

## STUDENTS

### Excused and Unexcused Absences

#### Definition of Absence

[WAC 392-401-015](#) states the definition of an absence:

A student is absent when the student is:

- A. Not physically present on school grounds; and
- B. Not participating in the following activities at an approved location:
  1. Instruction; or
  2. Any instruction-related activity; or
  3. Any other district or school-approved activity that is regulated by an
  4. instructional/academic accountability system, such as participation in district-sponsored sports.

#### Tardies

The district has the flexibility to determine what constitutes a tardy. The district differentiates a tardy from an absence and will exclude tardies from any reports that tally absences for the purposes of filing a truancy petition.

#### Daily Attendance Taking

The district will take daily attendance for all enrolled students.

### Excused and Unexcused Absences

Educators and administrators have a responsibility to monitor absences to determine if students and families need support. Students are expected to attend all assigned in-person classes each day except when there are necessary reasons for students to be absent. Upon enrollment and at the beginning of each school year, the district shall inform students and their parents/guardians of this expectation, the benefits of regular school attendance, the consequences of truancy, the role and responsibility of the district in regard to truancy, and resources available to assist the student and their parents and guardians in correcting truancy. The district will also make this information available online and will take reasonable steps to ensure parents can request and receive such information in languages in which they are fluent. Parents will be required to date and acknowledge review of this information online or in writing.

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Excused Absences

Regular school attendance is necessary for mastery of the educational program provided to students of the district. At times, students may be absent from class. School staff will keep a record of absence and tardiness, including a record of excuse statements submitted by a parent/guardian, or in certain cases, students, to document a student's excused absences. The following principles will govern the development and administration of attendance procedures within the district:

Absences due to the following reasons are excused:

- A. Physical health or mental health symptoms, illness, health condition or medical appointment for the student or person for whom the student is legally responsible. Examples of symptoms, illness, health conditions, or medical appointments include, but are not limited to medical, counseling, mental health wellness, dental, optometry, pregnancy, and behavioral health treatment (which can include in-patient or out-patient treatment for chemical dependency or mental health);
- B. Family emergency, including but not limited to a death or illness in the family;
- C. Religious or cultural purpose, including observance of a religious or cultural holiday or participation in religious or cultural instruction;
- D. Court, judicial proceeding, court ordered activity, or jury service;
- E. Post-secondary, technical school or apprenticeship program visitation, or scholarship interview;
- F. State-recognized search and rescue activities consistent with [RCW 28A.225.055](#);
- G. Absence directly related to the student's homeless or foster care/dependency status;
- H. Absences related to deployment activities of a parent or legal guardian who is an active duty member consistent with [RCW 28A.705.010](#);
- I. Absences due to suspensions, expulsions or emergency expulsions imposed pursuant to Chapter [392-400 WAC](#) if the student is not receiving educational services and is not enrolled in qualifying "course of study" activities as defined in [WAC 392-121-107](#);
- J. Absences due to student safety concerns, including absences related to threats, assaults, or bullying;
- K. Absences due to a student's migrant status; and,
- L. An approved activity that is consistent with district policy and is mutually agreed upon by the principal or designee and a parent, guardian, or emancipated youth.

In the event of emergency school facility closure due to communicable disease outbreak, natural disaster, or other event when districts are required to provide synchronous and asynchronous instruction, absences due to the following reason are excused:

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- A. Absences related to the student’s illness, health condition, or medical appointments due to the communicable disease;
- B. Absences related to caring for a family member who has an illness, health condition, or medical appointment due to the communicable disease, or other emergency health condition related to school facility closures;
- C. Absences related to the student’s family obligations during regularly scheduled school hours that are temporarily necessary because of school facility closures, until other arrangements can be made; and,
- D. Absences due to the student’s parent’s work schedule or other obligations during regularly scheduled school hours, until other arrangements can be made.

The district may define additional categories or criteria for excused absences. A school principal or designee has the authority to determine if an absence meets this policy according to the above criteria for an excused absence.

If an absence is excused, the student shall be permitted to make up all missed assignments outside of class under reasonable conditions and time limits established by the appropriate teacher(s); where reasonable, if a student misses a participation-type class, they can request an alternative assignment that aligns with the learning goals of the activity missed.

An excused absence will be verified by a parent/guardian or an adult, emancipated or appropriately aged student, or school authority responsible for the absence. If attendance is taken electronically, either for a course conducted online or for students physically within the district, an absence will default to unexcused until such time as an excused absence may be verified by a parent or other responsible adult.

Except as provided in subsection (2) of this section, in the event that a child in elementary school is required to attend school under [RCW 28A.225.010](#) or [28A.225.015\(1\)](#) and has five (5) or more excused absences in a single month during the current school year, or ten (10) or more excused absences in the current school year, the district shall schedule a conference or conferences with the parent and child at a time reasonably convenient for all persons included for the purpose of identifying the barriers to the child's regular attendance, and the supports and resources that may be made available to the family so that the child is able to regularly attend school. To satisfy the requirements of this section, the conference must include at least one school district employee such as a nurse, counselor, social worker, teacher, or community human services provider, except in those instances regarding the attendance of a child who has an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or a plan developed under section 504 of the rehabilitation act of 1973, in which case the reconvening of the team that created the program or plan is required.

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This conference is not required if the school has received prior notice or a doctor's note has been provided and an academic plan put in place so that the child does not fall behind.

Unexcused Absences

Any absence from school for the majority of hours or periods in an average school day is unexcused unless it meets one of the criteria above or in administrative procedure for an excused absence.

As a means of instilling values of responsibility and personal accountability, students whose absences are not excused will experience the consequences of their absences. A student's grade may be affected if a graded activity or assignment occurs during the period of time when the student is absent, and that absence is not excused. A student's academic grade or credit in a particular subject or course may be adversely affected by reason of tardiness or unexcused absences only to the extent and upon the basis that:

- A. The student's attendance and participation are related to the instructional objectives or goals of the particular subject or course; and,
- B. The student's attendance and/or participation has been identified by the teacher pursuant to the policy of the school district as a basis for grading, in whole or in part, in the particular subject or course.

The school shall notify a student's parent or guardian in writing or by telephone whenever the student has failed to attend school after one unexcused absence (the equivalent of one school day) within any month during the current school year. The notification shall include the potential consequences of additional unexcused absences. The school will make reasonable efforts to provide this information in a language the parent understands.

The school will hold a conference with the parent or guardian after three (3) unexcused absences within any month during the current school year. The conference will analyze the causes of the student's absences and develop a plan that identifies student, school, and family commitments to reduce the student's absences from school. If the parent does not attend the conference, the school official may still hold the conference with the student. However, the school will notify the parent of the steps the district has decided to take to eliminate or reduce the student's absences.

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Between the student's second and seventh unexcused absence, the school must take the following data-informed steps:

- A. Middle and high school students will be administered the Washington Assessment of the Risks and Needs of Students (WARNS) or other assessment.
- B. These steps must include, where appropriate, providing an available approved best practice or research-based intervention, or both, consistent with the WARNS profile or other assessment, if an assessment was applied, adjusting the child's school program or school or course assignment, providing more individualized or remedial instruction, providing appropriate vocational courses or work experience, referring the child to a community truancy board, requiring the child to attend an alternative school or program, or assisting the parent of the child to obtain supplementary services that might eliminate or ameliorate the cause or causes for the absence from school.
- C. For any child with an existing individualized education plan (IEP) or 504 plan, these steps must include the convening of the child's IEP or 504 plan team, including a behavior specialist or mental health specialist where appropriate, to consider the reasons for the absences. If necessary, and if consent from the parent is given, a functional behavior assessment to explore the function of the absence behavior will be conducted and a detailed behavior plan completed. Time should be allowed for the behavior plan to be initiated and data tracked to determine progress.

No later than the student's seventh unexcused absence in a month the district will enter into an agreement with the student and parents that establishes school attendance requirements, refer the student to a community engagement board or file a petition and affidavit with the juvenile court alleging a violation of [RCW 28A.225.010](#).

If such action is not successful, the district will file a petition and affidavit with the juvenile court alleging a violation of [RCW 28A.225.010](#) by the parent, student, or parent and student no earlier than the seventh unexcused absence within any month during the current school year and no later than the fifteenth unexcused absence during the current school year. or upon the tenth unexcused absence during the current school year.

The superintendent will enforce the district's attendance policies and procedures. Because the full knowledge and cooperation of students and parents are necessary for the success of the policies and procedures, procedures will be disseminated broadly and made available to parents and students annually.

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Tardies and Disciplinary Actions

Students shall not be absent if:

- A. They have been suspended, expelled, or emergency expelled pursuant to [Chapter 392-400 WAC](#);
- B. They are receiving educational services as required by [RCW 28A.600.015](#) and [Chapter 392-400 WAC](#); and
- C. The student is enrolled in qualifying "course of study" activities as defined in [WAC 392-121-107](#). Course of study activities do not include sending homework packets home.

A full-day absence is when a student is absent for fifty percent or more of their scheduled day.

A school shall not convert or combine tardies into absences that contribute to a truancy petition.

A student shall be considered absent if they are on school grounds but not in their assigned setting.

Tiered Response System for Student Absences

[WAC 392-401-045](#) requires school districts to implement minimum requirements of a multitiered system of support for attendance to address barriers to student attendance, provide timely interventions and best practices to reduce chronic absenteeism and truancy. Multitiered systems of support include:

- A. Monitoring daily attendance data for all students who are absent, whether excused or unexcused;
- B. A process to contact families and verify current contact information for each enrolled student that includes multiple attempts and modalities in the parent's home language;
- C. Differentiated supports that address the barriers to attendance and participation that included universal supports for all students and tiered interventions for students at-risk of and experiencing chronic absence, including school and district attendance or engagement teams, connecting to community resources, and community engagement boards; and,
- D. A process for outreach and reengagement for students who have been withdrawn due to nonattendance and there is no evidence that the student is enrolled elsewhere. This

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outreach and reengagement process must include:

1. A school and/or district point person/people to maintain the list, keep it updated and coordinate the outreach;
2. School or district staff assigned to conduct the outreach and attempts at re-engagement in coordination with community partners or other programs;
3. Multiple methods of communication and outreach in a language or mode of communication that the parent understands, including phone calls, texts, letters, and home visits;
4. Referral to community-based organizations;
5. Documentation of the attempts to reach student and family;
6. Following the required steps to address unexcused absences in [Chapter 28A.225 RCW](#), including early communication to parents, holding parent conferences, administering a truancy screener to understand the underlying reasons for the absences, and providing evidence-based or best practice interventions, even if the student has been withdrawn due to nonattendance.

Students Dependent Pursuant to Chapter 13.34, RCW

A district representative or certificated staff member will review unexpected or excessive absences of a student who has been found dependent under the Juvenile Court Act with that student and adults involved with that student. Adults includes the student's caseworker, educational liaison, attorney if one is appointed, parent or guardians, foster parents and/or the person providing placement for the student. The review will take into consideration the cause of the absences, unplanned school transitions, periods of running from care, in-patient treatment, incarceration, school adjustment, educational gaps, psychosocial issues, and the student's unavoidable appointments that occur during the school day. The representative or staff member must proactively support the student's management of their schoolwork.

Migrant Students

The district, parent/guardian and student are encouraged to work to create an Extended Absence Agreement with the school to decrease the risk of an adverse effect on the student's educational progress.

