

Frequently Asked Questions about **ATTENDANCE**

1. What do I have to do if my child is going to be absent from school?

Please call the DPHS 24 hour attendance line at (805) 284-9691 to *verify* your child's absence. You must leave your child's name, the reason for the absence, the date of the absence and your name to verify that it was a parent/guardian that is verifying the absence. Or, you may send a note upon your child's return to school signed by the parent/guardian.

2. What does it mean to “*verify*” my child's absence?

When a student is absent, parents are required to call/send a note to the attendance office in order to validate the reason for the child's absence. We call this process: Absence Verification. An absence must be verified within ***three school days***.

3. What happens after I have called in my child's absence?

The attendance clerk will then proceed to mark your child's attendance record with an “Excused” or “Unexcused” absence according to Ed. Code and District policies.

4. What happens if I forget to call my child's absence on the day of his/her absence?

You may call to verify your child's absence up to ***three school days*** after your child has been absent. Absences that are not verified within the time allowed will be considered unexcused absences.

5. What is considered an Excused Absence?

By law [EC § 48205], excused absences are: illness [fever 100° or more, your child must be fever free for twenty-four hours before returning to school], persistent runny nose with yellow-green mucous discharge, rashes [unless there is a note from your physician stating that your child is not contagious], vomiting [If your child is sent home vomiting he/she needs to be vomit free for twenty-four hours before returning to school], diarrhea [If your child is sent home from school with diarrhea he/she needs to be diarrhea free for twenty-four hours before returning to school], medical/dental appointments [doctor's note required for verification], death in the family, specific religious reasons, required appearance in court, and exclusion from school for contagious disease.

6. How many Excused Absences can my child have in one school year?

While we know students do become ill and are unable to attend school, the **average** number of days missed due to illness is 3 (three) per school year.

7. What can I do if my child has a chronic illness that prevents him/her from being at school regularly?

The Santa Barbara Unified School District offers alternative educational options for students with special circumstances that have been verified by a physician.

8. What if my child's absences do not fall under any of the Excused Absences categories?

State law [EC § 48260-48273] is very specific about these types of absences. A student who is absent or late more than 30 minutes from school (elementary) or class period (secondary) without a valid excuse will be marked "unexcused" for the day. These types of absences are also called "Truancies."

9. I thought "truancy" indicated that a child skipped/ditched school. Why would my child be considered "Truant" if I have called to verify the absence?

In accordance with Education Code of the State of California [EC § 48260-48273], any pupil who is absent from school for 3 days or more without a valid excuse, or tardy in excess of 30 minutes or more (Tardies are only excused with a parent note for illness, doctor/dental note for appointments), is "truant". E.g., student cuts 1st period on 3 separate days or student cuts one period for 2 days and is absent for one full day.

California Ed Code:

EC Section 48260 (a): Any pupil subject to compulsory full-time education or compulsory continuation education who is absent from school without a valid excuse three full days or tardy or absent more than any 30-minute period during the school day without a valid excuse on three occasions in one school year, or any combination thereof, is a truant and shall be reported to the attendance supervisor or the superintendent of the school district.

11. What about coming in late (tardy) or leaving early for an appointment?

According to State Law [EC § 48260-48273] a student that is absent from school in excess of 30 minutes during a school day is also considered "unexcused." *Compulsory Education Law* therefore, requires a student to attend a *full* day every day!

12. What is the process for a child with more than 3 unexcused absences/Tardies?

You will receive a letter from the school upon the 3rd (third) and the consequently upon the 6th (sixth) absence/truancy. The second letter (6th absence/truancy) indicates that you are required to attend an After School Meeting (ASM) with the Principal or Assistant Principal and a representative from the District Attorney's Office. Additional unexcused absences will result in a referral to the *School Attendance Review Board* and possible referral to the District Attorney.

13. What can I do if my child needs to be out of school for a length of time?

If your child must go out of town for five or more days, you may request that your child is signed up for an Independent Study Agreement. Please note that teachers need at least one week's notice in order to prepare materials without interrupting their instructional time.

14. Why is attendance such a big issue?

Regular attendance is vital to student's success in school. The student who is frequently absent misses social interaction and direct instruction from his/her teachers even though written work can be made up. Any day or hour absent is a missed learning opportunity. Attendance is a key predictor of dropouts. Dropouts create economic loss and jeopardize future work force since only 31% of dropouts keep a job more than a year. Also school loses funding for each absence, regardless of the reason; including illness or excused absences.

15. I thought schools got “paid” when kids are out ill/”excused”?

Schools do NOT receive funding even if the absence is excused. This law went into effect in 1998. Any absence is a loss of revenue as well as instructional opportunities.

16. How much revenue is really lost due to attendance?

The State of California funds *attendance* not absences. That is why schools in California are funded on Average Daily Attendance (ADA). ADA is the primary funding source for all schools/school districts in California.

17. What about homework, if my child is absent can I request homework to be sent home?

Students are given the opportunity to makeup schoolwork missed due to illness or a *valid excused absence* upon their return. As a general policy, a student is allowed one day to complete make-up work for each day of excused absence from school.