

# STEPHENS COUNTY

## ATTENDANCE PROTOCOL

SCHOOL YEAR  
2025-2026

Revised 1/14/2025

The Attendance Protocol Committee has agreed upon the following procedures, which are intended to promote the reduction of truancy at the individual, family and community levels. It is understood, however, that these procedures are general guidelines and extenuating circumstances may be considered as allowed by law for each student and family. It is also understood that each state and local agency involved must first adhere to its own policies, which were considered in the development in this protocol.

# STEPHENS COUNTY ATTENDANCE PROTOCOL

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## **Purpose and Organization**

The Official Code of Georgia Annotated, Section 20-2-690.2 establishes a Student Attendance Protocol Committee for each county in Georgia. The purpose of this Protocol Committee is to ensure coordination and cooperation among officials, agencies, and programs involved in compulsory attendance issues; to reduce the number of unexcused absences from school; and to increase the percentage of students present to take tests which are required to be administered under the laws of this state.

Each local board of education shall participate in, consider, and make publicly available, including but not limited to posting in a conspicuous location, its decision regarding the recommendations of the committee as provided in this Code section. Independent school systems may participate in the committee in the county where the system is located. Independent school systems whose geographic area encompasses more than one county may select one of such counties in which to participate. An independent school system that elects not to participate in the committee of the county where it is located shall request that the chief judge of the superior court of a county encompassed by its geographic area to establish an independent student attendance protocol committee in the same manner as established for the county school system.

The Student Protocol Committee shall be organized as provided in the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, Section 20-2-690.2. The Chief Judge of the Superior Court of each county shall establish a Student Attendance Protocol Committee for the county. Each of the following agencies, officials, or programs shall designate a representative(s) to serve on the committee:

- The Chief Judge of the Superior Court
- The Juvenile Court Judge or Judges of the county
- The District Attorney for the county
- The Solicitor-General of State Court, if the county has a State Court
- The Department of Juvenile Justice
- The School Superintendent, a Certificated School Employee, and a local School Board Member from each public school system in the county and a Certificated School Social Worker
- The Sheriff of the county
- The Chief of Police of the county police department
- The Chief of Police of each municipal police department in the county
- The County Department of Family and Children Services
- The County Board of Health
- The County Mental Health Organization
- Family Connections
- The court approved community based risk reduction program established by the juvenile court in accordance with Code Section 15-11-38, if such a program has been established.

The committee thus established may appoint such additional members as necessary and proper to accomplish the purposes of the committee.

Each committee shall, by June 1, 2005, adopt a written student attendance protocol for its county school system and for each independent school system within its geographic boundaries which shall be filed with the Department of Education. The protocol shall outline in detail the procedures to be used in identifying, reporting, investigating, and prosecuting cases of alleged violations of Code Section 20-2- 690.1, relating to mandatory school attendance. The protocol shall outline in detail methods for determining the causes of failing to comply with compulsory attendance and appropriately addressing the issue with children and their parents or guardians.

The protocol shall also include recommendations for policies relating to tardiness. The Department of Education shall provide model school attendance protocols, if requested by the committee.

A copy of the protocol shall be furnished to each agency, official, or program within the county that has any responsibility in assisting children and their parents or guardians in complying with Code Section 20-2-690.1.

The committee shall write the summary of possible consequences and penalties for failing to comply with compulsory attendance under Code Section 20-2-690.1 for children and their parents, guardians, or other persons who have control or charge of children for distribution by schools in accordance with Code Section 20-2-690.1. The summary of possible consequences for children shall include possible dispositions for children in need of services and possible denial or suspension of a driver's license for a child in accordance with Code Section 40-5-22.

The committee shall continue in existence after writing the student attendance protocol. The chief judge of the superior court of each county shall ensure that the committee meets at least quarterly during the first year, and twice annually thereafter, to evaluate compliance with the protocol, effectiveness of the protocol, and appropriate modifications.

Each local board of education shall report student attendance rates to the committee and the State Board of Education at the end of each school year, according to a schedule established by the State Board of Education.

## Stephens County School System Policy Board Policy JB

Regular school attendance is a law in Georgia. Parents and students must assume responsibility for being punctual and regular in school attendance. It is the position of the Stephens County Board of Education that each school day is important, and no student should be absent except for extraordinary reasons. Excessive tardiness and early dismissals interrupt the school day and can negatively impact student learning.

**NOTE: Students serving as pages at the Capitol are considered present for that day. Students in foster care are counted present when they are attending court proceedings relating to their foster care.**

### **\*Excused Absences**

An excused absence is an absence for which a student may make up any school work missed during the absence; however, when a student does not satisfactorily make up the school work missed or does not provide an excuse from the parent/guardian within the time limits required by the school the absences will be treated as an unexcused absence.

Absences from school may be excused for the following reasons:

1. The pupil is personally ill and attendance at school will endanger his/her health or the health of others.
2. The pupil's immediate family has a serious illness or death, which would reasonably necessitate absence from school.
3. A special and recognized religious holiday observed by the faith of the pupil occurs on a school day.
4. A court order or an order by a governmental agency including pre-induction physical examinations for service in the armed forces, mandating absences from school.
5. Conditions rendering attendance impossible or hazardous to student health or safety.
6. A period not to exceed one day is allowed for registering to vote or voting in a public election.
7. The pupil has a special medical or dental appointment that cannot be made for after school hours.
8. The pupil attends a funeral, which is approved at the discretion of the school administration.
9. An educational trip if approved by the school administrator after the parent submits the required application.
10. Visitation with parent/guardian up to five days for parent's/guardian's call to duty or leave from overseas deployment to a combat zone or combat support posting.

The school may request that the parent(s)/guardian(s) provide one or more of the following documents to validate the absence as excused:

- School nurse release
- Doctor's excuse
- Subpoena/Court Order
- Obituary of an immediate family member
- Hospital intake form for an immediate family member
- Government document for pre-induction physical examinations for service in the armed forces

This list is not all inclusive.

When a student is absent from school, an excuse must be submitted to the school within three school days of the student's return to school.

In regards to excused absences, a parent/guardian note may serve as documentation for a MAXIMUM OF SEVEN missed days of school. After SEVEN parent notes have been submitted, all additional absences will be considered unexcused unless accompanied by appropriate documents to validate the absences as excused. Please refer to the list above for documentation that will be accepted.

For an excused absence, a student will have a maximum of three school days to complete make-up work. For excused absences of 2-5 consecutive days, a student will have a maximum of five school days to complete the make-up work. For excused absences of 6-9 consecutive days, a student will have a maximum of ten school days to complete the make-up work. Students who miss 10 or more consecutive days due to illness may apply for hospital homebound services. The student must complete all make-up work within 14 calendar days after the close of a semester.

### **\*Unexcused Absences**

All absences that are not validated as excused according to the above conditions will be considered unexcused. Absences due to suspension or expulsion are unexcused.

### **\*Excuses for Tardiness/Early Dismissals**

The policy concerning EXCUSES FOR ABSENCES also applies to tardiness/early dismissals. Tardiness and Early Dismissals may be excused for the following reasons.

1. The pupil is personally ill.
2. The pupil's immediate family has a serious illness or death, which would reasonably necessitate a tardy or early dismissal.
3. A court order or an order by a governmental agency including pre-induction physical examinations for service in the armed forces.
4. The pupil has a special medical or dental appointment that cannot be made for after school hours.
5. The pupil attends a funeral, which is approved at the discretion of the school administration.

### **Consequences and Penalties for Excessive Absences**

When a student accumulates 5 unexcused absences, the school will notify the parent/guardian of the consequences and penalties of such absences and that each subsequent absence shall constitute a separate offense. After two reasonable attempts to notify the parent/guardian, the school will send written notice via first class mail or certified mail with return receipt requested. Once the letter is sent to the parent, the school has fulfilled its responsibility to notify the parent.

On an annual basis, the Stephens County School System will provide to the parent, guardian, or other person having control or charge of each student enrolled in school a written summary of possible consequences and penalties for failing to comply with compulsory attendance regulations. By September 1 of each school year or within 30 school days of a student's enrollment in the school system, the parent, guardian, or other person having control or charge of each student shall sign a statement indicating receipt of such written notification of possible consequences and penalties. After two (2) reasonable attempts to secure such signatures, the school will send written notice via first class mail or certified mail with return receipt requested. Once the letter is sent to the parent, the school has fulfilled its responsibility to notify the parent.

In addition, students who are age 10 or older by September 1 shall also sign a statement indicating receipt of written notification regarding possible consequences for non-compliance with compulsory attendance regulations and the Stephens County Board of Education policy governing student attendance.

If a student accumulates a total of eight absences or five unexcused absences, an attendance support team meeting will be held at the student's school in order to discuss attendance, grades, and discipline. An attendance support team meeting may be held when a student accumulates 14 tardies or early check-outs.

### **Truancy**

The Stephens County Board of Education defines truancy as “any child subject to compulsory attendance who during any school year is absent 5 or more days without a valid written excuse.”

### **\*Permission to Leave School**

All pupils are required to remain at school at all times during school hours unless permission to leave is granted by the principal upon a bona fide request of the parent(s)/guardian(s), provided the reason for leaving school is in keeping with attendance regulations.

### **Enrollment Requirements for Driver’s License/Permit** (O.C.G.A. § 40-5-22):

The Department of Driver Services (DDS) shall not issue an instruction permit or driver’s license to a person who is younger than 18 years of age unless at the time such minor submits an application for an instruction permit or driver’s license the minor presents acceptable proof that he or she has received a high school diploma, a general educational development (GED) diploma, a special diploma, or a certificate of high school completion or has terminated his or her secondary education and is enrolled in a postsecondary school, is pursuing a GED diploma, or the records of the DDS indicate that the applicant is enrolled in and not under suspension or expulsion from a public or private school or is enrolled in a home education program that satisfies the reporting requirements of all state laws governing such program.

### **Attendance Support Teams**

Each school will establish an Attendance Support Team (AST) chaired by an attendance support worker/counselor or principal designee. The team will be responsible for monitoring and implementing procedures to reduce tardy days, early dismissals, and truancy at the applicable school. The team will assess each truancy case and develop strategies and interventions to correct the student’s truancy.

### **\*Educational Trips**

Parents/guardians must complete the application for an Educational Trip and submit the request to the school one week before the trip. Principals have the ability to approve or to deny educational field trips. The administrator will review the student’s attendance record prior to making the decision to approve or to deny. Educational trips will not be excused for more than 5 school days. No trip will be excused for more than 5 consecutive school days. No trip will be excused during the last week of a semester due to exams. All work missed must be made up within the number of allotted days as previously specified. In addition, the student must keep a log of the activities that occurred that are related to his/her educational experience and write a paper concerning these activities. These documents must be presented to the administration in a similar manner as all other make-up work.

### **\*Hospital/Homebound**

A hospitalized or homebound pupil who receives as much as three hours of instruction per week from a certified hospital/homebound teacher may be counted present at the school for that week.

### **\*Effect of Absences on Grades**

Absences shall not penalize student grades if the following conditions are met:

1. absences are justified and validated for excusable reasons;
2. makeup work for excused absences was completed satisfactorily and within the time limits required for each school; and
3. A grade average of 70 or above has been earned in the course work.

**Administrators may use discretion in applying the aforementioned policy.**

Stephens County Schools

Date Adopted: 7/7/04

Revised: 01/14/25

## **Additional Attendance Terms and Information**

### **Absence:**

A student is considered absent any time he or she is missing from any assigned class or school activity, with or without parent permission.

### **Excused Absence:**

An excused absence is an absence for which a student may make up any school work missed during the absence; however, when a student does not satisfactorily make up the school work missed or does not provide an excuse from the parent/guardian within the time limits required by the school the absences will be treated as an unexcused absence.

Absences, which occur for reasons not listed above, will not be excused except when extenuating circumstances exist in the judgment of the school administrator.

### **Unexcused Absence:**

An absence without a valid written excuse is considered unexcused. Absences due to out-of-school suspension or expulsion are unexcused. (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 - JB 160-5-1-.10.)

### **Truant:**

Any child subject to compulsory attendance who during the school calendar year has more than five days of unexcused absences is considered truant (JB 160-5-1-.10).

### **Permission to Leave School**

All pupils are required to remain at school at all times during school hours unless permission to leave is granted by the principal upon a bona fide request of the parent(s)/guardian(s), provided the reason for leaving school is in keeping with attendance regulations.

### **Tardy:**

A student is tardy when he or she is not present in the assigned class or school activity at the designated time.

### **Excused Tardy:**

A tardy is excused when a student arrives late to school with a valid excuse. Other tardies may be excused at the Principal's discretion.

### **Unexcused Tardy:**

A tardy is unexcused when a student arrives late to school without a valid excuse. (Examples include over-sleeping, traffic congestion, errands for parents).

### **Early Dismissal:**

An early dismissal is when a student is checked out of school before the end of the school day.

### **Excused Early Dismissal:**

An early dismissal is excused when a student is checked out early before the end of the school day with a valid excuse. (See above: **Excuses for Tardiness/Early Dismissals.**)

**Unexcused Early Dismissal:**

An early dismissal is unexcused when a student is checked out early before the end of the school day without a valid excuse. (Examples include going out of town, a hair appointment, avoiding after school traffic.)

**Detention:**

Work/study session outside of regular school hours.

**In-school Suspension:**

Removal of a student from their regular classes and assignment of the student to an alternative program isolated from peers.

**Out-of-school Suspension:**

During the period of suspension, the student is excluded from all school sponsored classes and/or activities. 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.

**Expulsion:**

Permanent removal from school.

**Attendance Support Teams**

Each school will establish an Attendance Support Team (AST) chaired by an attendance support worker/counselor or principal's designee. Members of the team may include the attendance support worker, school counselor, school nurse, school social worker, an administrator, and community representatives. The AST will review the student's attendance, grades, and discipline record with the parent/guardian and/or student depending on the student's age and circumstances surrounding the attendance issue. The AST will give suggestions and inform the family of referral resources when needed and appropriate.

The law and possible consequences of further absences will be discussed. A contract will be signed with the parent/guardian, student (if present), and the AST representative. Further unexcused absences may result in a legal complaint being filed.



# Stephens County School System

*Schools Committed to Student Success*

## Attendance Support Team Notes

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_ NAME OF STUDENT: \_\_\_\_\_ DOB: \_\_\_\_\_

SCHOOL: \_\_\_\_\_ GRADE: \_\_\_\_\_

PARENT/GUARDIAN: \_\_\_\_\_

**Total Absences:** \_\_\_\_\_ EXCUSED \_\_\_\_\_ UNEXCUSED \_\_\_\_\_

**Total Tardies / Checkouts:** \_\_\_\_\_ EXCUSED \_\_\_\_\_ UNEXCUSED \_\_\_\_\_

### AST MEETING PROCEDURE:

- The team is introduced, brief information about the Attendance Support Team is shared, and the Compulsory Attendance Law is explained.
- Team members, parents, and students (as applicable – age 10 and older) discuss the problems which cause the absences from school.
- Team members share and show evidence of how poor attendance impacts the student’s grades, discipline, peer interactions, and the student’s self-esteem.
- Specific strategies and interventions to improve student attendance are identified and agreed upon.
- Parent and student are provided a copy of completed “Consequences and Penalties for Excessive Absences” form.
- An Attendance Contract is developed and signed by parents, students (as applicable), and Attendance Support Team members. A copy of the Attendance Contract is provided to the parent and student.
- Parent and students are informed that any violation of the Attendance Contract may result in a referral to Juvenile Court (students) or to Magistrate Court (parents).

NOTES: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



# Stephens County School System

*Schools Committed to Student Success*

## ATTENDANCE SUPPORT TEAM CONTRACT

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

NAME OF STUDENT: \_\_\_\_\_ DOB: \_\_\_\_\_

SCHOOL: \_\_\_\_\_ GRADE: \_\_\_\_\_

PARENT/GUARDIAN: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

### **STUDENT AGREES TO: (Check all that apply.)**

- \_\_\_ ATTEND SCHOOL, ARRIVE ON TIME, & STAY FOR DURATION OF THE SCHOOL DAY UNLESS LAWFULLY EXCUSED.
- \_\_\_ PARTICIPATE IN AND MAINTAIN PASSING GRADES IN ALL CLASSES.
- \_\_\_ COMPLETE AND RETURN ALL HOMEWORK AS DIRECTED.
- \_\_\_ OBEY ALL SCHOOL RULES, DRESS CODES, AND BEHAVE APPROPRIATELY AT SCHOOL.
- \_\_\_ SHOW AGENDA AND OR OTHER SCHOOL COMMUNICATION TO PARENT AS REQUIRED.
- \_\_\_ OTHER \_\_\_\_\_

### **PARENT AGREES TO: (Check all that apply.)**

- \_\_\_ ENSURE THE STUDENT IS READY TO ATTEND SCHOOL ON TIME EACH DAY & STAY FOR THE DURATION OF THE SCHOOL DAY, UNLESS LAWFULLY EXCUSED.
- \_\_\_ HAVE CHILD SEEN ON FIRST DAY OF CHILD'S ABSENCE AND SUBMIT A DOCTOR'S EXCUSE ON THE FIRST DAY OF THE STUDENT'S RETURN TO SCHOOL OR BRING STUDENT TO THE SCHOOL NURSE.
- \_\_\_ NOTIFY THE SCHOOL ATTENDANCE SUPPORT WORKER IMMEDIATELY IF STUDENT IS GOING TO BE ABSENT FROM SCHOOL FOR ANY REASON OR IF STUDENT REFUSES TO COME TO SCHOOL.
- \_\_\_ ENSURE ALL HOMEWORK IS COMPLETED AND RETURNED TO SCHOOL PROMPTLY AS DIRECTED.
- \_\_\_ INFORM SCHOOL NURSE AND PRINCIPAL ABOUT MEDICATION PRESCRIBED AND TAKEN BY THE CHILD.
- \_\_\_ CHECK AGENDA DAILY AND USE FOR COMMUNICATION WITH SCHOOL
- \_\_\_ ATTEND ANY FUTURE SCHOOL CONFERENCE CONCERNING THE STUDENT.
- \_\_\_ OTHER \_\_\_\_\_

**SPECIFIC TERMS OF CONTRACT:**

FAILURE TO COMPLY WITH ALL TERMS MAY RESULT IN A REFERRAL TO:

- \_\_\_ JUVENILE COURT
- \_\_\_ MENTAL HEALTH OR OTHER COUNSELING PROVIDER
- \_\_\_ DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES
- \_\_\_ OTHER \_\_\_\_\_

WE HAVE READ OR HAVE HAD READ TO US THE ABOVE ACTION PLAN TO IMPROVE OUR CHILD'S (CHILDREN'S) SCHOOL ATTENDANCE. WE UNDERSTAND THAT FAILURE TO COMPLY WITH THE ABOVE ACTION PLAN MAY RESULT IN A COURT REFERRAL.

\_\_\_\_\_  
STUDENT

\_\_\_\_\_  
PARENT/GUARDIAN

\_\_\_\_\_  
ATTENDANCE SUPPORT TEAM MEMBER

\_\_\_\_\_  
ATTENDANCE SUPPORT TEAM MEMBER



# Stephens County School System

*Schools Committed to Student Success*

## AUTHORIZATION FOR RELEASE OF INFORMATION

Date of Attendance Support Team Meeting: \_\_\_\_\_

NAME OF STUDENT: \_\_\_\_\_

DOB: \_\_\_\_\_

SCHOOL: \_\_\_\_\_

GRADE: \_\_\_\_\_

PARENT/GUARDIAN: \_\_\_\_\_

**Total Absences:** \_\_\_\_\_ **EXCUSED** \_\_\_\_\_ **UNEXCUSED** \_\_\_\_\_

**Total Tardies / Checkouts:** \_\_\_\_\_ **EXCUSED** \_\_\_\_\_ **UNEXCUSED** \_\_\_\_\_

I hereby under the provision of Public Law 93-380, "The Family Education Rights and Privacy Act of 1974," authorize Stephens County School System to release /obtain information regarding \_\_\_\_\_'s absences from school. I further authorize establishing open lines of communication for the \_\_\_\_\_ school year. Open lines of communication will mean the sharing of information of the students' progress/problems by telephone contact, written contact and/ or personal contact. I hereby authorize open lines of contact between the following agencies/person:

**Stephens County School System**  
**Stephens County Health Department**  
**Toccoa Police Department**  
**Northeast Georgia Physicians Group**

**Department of Family and Children's Services**  
**Stephens County Mental Health**  
**Stephens County Sheriff's Office**  
**Dr. Elizabeth Pinkerton**

**Department of Juvenile Justice**  
**Stephens County Hospital**  
**Dr. Angela Reese**

**Other Agencies Approved:** \_\_\_\_\_

and any other agencies/individuals approved by the Attendance Support Team. All information I hereby authorize to be released/shared between agencies will be held strictly confidential within the sharing agencies. I understand the purpose of this release is so the attendance support team may gather and share information and make recommendations to best help my student.

Parent/Guardian Signature & Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Witness Signature & Date: \_\_\_\_\_



# Stephens County School System

## *Schools Committed to Student Success*

### CONSEQUENCES AND PENALTIES FOR EXCESSIVE ABSENCES

Mandatory attendance is required for children between their sixth and sixteenth birthdays. All children enrolled for twenty school days or more in a public school prior to their sixth birthday shall become subject to the compulsory attendance law even though they have not attained six years of age (O.C.G.A § 20-2-150). Every parent, guardian, or other person residing within the state of Georgia having control or charge of any subject to mandatory attendance shall be responsible for enrolling in a public school, private school, or home school program (O.C.G.A. § 20-2-690.1). Legal complaints may be filed with the Magistrate Court against the parent(s) or guardian(s) or with the Juvenile Court against the parent(s) or guardian(s) and/or the student for violating the Georgia Compulsory Attendance Law after all reasonable efforts to resolve and address absenteeism and/or tardiness have been exhausted by the Board of Education.

**STUDENT CONSEQUENCES** include but not limited to:

- permitting the child to remain with their caregivers with or without conditions prescribed by the court (O.C.G.A. § 15-11-212);
  - placing the child on probation;
  - requiring community service;
  - requiring the child to attend structured after school or evening program;
  - requiring the child be supervised during the day (O.C.G.A. § 15-11-442);
  - transferring temporary custody of the child;
  - ordering the child and his or her parent, guardian, or legal custodian to participate in counseling;
  - ordering the Department of Family and Children Services to create a case plan and ordering parent participation (O.C.G.A. § 15-11-212);
  - requiring as a condition of probation that the child obtain a high school diploma or equivalent (O.C.G.A. § 15-11-601);
  - suspending of driver's license privileges;
  - continuing court involvement supervision for the time necessary for compliance, not to exceed two years
  - (O.C.G.A. 15-11-443); and/or
- Utilizing progressive discipline or sanctions as needed to protect and safeguard the best interest of the student's educational future.

**PARENT(S) CONSEQUENCES** include, but are not limited to:

- using contempt powers to incarcerate the parent or guardian for up to 20 days (O.C.G.A. § 15-11-31);
- imposing a fine up to \$1000.00;
- requiring the child's parent, guardian, or legal custodian to participate in parenting classes (O.C.G.A. § 15-11-31); and/or
- requiring the child's parent, guardian, or legal custodian to enter into a contract or plan as part of the disposition of any charges against the child to provide supervision and control for the child (O.C.G.A. § 15-11-31)

Any violations or non-compliance by the parent(s) or guardian occurring beyond a contempt charge shall immediately be referred to the District Attorney's office by the Juvenile Court for prosecution of the parent(s) or guardian under O.C.G.A. 20-2-690.1. Any person found in violation of said Code shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon conviction shall be subject to a fine not less than \$25.00 and not greater than \$100.00; imprisonment not to exceed 30 days; community service; or any combination of such penalties.

*Each day's absence from school in violation of this part after the child's school system notified the parent, guardian, or other person who has control or charge of a child of five unexcused days of absences for a child shall constitute a separate offense.*

I have read or have had read to me and understand the **Consequences and Penalties for Excessive Absences** provided above. I understand that ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) DOB: \_\_\_\_\_ has accumulated:

**Total Absences:** \_\_\_\_\_ Excused \_\_\_\_\_ Unexcused \_\_\_\_\_

**Total Tardies/Checkouts:** \_\_\_\_\_ Excused \_\_\_\_\_ Unexcused \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Parent/Guardian Signature                      Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Student Signature                                      Date

### School Procedures

In addition to the following procedures, the Principal or designee may address the student and/or parent(s)/guardian(s) by phone, mail, or in person at any time school attendance is a concern. The attendance procedures are based on absences per school year.

<b>Procedures for Unexcused Absences</b>	
Beginning of School Year or Upon Enrollment	<p>Written Notice to Parents/Guardians: Parent/Guardian will receive notice of the school attendance policy along with the consequences and penalties for failing to comply with Georgia attendance laws at the beginning of the school year.</p> <p>Written Notice to Students: Students will receive notice of the school attendance policy along with the consequences and penalties for failing to comply with Georgia attendance laws at the beginning of the school year.</p>
3	Phone Call: Parent/Guardian will receive a phone call from the classroom teacher indicating the number of absences and reminding the parent of the importance of regular school attendance.
5	Parent/Guardian will receive communication from the school when a student has missed 5 total days of school. (Virtual and In Person Learners)
10+	<p>Meeting:</p> <p>An Attendance Meeting will be held with the Attendance Support Team to discuss supports that can be provided to facilitate improved attendance. The attendance contract will be discussed. Consequences for continued absences will be reviewed.</p>
11+	<p>Juvenile Court Referral and/or a Risk Reduction Referral may be completed by the school social worker</p> <p>Documentation Provided to the Parent: Parent will receive a communication from the school when a student has missed 10 days of school.</p> <p>Juvenile Court Referral/Risk Reduction: Parent will be notified by local law enforcement of the date and time to appear in court.</p> <p>Please note: A parent or student may be referred to court before a student reaches 10 unexcused absences if there is a history of truancy or if other circumstances merit an earlier court referral.</p>
15+	Schools will communicate to parents when a student has missed 15 days of school reminding them of the importance of school attendance.

<b>Procedures for Excused Absences</b>	
Beginning of School Year or Upon Enrollment	<p>Written Notice to Parents/Guardians: Parent/Guardian will receive notice of the school attendance policy along with the consequences and penalties for failing to comply with Georgia attendance laws at the beginning of the school year.</p> <p>Written Notice to Students: Students will receive notice of the school attendance policy along with the consequences and penalties for failing to comply with Georgia attendance laws at the beginning of the school year.</p>
7	Parent notes may be accepted for 7 (seven) total absences. After the 7 <sup>th</sup> parent note, a student would need a medical excuse or release from the school nurse in order to be excused. Parent notes must be submitted within 3 days of a student's return from absences.
10	Attendance will be reviewed. 10 Excused absences and referrals may be made to the Attendance Support Team.
11+	Juvenile Court Referral may be made.

<b>Procedures for Tardies and Check-outs</b>	
Tardies and Checkouts (total combined)	Notification
14	Meeting: Parent will be contacted and an Attendance Support Team (AST) meeting will be scheduled to discuss supports that can be provided to facilitate improved attendance. If the tardies and checkouts are excused with valid written excuses, the AST Chairperson will hold this meeting at his/her discretion. Students 10 years and older may participate in the AST meetings, as deemed appropriate by the AST chairperson. An Attendance Contract will be developed by the AST Team.
15+	Excessive tardiness and checkouts interrupt the school day and can negatively impact student learning. A referral may be made to Juvenile Court when all efforts have been exhausted by the Board of Education to reduce number of tardies and checkouts, particularly when excessive tardiness and checkouts occur in addition to excessive unexcused absences.

## STUDENT WITHDRAWALS

- Stephens County Schools will withdraw any student who is **not** subject to compulsory attendance (between ages 6-16), and;
  1. has missed 10 or more consecutive days of unexcused absences;
  2. Is **not** receiving instructional services from the school system through hospital homebound instruction or instructional services required by the federal Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).
- Each principal or designee shall use his/her best efforts to notify the parent/guardian if the school system plans to withdraw such student who is younger than 18 years of age and is not subject to the compulsory school attendance law.
- Schools are authorized to withdraw a student subject to compulsory school attendance if the principal has determined the student is no longer a resident of the county or enrolled in a private or home study program.
- Schools shall withdraw students retroactive to the first day of the consecutive absences.

## Community Support / Responsibilities

### A. Attendance Protocol Committee

The committee shall elect a chairperson and may elect other officers if they so choose.

The committee is responsible for ensuring coordination and cooperation among officials, agencies, and programs involved in compulsory attendance issues, to reduce the number of unexcused absences from school, and to increase the percentage of students present to take tests which are required to be administered under the laws of the state.

By June 1, 2005 each student protocol committee shall produce and adopt a student attendance protocol for its Local County or school system:

- The attendance protocol must specify the procedures for identifying, reporting, investigating, and prosecuting violations of the state's mandatory school attendance law (O.C.G.A. 20-2-690.1).
- The protocol must also specify local methods used to determine the causes and solutions for student truancy, and the local attendance protocol will include recommendations for policies related to student tardiness.

A copy of the local protocol shall be provided to each agency, official, or program within the county that has any responsibility in assisting children and their parents or guardians with respect to student attendance.

### B. Law Enforcement

Law enforcement officers will transport truant students to school if they are on the streets or in public places unsupervised during school hours. Students who are home-schooled may be transported to their home if they are in public unsupervised during school hours.

#### School Resource Officers:

- Attend the Attendance Support Team meetings as necessary conducted at the schools.
- Conduct home visits as necessary with the school social worker when students are reported as truant.

### C. Stephens County Health Department

- Assist school nurses with hearing/vision/scoliosis screenings.
- Provide services for families with chronic head lice.
- Provide workshops for school faculty/staff on reducing communicable diseases in the schools.
- Serve as consultant regarding health issues identified by the Attendance Support Team and the School System

### D. Avita Community Partners

- Provide counseling to families who have been to court for truancy
- Serve as consultant regarding mental health issues identified by the Attendance Support Team and the school system

### E. Department of Family and Children Services

- Accept and consider information related to school attendance, behavior, and performance in reports and investigations of other suspected abuse and/or neglect.
- Accept and consider information regarding cases of reported educational neglect.
- Address school attendance in departmental case plans.
- Address school attendance for Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) cases.
- Ensure school enrollment and encourage regular attendance for students in the care of the Department.
- Inform school officials of emergency shelter care or foster care placements arranged by the Department.

- Attend court proceedings, when necessary, for cases involving truancy and/or complaints against parents related to mandatory school attendance.

F. School System

- The school system will promote regular attendance in school and provide incentives for good attendance.
- The Board of Education shall consider and publicly announce its decisions regarding the protocol committee recommendations for student attendance.
- Each local Board of Education shall report annual student attendance rates to the student attendance protocol committee and the State Board of Education by September 1 following each school year.
- The local school system shall be responsible for providing a copy of the adopted written student attendance protocol to the Georgia Department of Education no later than July 1, 2005, and upon any subsequent revisions or amendments.

G. Family Connection of Stephens County, Inc.

- Family Connection of Stephens County, Inc. will support the school system in the development, implementation, and evaluation of programs that reinforce school attendance. Family Connection will provide training and recruitment services for the mentoring program. As a partner in education, Family Connection will assist in the identification of resources for families as specific needs are identified by the Attendance Support Team and/or the school system.

## Legal Procedures

### **Legal referrals by the school system social worker:**

Legal complaints may be filed against the parent/guardian and student for violating the Georgia Compulsory Attendance Law. It shall be the duty of the School System Social Worker to coordinate all judicial proceedings on behalf of the school system. As required by law, a certified letter with return receipt requested must be sent to the parent prior to any action to impose a penalty on a parent, guardian, or other person residing in this state who has control or charge of a child or children for violating the Compulsory School Attendance law.

If the parent/guardian cooperates with the Attendance Support Team (AST) contract and school recommendations, then no complaint will be filed against the parent/guardian, even if the student continues to have absences.

If the parent/guardian does not cooperate with the AST contract and the student has continued unexcused absences, then one of the options below will be selected by the Stephens County School Social Worker:

Option 1: The Stephens County School Social Worker will refer the case to Magistrate Court for a pre-warrant hearing.

Option 2: The Stephens County School Social Worker will file a complaint against the student in Juvenile Court.

Option 3: The Stephens County School Social Worker will seek to obtain a warrant against the parent/guardian for violation of O.C.G.A. 20-2-690.1 from the Magistrate Court of Stephens County. If a warrant is granted, the parent/guardian will be served with process by the Stephens County Sheriff's Office. The case will be prosecuted by the Stephens County Solicitor's Office.

### **Magistrate Court:**

The Magistrate Court will be utilized for Pre-Warrant Inquiries prior to requesting a warrant for failure to comply with compulsory school attendance. Sufficient information should be given to the Magistrate to warrant the inquiry process. The Magistrate Judge shall issue notice for the parent to appear in court.

Warrants for arrest are to be obtained from the Magistrate Court Judge or designee.

### **Juvenile Justice Procedures:**

The Department of Juvenile Justice will process complaints as directed by the Juvenile Court. Upon disposition of the Court, the Department of Juvenile Justice will make necessary referrals ordered by the Court and will supervise any conditions outlined by the Court in compliance with DJJ policy.

### **Juvenile Court:**

After all reasonable efforts to resolve and address absenteeism/tardiness have been exhausted by the Board of Education, the case will then be forwarded to the Juvenile Court.

A juvenile complaint form shall be completed by the superintendent or his/her designee and forwarded to the Clerk of Court. The complaint form shall set forth plainly and with particularity the name, date of birth, and residence address of the child, the names and addresses of the parents, guardians, or legal custodian, the name of any public institution or agency having the responsibility or ability to supply services alleged to be needed by the child and whether any of the above matters are unknown (O.C.G.A. § 15-11-390).

Attached to the complaint will be the most current report of attendance and discipline records, as well as documentation of all efforts that have been made by the Board of Education to resolve the issue(s) with the student, parent(s) or guardian.

A complaint filed by a school official must include information to show that the school has tried to resolve the problem through educational approaches and has sought to engage the child's parent, guardian, or legal custodian in solving the problem but has been unsuccessful. The school's complaint must also account for the child's eligibility for Individuals with Disabilities Education Act or Section 504 of the federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973. The school shall also review the appropriateness of the child's current Individualized Education Program (IEP) and placement and has made modifications where appropriate (O.C.G.A § 15-11-390).

Upon receipt of the juvenile complaint form, the Department of Juvenile Justice shall then file the complaint with the clerk of court and schedule the case for a preliminary hearing. The Board of Education shall receive notice of the upcoming cases scheduled in the form of a court calendar. Summons must be served on the child, the parents or legal custodian, Department of Family and Children's Services, and any other public agency or institution providing services or any other persons who are proper and necessary parties (O.C.G.A § 15-11-423).

The Court shall appoint an attorney for a child alleged to be a child in need of services. At or before the preliminary hearing, the student shall be advised of their right to legal representation and the Court shall give them an opportunity to hire counsel if they choose (O.C.G.A § 15-11-402). All parties, including counsel will receive notification of this hearing by proper service through the clerk of court.

The Court shall make every attempt to resolve the case the day of the preliminary hearing with specifically outlined conditions for child, parent(s) or guardian(s) to follow. The Court, after hearing and reviewing all of the evidence, documentation and testimony and taking into consideration the age of the child and circumstances surrounding the case, shall make every reasonable effort to appropriately outline very specific conditions for the student, parent(s) or guardian(s) to follow. If issues of deprivation dependency are disclosed, an immediate referral shall be made to the Department of Family and Children Services for investigation.

The Court may order the following dispositions in reference to the student, including, but not limited to: permitting the child to remain with their caregivers with or without conditions prescribed by the court (O.C.G.A. § 15-11-212); placing the child on probation; requiring community service; requiring the child to attend structured after school or evening program; requiring the child be supervised during the day (O.C.G.A. § 15-11-442); transferring temporary custody of the child; ordering the child and his or her parent, guardian, or legal custodian to participate in counseling; ordering the Department of Family and Children Services to create a case plan and ordering parent participation (O.C.G.A. § 15-11-212); requiring as a condition of probation that the child obtain a high school diploma or equivalent (O.C.G.A. § 15-11-601); suspending of driver's license privileges; continuing court involvement supervision for the time necessary for compliance, not to exceed two years (O.C.G.A. 15-11-443); and/or utilizing progressive discipline or sanctions as needed to protect and safeguard the best interest of the student's educational future. The Court shall outline a specific time limit for which conditions are to be followed.

The Court may order the following dispositions in reference to the parent(s) or guardian, including, but not limited to: using contempt powers to incarcerate the parent or guardian for up to 20 days (O.C.G.A. § 15-11-31); imposing a fine up to \$1000.00; requiring the child's parent, guardian, or legal custodian to participate in parenting classes (O.C.G.A. § 15-11-31); and/or requiring the child's parent, guardian, or legal custodian to enter into a contract or plan as part of the disposition of any charges against the child to provide supervision and control for the child (O.C.G.A. § 15-11-31).

If the student, parent(s) or guardian successfully follow all Court ordered conditions for the period of time specified, the Court will consider a dismissal of the case and/or termination of the supervision. (Code 15-11-443 15-11-212)

It will be the responsibility of the Board of Education to monitor attendance and cooperation of the student, parent(s) or guardian. The Board of Education will provide all agencies involved a regular report of progress. The Department of Juvenile Justice will make any referrals ordered by the Court and monitor conditions outlined by the Court, in compliance with DJJ policy of standards of contact. Any non-compliance will be immediately reported by the Board of Education to the Department of Juvenile Justice or the Juvenile Court.

Upon receipt of any non-compliance, the Department of Juvenile Justice or the Juvenile Court will immediately schedule the case for review. All parties will be notified of the review by proper service of the clerk of court.

If the non-compliance is confirmed by the Court as a result of the student's action(s), the Court may order any of the previously stated dispositions that would assist in establishing compliance of conditions. The Court, while considering all factors relevant to the student and case, shall continue involvement or supervision for the shortest time necessary to accomplish the purposes of the order and for not more than two years (O.C.G.A. § 15-11-443). The Court shall continue utilizing progressive discipline or sanctions as needed to protect and safeguard the best interest of the student's educational future.

If the non-compliance is confirmed by the Court as a result of the parent(s) or guardian's actions, the court may punish the person(s) for being in contempt of court for willfully disobeying an order of the court. The court may impose any or all of the following sanctions: Requiring the person to make restitution in an amount not to exceed \$2500.00 for any damage caused by the child's wrongful act; impose a fine up to \$1000.00; reimbursement to the state for the cost of detention, treatment or rehabilitation of the child, require the parent or guardian to perform community service or require the person to enter a contract or plan as a part of the disposition of any charges against the child. The Court may also use civil contempt powers to incarcerate the parent or guardian.

Any violations or non-compliance by the parent(s) or guardian occurring beyond a contempt charge shall immediately be referred to the District Attorney's office by the Juvenile Court for prosecution of the parent(s) or guardian under O.C.G.A. 20-2-690.1. The office of the District Attorney shall be provided with accurate and complete documentation of every action and proceeding prior to the referral. Every agency including but not limited to: Board of Education, Department of Juvenile Justice, Department of Family and Children Services, Mental Health, shall be available to the District Attorney's office for interviews, questions and/or testimony needed to adequately prepare the case for prosecution.

### **Monitoring the Protocol**

To ensure that these written protocol procedures are followed, the Stephens County Attendance Protocol Committee will meet quarterly for the first year. The Committee will then meet semi-annually, as required by law. The Committee's goal will be to improve communication between agencies, encourage inter-agency cooperation, and update the protocol as necessary. Each participating agency shall monitor and evaluate compliance with this protocol and, as needed, recommend protocol revision and implementation that best meets the needs of the community and complies with the Federal, State, and local statutes, as well as agency policy.