

## COMPULSORY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

Compulsory education is essential to the preservation of the rights and liberties of the people and the continued prosperity of our nation. Maintaining regular student attendance is necessary to achieve the goal of an educated citizenry.

### 1. Compulsory Attendance Ages

Under state law, full-time attendance at school is required of every child 6 years of age or older and under age 17, unless they have received a high school diploma or its equivalent.

Although not required to enroll in school, if a child who is 5 years of age and under age 6 is voluntarily enrolled in a public school and has not formally withdrawn, that child is required to attend school when it is in session.

### 2. Excusable Absences from School

A person's absence from school is excused when the absence is for one of the following reasons:

- A. Personal health, including the person's physical, mental, and behavioral health;
- B. An appointment with a health professional that must be made during the regular school day;
- C. Observance of a recognized religious holiday when the observance is required during the regular school day;
- D. A family emergency;
- E. A planned absence for a personal or educational purpose which has been approved;  
or
- F. Education disruption resulting from homelessness, unplanned psychiatric hospitalization, unplanned hospitalization for a medical emergency, foster care placement, youth development placement or some other out-of-district placement that is not otherwise authorized by an IEP or other education plan or a Superintendents' agreement.

### 3. Adult Responsibility for School Attendance

Parents or other adults having control of a person of compulsory attendance age are responsible for ensuring that a student attends school as required by law. The Board expects school administrators and staff to work with families in an effort to ensure compliance.

4. Exceptions to the Compulsory Attendance Requirement

A child may be excused from compulsory attendance at school if they meet the requirements in one of the following sections:

- A. They have graduated from high school before that person's 17th birthday;
- B. A person who has all of the following:
  - 1. Reached the age of 15 years of age or completed the 9th grade;
  - 2. Obtained permission to unenroll from school from their parent or guardian;
  - 3. Been approved by the principal for a suitable program of work and study or training;
  - 4. Obtained permission to unenroll from school from the Board or its designee; and
  - 5. Agreed in writing with that person's parent and the Board or its designee to meet annually until that person's 17th birthday to review that person's educational needs.

If a request to be excused from school has been denied pursuant to this section, the student's parent may appeal to the Commissioner of Education.

- C. They have matriculated in and are attending an accredited, post-secondary, degree-granting institution as a full-time student. An exception to the compulsory attendance law under this paragraph must be approved by the Commissioner of Education.
  - D. They are enrolled in an online learning program or course.
  - E. A person who has reached 17 years of age, provided that the student and the student's parent or guardian have complied with applicable withdrawal procedures established by the District.
5. Alternatives to Attendance at Public School
- A person age 6 or older and under age 17 shall be excused from attending a public school if they obtain equivalent instruction as allowed by law. A person under age 6 is not required to comply with this section.

Equivalent instruction alternatives are as follows:

- A. A private school approved for attendance purposes pursuant to state law and regulations;
- B. A private school recognized by the Department of Education as providing equivalent instruction;
- C. A home instruction program that complies with state law and regulations;
- D. Any other manner arranged by the Board and approved by the Commissioner of Education; or
- E. Pursuant to 20-A MRS Sections 5104-A or 8605 (approved alternative education program or adult education program).

A student shall be credited with attendance at a private school under Paragraphs A or B only if the legally required certificate from the private school is filed with the student's school unit.

Legal Reference: 20-A MRSA §§ 5001-A et seq.; 5051 et seq.; 2901; 5104-A; 8605  
Ch. 125 § 8.06 (Maine Dept. of Ed. Rules)

Cross Reference: IHBG - Home Schooling  
JFC - Dropout Prevention Student Withdrawal from School  
JHB - Truancy

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