children between their sixth(6th) and sixteenth (16th) birthdays shall enroll and send such child or children to a public school, a private school, or a home study program (O.C.G.A. 20-2-690.1). Children that have attained 20 days enrollment in Kindergarten also fall under compulsory attendance according to O.C.G.A. 20-2-150.

B: Truant:

Per the Georgia State Board of Education attendance Rules, "Truant" is defined as "any child subject to compulsory education (ages 6 through 16, and 5 year olds who have attended twenty (20) days in school) who during the school calendar year has more than five days of unexcused absences".

C: Monitoring

Each school system shall assure compliance with compulsory education and attendance policies in assigned schools. Individual schools will monitor attendance and follow the protocol for reporting.

II. Identifying Truant Students:

A: Excused Absences

Excused absences shall include:

- School days missed as a result of an out of school suspension shall not count as unexcused days for the purpose of determining student truancy.
- Personal illness or when attendance in school endangers the student's health or the health of others.
- A serious illness or death in a student's immediate family necessitating absence from school.
- A court order or an order by a government agency, including pre-induction physical examinations for service in the armed forces, mandating absence from school.
- The observation of religious holidays, necessitating absence from school.
- Conditions rendering attendance impossible or hazardous to student health or safety.
- Registering to vote or voting in a public election, which shall not exceed one day.
- A student whose parent or legal guardian is in military service in the armed forces of the United States or the National Guard, and such parent or legal guardian has been called to duty for or is on leave from overseas deployment to a combat zone or combat support posting, shall be granted excused absences, up to a maximum of five school days per school year, for the day or days missed from school to visit with his or her parent or legal guardian prior to such parent's legal guardian's deployment or during such parent's or legal guardian's leave.
- Page for Georgia General Assembly (counted as present in school).
- A foster care student who attends court proceedings relating to the student's foster care shall be credited as present by the school and shall not be counted as an absence, either excused or unexcused, for any day, portion of a day, or days missed from school as set forth in O.C.G.A. & 20-2-692.

- A student who successfully participates in the Student Teen Election Participant (STEP) program shall be counted as present and given full credit for the school day during which he or she served in the STEP program. No student shall be permitted to be absent from school or participate in the SEEP program for more than two school days per school year.
- Any other absence not explicitly defined herein but deemed by the principal to have merit based on circumstances.

Three (3) Days to Submit Excuse for Absence

Upon returning to school, the student will have three (3) days to present the necessary written documentation to have the absences count as excused. Failure to present this documentation will result in an unexcused absence. Phone calls **will not** be accepted in place of a written notice.

Excuse must include:

1. The date(s) of the absence
2. Student name
3. Reason for absence
4. Parent or guardian signature

B. Five (5) Days of Parent Notes for Illness

A parent's note will be accepted to excuse personal illness for five (5) days during the school year. After a parent's note has been used for five (5) days at any time during the school year, a doctor's excuse is required for ALL future absences due to illness unless otherwise determined by the principal or the principal's designee.

If an athlete is absent from school for a half-day or longer, he/she will not be allowed to practice during that time and will not play in any games during the time of the absence.

C. Unexcused Absences

Unexcused absences shall include all absences that do not meet the criteria as outlined for excused absences. Also refer to Section II.D. Tardies and Early Dismissals. School days missed as a result of an out of school suspension shall not count as unexcused days for the purpose of determining student truancy.

D. Tardies/Early Dismissals

As mandated by O.C.G.A. 20-2-690.2, the Attendance Protocol Committee must recommend policies regarding tardies and early dismissals. In order to promote continuity between the school systems, the following policy is recommended:

- *Five (5) unexcused tardies/early dismissals will count as one (1) unexcused absence.
 - *The conditions for excusing a tardy or early dismissal will be the same as an absence.
 - *Tardies and early dismissals must be traced separately and the date will be used to identify truant students.
- Information concerning students, who meet these thresholds, will be monitored by the school.

E. Student Withdrawals

Local school systems are authorized to withdraw a student who:

- *Has missed more than 10 consecutive days of unexcused absences.
- *Is not subject to compulsory attendance.
- *Is not receiving instructional services required by the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

Local school systems shall notify the parent or guardian of the intention to withdraw a student younger than 18 years of age who is not subject to compulsory attendance.

III. Notification of Parent/Guardian

Within thirty (30) days of enrollment in school, the parent or guardian will be notified in writing of the attendance policies and consequences. The parent/guardian must sign and return this notification.

IV. Violation of Attendance Policy

Unexcused Absences

A. Three (3) or More Unexcused

By the time a student has acquired an equivalent of three or more unexcused absences, the school will notify the parent or guardian in writing. This is a courtesy to make parents/guardians aware that we are monitoring their student's attendance. This reminder or similar documented action will serve as a good faith effort required of the school before taking further action. Failure to receive this reminder does not prevent further action taken to attempt to improve attendance.

B. Five (5) or More Unexcused

The school will notify the parent/guardian of the attendance policy and consequences at an equivalent of five (5) unexcused absences in conjunction with a Truancy Meeting, which the parent/guardian will attend. The objective of the meeting will be to explore barriers to attendance, develop a plan to improve attendance, and to remind the parent/guardian of the attendance policy and consequences for further unexcused absences.

C. Five (5) Days of Parent Notes for Illness

A parent's note will be accepted to excuse personal illness for five (5) days during the school year. After a parent's note has been used for five (5) days at any time during the school year, a doctor's excuse is required for ALL future absences due to illness unless otherwise determined by the principal or principal's designee.

D. Ten (10) or More Unexcused Absences

- Ten or more unexcused absences will result in a petition for educational neglect or truancy to be filed with the Department of Family and children's Services or the Juvenile Court System.
- In the event of a referral, each additional unexcused absences following notification of the parent/guardian of 10 unexcused days of absences for a child shall constitute a separate violation of the Compulsory Education Law (O.C.G.A. 20-2-690.1) The violation will be reported to the court.
- Any parent, guardian, or other person with control of a child, who violates the Compulsory Education Law shall be guilty of a misdemeanor, and upon conviction, thereof, shall be subject to a fine not less than \$25.00 and not greater than \$100, imprisonment not to exceed 30 days, community service, or any combination of such penalties, at the discretion of the court having jurisdiction (O.C.G.A. 20-2-690.1).