

# COMPULSORY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

## The Laws You Need to Know

### What are the school attendance requirements in California?

- Every person between the ages of six (6) years and eighteen (18) years of age is required to attend school. (Education Code 48200)
- Students are expected to attend school regularly and on time.
- Parents and guardians are required to send their children to school.

### What is considered a valid, legal absence?

- Absences are allowed for the following causes, when **verified**:
  - A student's illness (not parent's or other family member)
  - Quarantine by a county or city health officer
  - Medical, dental or eye appointments
  - Attending the funeral of an immediate family member: one (1) day in California; three (3) days out of California. Immediate family member means student's mother/father, brother/sister, child, grandmother/grandfather, or spouse, spouse's mother/father, spouse's child, spouse's brother/sister, or any relative living in the immediate household of the student. (Education Code 48205)
  - Court appearance when the student has a subpoena with his/her name on it.
  - Religious holiday/retreat/ceremony (maximum of four (4) hours per semester) **with prior written request from parent and approval from school**
  - Employment conference attended by student's parent/guardian **with prior written request from parent and approval from school**. Student who attends such a conference with parent/guardian is expected to complete all assignments and tests which can reasonably be provided. (Education Code 48205, CCR Title 5, Sec. 420)
- **Verified absence due to illness or quarantine is allowed.** Verification may be by one of the following: school/public health nurse, attendance supervisor, physician, teacher, or any other qualified employee of the school district. (Education Code 46011, CCR Title 5, Sec. 421)

**Parents cannot verify an absence!**

**What are the consequences for parents of school children when a student does not attend school?**

- Parents who fail to send their children to school can be criminally prosecuted under Penal Codes 272 and 270.1 and Education Codes 48291/48293 and 48453/48454. The penalties can range from a fine of \$50 to \$2,500 plus a penalty assessment and can be sentenced to up to a year in jail. Parents can be ordered by a judge to personally deliver their child to school.
- Parents who violate education laws can also be prosecuted for neglecting their child's education. The charge is "Contributing to the Delinquency of a Minor," a misdemeanor. (Penal Code sec. 272) The penalties are up to one year in the county jail and up to a \$2,500 fine for each child.

**What are the best ways for parents to avoid a violation of the compulsory education laws?**

- When your child is ill, either bring the child to school to have the illness verified by school personnel/school nurse or take the child to a health care provider for verification and obtain written documentation of the illness. Keep a copy of the documentation for yourself.
- Discuss ongoing medication conditions with school personnel and, if necessary, sign a release of information to the school from the doctor.
- Make sure that your child is on time and in school every day.
- Schedule medical and dental appointments after school or on school holidays.
- Seek assistance from a school administrator/counselor if you are having problems getting your child to school. They can direct you to resources that will help you.

**REGULAR SCHOOL ATTENDANCE IS THE  
MOST VALUABLE GIFT YOU CAN GIVE YOUR CHILDREN**