

STUDENT ATTENDANCE PROTOCOL
RICHMOND COUNTY, GEORGIA

In Response to
O.C.G.A. § 20-2-690.2
and
State Board of Education Rule 160-5-1-.10
With References to
Mandatory Education Law
O.C.G.A. § 20-2-690.1

Chief Judge of Richmond County Superior Court
The Honorable Judge John Flythe

Richmond County School System
Dr. Malinda B. Cobb, Superintendent



Updated June 1, 2026

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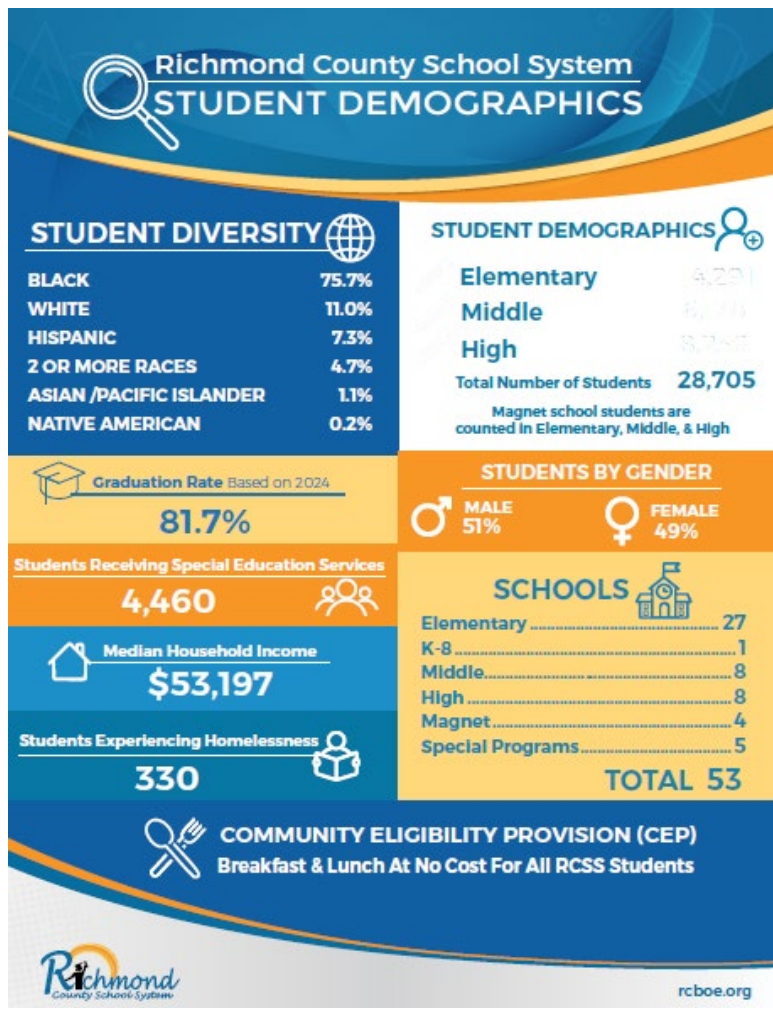
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INTRODUCTION

This document outlines the Richmond County School System’s protocol for addressing and decreasing chronic absenteeism and incidents of truancy in accordance with the legal points of reference cited below. This Protocol reflects commitments that Richmond County School System employees and identified stakeholders have made to promote the educational success of children and families in Richmond County.

INFORMATION REGARDING THE RICHMOND COUNTY SCHOOL SYSTEM

Chartered on August 23, 1872, the Richmond County School System (RCSS) has the oldest public school in the South and the 5th oldest public high school in America. Several RCSS schools are on the National Register of Historic Places. Richmond County is steeped in history, and our School System strives to move education forward and provide students with opportunities to succeed.



Strategic Planning Process

Every five years, the Richmond County School System (RCSS) engages in a comprehensive review and development of its Strategic Plan. This collaborative process brings together a diverse group of stakeholders, including students, parents, community members, and School System employees to shape a shared vision for continuous improvement.

For the 2025-2030 Strategic Plan, RCSS partnered with Cognia, our accrediting agency, to guide the development process. The result is a forward-looking plan that reflects the collective priorities and aspirations of our stakeholders.

The RCSS Strategy Map provides a visual summary of the 2025-2030 Strategic Plan, outlining the strategic themes, objectives, and critical initiatives designed to drive student and staff achievement and success.

Pursuant to this process, the following Mission, Vision and Belief Statements were developed:

Mission Statement: Empowering Every Learner Every Day

Vision Statement: To prepare every student to thrive, adapt, and lead in an ever-changing world.

Belief Statements:

- Success is attainable for everyone.
- All students deserve a quality educational experience.
- Education is a shared responsibility.
- Transparency is a foundation of trust.
- Safety for all is a priority.

The tenets of the School System's Strategy Map and Belief Statements, as well as the legal requirements for the attendance protocol informed and guided the development of the Protocol for increasing student attendance.

RICHMOND COUNTY SCHOOL SYSTEM
2025-2030 Strategy Map

 <p>Student Achievement</p> <p>Objective Empower Every Learner to Take Ownership of their Learning.</p> <p>Critical Initiatives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◀ Provide professional learning in evidence-based teaching methods. ◀ Provide all learners with access to engaging learning opportunities in a comprehensive curriculum. ◀ Promote student ownership of learning by fostering voice, choice, and accountability. ◀ Improve measurable academic outcomes using data-driven decision making. 	 <p>Stakeholder Engagement & Communication</p> <p>Objective Engage with our Community using a Variety of Consistent Two-Way Communication Tools.</p> <p>Critical Initiatives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◀ Streamline and centralize communications platforms. ◀ Develop a district-wide communications plan. ◀ Train staff and school district leaders in effective communication strategies. ◀ Create systems, processes and opportunities for student and staff achievement stories to be disseminated across multiple platforms. ◀ Enhance partnership program to foster community involvement. 	 <p>Talent Development</p> <p>Objective Foster Student and Staff Potential to Embrace Ongoing Growth and Development.</p> <p>Critical Initiatives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◀ Establish a framework for adult-centered professional learning opportunities based on staff input, experiences and roles. ◀ Enhance student agency for increased student opportunities for enrollment, enlistment and employment. ◀ Refine the comprehensive recruitment and retention plan for students and staff. ◀ Leverage technology integration to enhance student and staff performance and productivity. ◀ Develop a system for monitoring the implementation of professional learning. 	 <p>Safe & Secure Learning Environment</p> <p>Objective Provide a Safe and Secure Environment for All.</p> <p>Critical Initiatives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◀ Define and develop a positive system culture. ◀ Ensure physical and emotional safety by enhancing security measures and providing emotional support for students and staff. ◀ Develop a comprehensive safety training plan. ◀ Design fiscally responsible processes and procedures for operational effectiveness.
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INFORMATION REGARDING ATTENDANCE

IMPORTANCE OF ATTENDANCE

Chronic absenteeism, defined as missing 10% or more of school days has notably increased (nearly doubled from 2018-19 to 2023-24) since the COVID-19 pandemic. The national rate of chronic absenteeism pre-pandemic was 15 percent of students compared to a national peak of 29 percent in 2021-2022 (with Georgia’s peak at 23.9%). While the national and state rate has been slowly decreasing since this peak, absenteeism has been shown to be highest in low-income districts where 30 percent of students are chronically absent. The RCSS chronic absenteeism rate as of the 2024-2025 school year was 32.9%.

Chronic absenteeism negatively impacts student achievement, as well as student mental health and graduation rates (and increased dropout rates). Research shows that chronic absenteeism may also negatively impact instruction time for those students who do attend class—teachers may need to repeat class instruction, slowing progress for students who attend regularly. Low attendance has also been shown to reduce teacher and staff morale; teacher satisfaction drops steadily as absenteeism increases, according to recent studies.

ATTENDANCE GOALS

The Richmond County School System is committed to reducing absenteeism. To that end, each year the School System sets goals regarding attendance rates, including the reduction of chronic absenteeism.

The Georgia State School Superintendent has pledged to cut chronic absence by 50% over five years, joining THE 50% CHALLENGE, supported by a partnership between Attendance Works, EdTrust, and Nat Malkus with AEI. According to the Georgia Department of Education (“GaDOE”), “Georgia joins a bipartisan list of states taking a firm stand on this urgent issue that, if not addressed, could have long-term impacts on students, families and the economic health of the state and nation.”

The GaDOE’s website continues: “GaDOE has also launched a public-facing dashboard to provide data on attendance rates, produced a public service announcement in partnership with Georgia Public Broadcasting to elevate the issues for families, provided extensive training and technical assistance for school districts, and developed a new statewide school climate survey to supply schools with actionable data to improve their safety, climate, and attendance rates.” <https://gadoe.org/press-releases/chronic-absenteeism-reaches-lowest-levels-since-pre-pandemic-as-state-continues-efforts-to-reduce-absence-rates/>

INFORMATION REGARDING THE PROTOCOL

Georgia law requires that the Chief Judge of the Superior Court of each county shall establish a Student Attendance and School Climate Committee (“Committee”) for each such county.

The purpose of the Committee shall be to:

1. Ensure coordination and cooperation among officials, agencies, and programs involved in compulsory attendance issues
2. (a) **Reduce** the number of unexcused absences from school, (b) **Increase** the percentage of students present to take tests which are required to be administered under the laws of this state
3. Reduce the number of students who are chronically absent as defined in O.C.G.A. 20-2-690.3
4. Improve the school climate in each school.

The Chief Judge of the Superior Court shall ensure that the committee is convened by November 1, 2025, and twice annually thereafter to:

- Evaluate compliance with the protocol
- Evaluate effectiveness of the protocol
- Evaluate appropriate modifications
- Review and revise, if necessary, recommendations relating to school climate

Required Committee Members:

Each of the following agencies, officials, or programs SHALL designate a representative to serve on the committee:

- Chief Judge of the Superior Court
- Juvenile Court Judge(s) of the County
- District Attorney
- Solicitor-General of State Court
- Department of Juvenile Justice
- Superintendent of Schools
- Certified School Employee
- Local School Board Member
- Certificated School Social Worker
- Chief of Police
- Department of Family and Children’s Services (DFCS)
- County Board of Health
- County Mental Health Organization
- County Family Connection Commission/Board
- Court approved community based risk reduction program established by the Juvenile Court

- Additional members as necessary and proper to accomplish purposes of the Committee

The Protocol – Contents and Requirements:

Each Committee shall, by June 1, 2026, adopt a written student attendance protocol for each local school system within its geographic boundaries which shall be filed with the Department of Education, which shall include the following information:

- Outline in detail the procedures to be used in identifying, reporting, investigating and prosecuting cases of alleged violations of compulsory attendance requirements provided for in Code Section 20-2-690.1
- Outline in detail methods for determining the causes of failing to comply with compulsory attendance and for appropriately addressing the issue with children and their parents or guardians
- Include recommendations for policies relating to tardiness and chronic absenteeism.
- Contain the summary of possible consequences and penalties for failing to comply with compulsory attendance under 20-2-690.1 for children and their parents/guardians who have control or charge of children for distribution by schools in accordance with 20-2-690.1. The summary of possible consequences for children shall include possible dispositions for children in need of services and possible denial of a driver’s license for a child in accordance with Code Section 40-5-22.

The Committee *Shall* Review and Make Recommendations for Policies Relating To:

- School climate
- Promoting positive gains in student achievement scores
- Student and teacher morale
- Community support
- Student and teacher attendance
- Decreasing student suspensions, expulsions, dropouts
- Decreasing other negative aspects of the total school environment

The Committee *May* Review, if available:

- School climate ratings for each school in the school system
- Non-identifying data from student health surveys
- Data on environmental and behavioral indicators
- Data on student behavioral and school-based reactions
- Teacher and parent survey instruments

The Committee *May* Recommend:

- Use of positive behavioral interventions and supports
- Use of response to intervention
- Trauma informed care training

- Optimization of local resources through voluntary community, student, teacher, administrator, and other school personnel participation

Each Local Board of Education *Shall*:

- Participate in Decisions regarding the Recommendations of the Committee
- Consider Decisions regarding the Recommendations of the Committee
- Make Publicly available Decisions regarding the Recommendations of the Committee (including posting in a conspicuous location)
- Report student attendance rates and aggregated student discipline data 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.
- Furnish a copy of the Protocol to each agency, official or program within the county that has any responsibility in assisting children and their parents

In 2025, the Georgia Legislature passed Senate Bill 123, which requires further proactive measures than those already in place to continue to address (and reduce) absenteeism.

While statutes regarding compulsory attendance already require an attendance protocol, the new legislation added an additional purpose of the protocol: “to reduce the number of students who are chronically absent as such term is defined in Code Section 20-2-690.3.” The legislation requires the protocol to include recommendations for policies relating to tardiness and chronic absenteeism.

In addition, the legislation requires the establishment of attendance review teams to address chronic absenteeism:

- Each school system with a chronic absenteeism rate of 10 percent or high shall establish an attendance review team for the local school system.
- Each school system that has one or more schools with a school chronic absenteeism rate of 15 percent or higher shall establish an attendance review team for each such school.
- The law requires that each such attendance review team shall meet at least once monthly and shall be responsible for reviewing the individual cases of students who are chronically absent and developing intervention plans for such students and their parents or guardians. The local school system’s attendance review team is authorized to work in conjunction with school attendance review teams.
- According to the legislation, attendance review teams may consist of school administrators, school counselors, school social workers, teachers, other school personnel and the parents or guardians of such students who are chronically absent.

These amendments to the law regarding attendance demonstrate that the mission of the School System is not just to address truancy but also chronic absenteeism as well as tardies.

LEGAL POINTS OF REFERENCE

- **O.C.G.A. § 20-2-690.1. Mandatory Education for Children Between the Ages of Six and 16.**
- **O.C.G.A. § 20-2-690.2. Establishment of Student Attendance and School Climate Committee; Membership; Summary of Penalties for Failure to Comply; Review and Policy Recommendations; Reporting:** The Chief Judge of the superior court for each county shall establish a student attendance protocol committee for its county. The purpose of the committee shall be to reduce the number of unexcused absences from school and to increase the percentage of students present to take state-mandated tests.
- **O.C.G.A. § 20-2-690.3. Policies and Procedures for Attendance Review Teams and for Intervention Plans for Chronically Absent Students or Students Who Are At Risk of Becoming Chronically Absent**
- **O.C.G.A. § 20-2-785. Referral and Assessment to Determine Whether Withdrawal was to Limit Education**
- **State Board of Education Rule 160-5-1-.10 – Student Attendance**
- **State Board of Education Rule 160-5-1-.28 – Enrollment and Withdrawal**
- **RCSS Board Policy JBD: Absences and Excuses**
- **RCSS Code of Student Conduct and Discipline: Rules 10, 11, 12**

DEFINITIONS FOR ATTENDANCE PROTOCOL


- **Absence (Excused):** An Absence shall be declared excused for:
 1. Personal illness or when attendance in school endangers the student's health or the health of others.
 2. Serious illness or death in a student's immediate family necessitating absence from school.
 3. Medical or dental appointments that cannot be scheduled outside school hours.
 4. Attendance of non-school activities or functions authorized by the Superintendent or designee.
 5. Special and recognized religious holidays observed by the student's faith.
 6. Registering to vote or voting in a public election, which shall not exceed one day.
 7. Mandate or order of government agency.
 8. A student whose parent or legal guardian is in military service in the armed forces of the United States or National Guard, and such parent or legal guardian has been called to duty for or is on leave from overseas deployment to a combat zone or combat support posting shall be granted excused absences, up to a maximum of five school days per year, for the day or days missed from school to visit with his or her parent or legal guardian prior to such parent's or legal guardian's deployment or during such parent's or legal guardian's leave.
 9. Students in a foster home or otherwise in the foster care system under the Department of Family and Children Services when attending court proceedings relating to the student's foster care.
 10. A student who participates in an activity or program sponsored by 4-H.
 11. Full-time students participating in the Student Teen Election Participant (STEP) program, not to exceed two days per year.
 12. Students when they are serving as pages of the Georgia General Assembly.
 13. A student taking tests and physical exams for military service in the armed forces of the United States and the National Guard.
 14. Extreme circumstances that cannot be resolved outside school hours; parent or guardian must request and receive approval from the Principal or designated representative.
 15. Any other absence not explicitly defined herein but deemed by the Local Board to have merit based on the circumstances.
- **Absence (Unexcused):** Any absence not covered in Items 1 through 15 above, shall be declared unexcused. It is the policy of the Richmond County Board of Education that no unexcused absences are allowed. An absence is either excused or unexcused.
- **Attendance Review Team:** A team of individuals who shall meet at least once monthly and shall be responsible for reviewing the individual cases of students who are chronically absent and developing intervention plans for such students and their parents/guardians.
- **Child in Need of Services ("CHINS"):** A child adjudicated to be in need of care, guidance, counseling, structure, supervision, treatment, or rehabilitation and who is adjudicated to be: (1) subject to compulsory school attendance and who is habitually and without good and sufficient cause truant (as defined in O.C.G.A. 15-11-381) from school; (2) Habitually disobedient of the reasonable and lawful commands of his/her parent, guardian, or legal custodian and is ungovernable or places himself/herself or others in unsafe circumstances;

(3) A runaway, as defined in O.C.G.A. 15-11-381; (4) A child who has committed an offense applicable only to a child; (5) A child who wanders or loiters about the streets or any city or in or about any highway or any public place between the hours of 12:00 Midnight and 5:00 A.M.; (6) A child who disobeys the terms of supervision contained in a court order which has been directed to such child who has been adjudicated a child in need of services; or (7) A child who patronizes any bar where alcoholic beverages are being sold, unaccompanied by his or her parent, guardian, or legal custodian, or who possesses alcoholic beverages, or (8) A child who has committed a delinquent act and is adjudicated to be in need of supervision but not in need of treatment or rehabilitation.

- **Chronically Absent:** the attendance status of a student whose total number of absences, whether excused or unexcused, at any time during a school year is equal to or greater than ten (10%) percent of the total number of school days that such student has been enrolled at the same school or with in the same local school system during the current school year excepting such student's first day of enrollment.
- **Compulsory Education:** Each child in the State of Georgia shall be required to attend a public school, a private school, or a home study program between his or her sixth and sixteenth birthdays. Such compulsory attendance shall not apply to any child who has successfully completed all requirements for a high school diploma or state approved high school equivalency (HSE) diploma.
- **Early Checkouts** occur when a student is removed from class and leaves school prior to the official end of the school day with a parent or legal guardian.
 - To be considered in attendance for a school day, the student must be present one-half of the school day.
 - At the time the student is released from school, the parent or legal guardian may be required to bring appropriate documentation showing the reason for an early checkout.
- **Full School Day:** For a student to be marked present for a full school day, a student must be in attendance for one-half or more of the school day. Leaving school for unauthorized purposes before the end of the instructional day shall be counted as a tardy. A student will not be recognized for perfect attendance after ten (10) tardies.
- **Grades and Absences.** A student's final course grades shall not be penalized because of the absences if the following are met:
 - Absences are justified and validated for excusable reasons.
 - Make-up work for an excused absence is completed satisfactorily.
- **Make-Up Work:** Upon returning to school following an absence, it is the student's responsibility to contact the teacher(s) to request makeup work. The teacher shall promptly and courteously allow students the opportunity to make up the missed assignments and tests. The contact should be made on the day the student returns to school unless the teacher allows a longer time. Make-up work must be completed by the student within the time specified by

the teacher. In the event of an extended absence, student work may be requested by contacting the school. The parent will be able to pick up the work at the end of the day following the request.

- **Multi-Tiered System of Supports (“MTSS”):** A systemic, continuous-improvement framework in which data-based problem solving and decision making is practiced across all levels of the educational system for supporting students at multiple levels of intervention. [O.C.G.A. § 20-2-742]
- **Parent/Guardian:** An individual who has the legal right to provide for the care and control of a student.
- **Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (“PBIS”):** An evidence-based data-driven framework to reduce disciplinary incidents, increase a school’s sense of safety, and support improved academic outcomes through a multitiered approach, using disciplinary data and principles of behavior analysis to develop school-wide, targeted, and individualized interventions and supports.” [O.C.G.A. § 20-2-741]
- **Pre-Arranged Absence:** Parents are encouraged not to take their child(ren) out of school for vacation. If parents find it necessary for students to miss school due to an out-of-town trip or college visit (limit 5 days per year), the parents should discuss the matter with the administrator to make necessary arrangements and submit a completed Prearranged Absence Form to the school administration. Approved prearranged absences are designated as excused.
- **School Climate:** the quality and character of school life, based on the experiences of students, parents, and staff, which reflects the school’s norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, and physical environment.
- **Suspensions:** For purposes of the countywide attendance protocol, suspension days shall not be considered unexcused absences. Any student who serves a short-term suspension out of school shall be allowed to make up missed assignments and tests. It shall be the student’s responsibility to obtain the missed work from the teacher(s) and complete the work within one week of returning to school. It shall be the teacher’s duty to promptly and courteously allow these students the opportunity to make up missed assignments and tests.
- **Tardies (unexcused and excused):** Failure of a student to be in the assigned classroom or instructional space at the assigned time.
- **Truant.** Any child who is subject to compulsory attendance during the current school calendar year has five (5) or more days of unexcused absences.







Georgia What is Chronic Absenteeism?

There are a lot of terms related to attendance, but what do they mean?

Chronic Absenteeism

When a student misses 10% or more days enrolled in a school. This includes **excused and unexcused absences**, suspensions, and any other non-educational reason for not being in the classroom.


2 absences per month in a 180-day school year typically qualifies a student as chronically absent.

Impacts a school's CCRPI score.

Accounts for every time a child is not in school.

Every. Day. Counts.

Truancy

When a student violates the compulsory attendance laws by having more than five(5) unexcused absences in a school year.








May lead to intervention with outside agencies, such as:

- Children in Need of Services
- Department of Family and Children Services
- Juvenile Justice

PREVENTION:

ONGOING PROACTIVE AND PREVENTATIVE PROCEDURES

It is the goal of the Richmond County School System to reduce absenteeism, both excused and unexcused, and to promote regular daily attendance, in turn, increasing student achievement, including academic and personal success. The School System believes that prevention components of the Protocol are as vital as intervention. Below are School System Prevention strategies designed to increase attendance.

These supports and interventions are designed to decrease chronic absenteeism as well as truancy.

THE RICHMOND COUNTY SCHOOL SYSTEM WILL:

□ Provide the Following Required Parent/Guardian Notifications and Communications:

- Local schools will provide to the parent, guardian, or other person having control or charge of each student enrolled in the school a written and/or electronic summary of possible consequences and penalties for failing to comply with compulsory attendance.
- By **September 1 of each school year or within 30 days of a student's enrollment in the school**, the parent, guardian, or other person having control or charge of each student shall sign a statement indicating receipt of such written statement of possible consequences and penalties as required under State Board of Education Rule 160-5-1-.10 (2)(i)(3).
- These notices to parents will be included in the Code of Student Conduct and Discipline, and where applicable, the individual school's Student/Parent Handbook and the Richmond County School System website.

□ Provide Ongoing Informative and Positive Information and Communication to Parents, Students, Staff, and Other Community Stakeholders:

- Information Regarding the Importance of Regular Attendance
- Attendance Recognition for Regular and Improved Attendance (School-wide and System-wide)
- Communications Regarding and Activities Supporting Attendance Awareness Month
- Throughout the school year, administrators, teachers, counselors, and paraprofessionals should use every opportunity to provide school community communications and discuss good school attendance when meeting with parents (*i.e.*, conferences, open houses, newsletters, etc.).

□ **Provide Notifications and Communications to Parents/Guardians for the Purpose of Proactive Intervention and Awareness of Attendance Requirements:**

- By September 1 of each school year, the Principal or his/her designee will send a notification letter to the parents/guardians of those students who had 15 or more unexcused absences during the previous school year. The letter should reference the importance of good attendance and offer support to the parents/guardian. These letters should also contain information informing parents about the State Board of Education Attendance Rules.
- Designated school staff (as determined by the school site administrator) will contact parents each time a student has an unexcused absence to inquire about the reason for the absence and offer support/encouragement as well as remind student/parent of possible consequences for excessive absences. **All student/parent contacts should be recorded in the Student Information System.**
- When students accumulate excessive absences (excused or unexcused), parents/guardians will be invited to participate in a meeting to discuss ongoing attendance concerns and any other barriers impacting school success.
- When warranted, follow the required protocol described in the INTERVENTION section of this Attendance Protocol.

□ **Provide Notifications and Communications to Students for the Purpose of Proactive Intervention and Awareness of Attendance Requirements:**

- Annually students will review the Attendance Protocol and provisions in the Code of Student Conduct and Discipline (e.g., Student Participation in the Canvas Course “Richmond 101” which contains explanation of many key concepts and requirements in the Code of Student Conduct and Discipline, including Attendance requirements).
- By September 1, students age 10 or older shall sign a statement indicating receipt of such written statement of possible consequences for non-compliance to the School System’s attendance policy. *See State Board of Education Rule 160-5-1-.10 (2)(i)(3).* These notices will be included in the Code of Student Conduct and Discipline, and where applicable, the individual school’s Student/Parent Handbook and the Richmond County School System website.

□ **Promote Positive School Climate and Regular/Improved Attendance by Implementing Interventions and Initiatives:**

- Schools should develop and implement Tier 1 universal supports to promote school-wide daily attendance. Some examples are: clear, concise and consistent communication about schedules and expectations (e.g., posting attendance information and expectations on the school website and throughout the local schools); personalized positive communication to

families when students are absent; connecting students to a caring adult within the school community; recognition of good and improved attendance; routines, rituals and celebrations related to attendance and engagement.

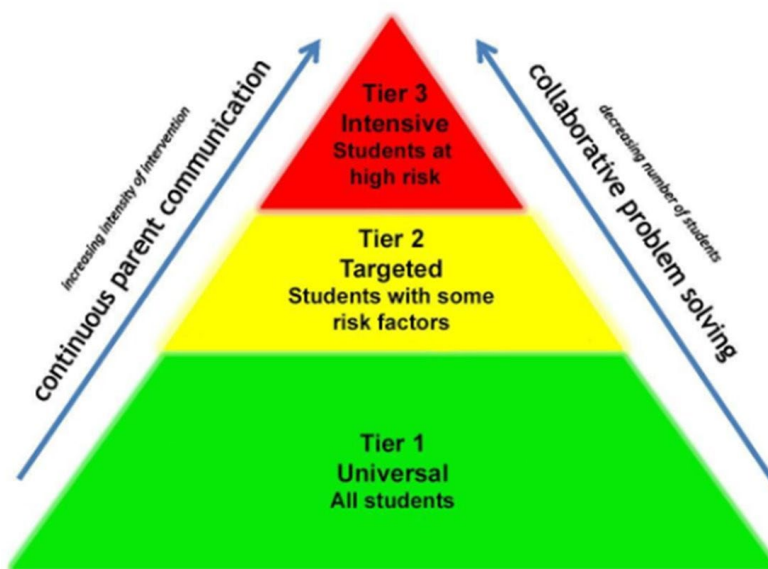
- Schools should develop and implement active, positive student attendance incentive programs (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (“PBIS”)) to support and encourage good daily student attendance.
- Schools should emphasize the importance of developing relationships and promoting engagement to support and increase attendance. Some examples of relationship-building activities include Morning Meetings, Advisement Groups, School Council, Student Council, Parent/Teacher Organization.
- System-level and School-level leaders as well as other designated personnel may consult with the Community and Family Engagement Department to identify and engage community partners to support attendance initiatives.
- School personnel will identify students who have been chronically absent during the previous school year with an eye toward implementing supports for the student and the family to increase attendance. These supports should include initiating contact with the student and family prior to the start of the school year to identify any barriers and provide positive encouragement. For example, before school begins for the year, teachers will be notified of students in their classes who had 15 or more unexcused absences the previous year so they can provide positive encouragement to these students.
- System-level and School-level leaders will provide appropriate training and oversight to ensure staff members are aware of components of Attendance Protocol and the impact of attendance on achievement.
- System-level and School-level leaders will provide appropriate training and oversight to ensure staff members record and monitor daily attendance.

□ Utilize School-Based Attendance Review Teams and System-Based Supports/Monitoring to Implement and Oversee Aspects of the Attendance Protocol

- System-level and School-level leaders will ensure Attendance Review Teams (“ART”) are in place at each school and are operating within the guidelines and requirements set by System-level leadership, including required team members, applicable roles, frequency of meetings, duties of members, and required artifacts/documentation.
- System-level leaders will provide training to teams and review best practices for team activities and membership.
- School Attendance Review Teams will review previous year’s school attendance data.
- Prior to the start of the school year, the School Attendance Review Teams will develop

school-wide attendance goals to share with staff, students, families, and the community.

- As part of the **PREVENTIVE** plans to reduce absenteeism, schools will utilize, as appropriate, a tiered approach to address attendance matters. A tiered approach to school attendance provides structured, data-driven support to reduce absenteeism effectively. Benefits include early identification of at-risk students, personalized support that addresses root causes, improved student engagement, and more efficient allocation of school resources.
 - **Tier 1: Foundational/Universal Prevention (All Students):** Early Detection and Prevention – Proactive, school-wide initiatives promote a positive climate and motivate attendance for all, reducing the number of students who fall into chronic absenteeism. (Examples are positive school climate, recognition programs)
 - **Tier 2: Targeted Intervention (At-Risk Students):** Students receive personalized and tailored support, such as mentoring or small-group interventions, addressing specific barriers like bullying, housing issues, or academic struggles.
 - **Tier 3: Intensive Support (Chronic Absence):** Intensive individualized support for students at high risk, which offers specialized, high-intensity resources and interagency collaboration (housing, health) to resolve deep-rooted, complex challenges. (Examples are case management, individualized intervention plans, and interagency collaboration.)
- Prior to the start of the school year, school leadership will include school-wide attendance goals and interventions (representing each Tier of Support) to be placed in the School Improvement Plan (SIP).
- School Attendance Review Teams will regularly monitor attendance and the effectiveness of prevention activities as well as interventions. System-level leaders (including the District Attendance Review Team) will provide oversight and monitoring of these activities and data.



INTERVENTION PROCEDURES

ADDRESSING CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM

According to Attendance Works, the most recent federal data show that in the 2020-21 school year, at least 14.7 million students nationwide were chronically absent. This means that chronic absence has almost doubled from the more than 8 million students, pre-Covid-19, who were missing so many days of school that they were academically at risk. Chronic absence--missing 10 percent or more of school days due to absence for any reason—excused, unexcused absences and suspensions—can translate into students having difficulty learning to read by the third grade, achieving in middle school, and graduating from high school.

Chronic absence incorporates all absences: excused, unexcused and suspensions. The focus is on the academic consequences of this lost instructional time and on preventing absences before students miss so much school that they fall behind. It recognizes that students miss school for many understandable issues such as asthma or homelessness or unreliable transportation, for which a punitive response is not appropriate. But what helps is working with families to share the importance of attendance and to fix the underlying problems that lead to absenteeism.

Given this broader focus, addressing chronic absence becomes an issue for the entire community. Medical providers can help address health challenges; transit and housing agencies can resolve other barriers to attendance; volunteers from businesses and faith communities can mentor students and support families. These approaches can also reduce truancy.¹

In order to address the issue of chronic absenteeism, the Georgia Legislature passed Senate Bill 123 in 2025, which requires further proactive measures to continue to address (and reduce) absenteeism. While statutes regarding compulsory attendance already require an attendance protocol, **the new legislation added an additional purpose of the protocol: “to reduce the number of students who are chronically absent as such term is defined in Code Section 20-2-690.3.”** The legislation requires the protocol to include recommendations for policies relating to tardiness and chronic absenteeism.

In addition, the legislation requires the establishment of attendance review teams to address chronic absenteeism, and these requirements are incorporated into this Protocol:

- Each school system with a chronic absenteeism rate of 10 percent or high shall establish an attendance review team for the local school system.
- Each school system that has one or more schools with a school chronic absenteeism rate of 15 percent or higher shall establish an attendance review team for each such school.
- The law requires that each such attendance review team shall meet at least once monthly and shall be responsible for reviewing the individual cases of students who are chronically absent and developing intervention plans for such students and their parents or guardians. The local

¹ <https://www.attendanceworks.org/whats-the-difference-between-chronic-absence-and-truancy/>

school system's attendance review team is authorized to work in conjunction with school attendance review teams.

- According to the legislation, attendance review teams may consist of school administrators, school counselors, school social workers, teachers, other school personnel and the parents or guardians of such students who are chronically absent.

These amendments to the law regarding attendance, and the incorporation of these requirements, demonstrate that the mission of the School System is not just to address truancy but also chronic absenteeism as well as tardies.

ADDRESSING TRUANCY

Despite the best efforts and use of interventions contained within this Protocol, there will be times that students accumulate excessive unexcused absences to the point of truancy, necessitating the protocol to address truancy.

In these instances, communication with Parents/Guardians is integral to the Attendance Protocol Process. It is the standard that Parent/Guardian communication is completed and documented in the Infinite Campus Contact Log for each unexcused absence, even those beyond 10. Schools must maintain copies of all mailed letters.

The following steps should be followed to address unexcused absences.

- When a student has accumulated **one (1) to two (2) unexcused absences**, the parent will receive a ShoutPoint Notification from Infinite Campus. The school administrator is responsible for monitoring this action, and the documentation is the Sent Message Log Report housed in Infinite Campus. In addition, the teacher (or designated personnel) will communicate each such absence to the Parent/Guardian via telephone call, letter, text, email, or in person. This communication should be documented in the Infinite Campus Contact Log.
- When a student has accumulated **three (3) unexcused absences**, the classroom teacher or school-designated personnel will contact the parent to review the RCSS Attendance Protocol and Compulsory Attendance Law. This contact may be made via telephone call, letter, text, email, or in person. This communication should be documented in the Infinite Campus Contact Log.
- When student has accumulated **four (4) unexcused absences**, the Attendance Review Team members or designee are to obtain/verify signatures on the Acknowledgment of Receipt of the RCSS Code of Student Conduct and Discipline and/or Acknowledgment of the Compulsory Attendance Law and upload into the Infinite Campus Attendance Protocol Tab “Documents” section.
- When student has accumulated **five (5) unexcused absences**, the school [Member of the Attendance Review Team or designated personnel] will send the parent/guardian via email or first-class mail the “5-Day Letter.” This 5-Day Letter notice shall outline the penalty and consequences of such absences, and that each subsequent absence shall constitute a separate offense. Copy of the letter and/or email should be placed into the Infinite Campus Attendance Protocol Tab “Documents” section. In addition to the required letter, schools may also attempt to contact the parent/guardian via phone call, text, or in person. School personnel should document parent response received.
- After two reasonable attempts to notify the parent/guardian of **five (5) unexcused days** of absence (including but not limited to phone call, letters, emails, etc.) without response, the school ***shall*** send written notice via certified mail with the return receipt requested.
- When the student has accumulated **six (6) unexcused absences**, a member of the Attendance Review Team will contact the Parent/Guardian to schedule an Attendance Review Parent Conference. Parents are requested to attend the Student Attendance Review Committee meeting (in person, virtually, or via conference call). School social workers should be invited

to participate as members of the committee since one possible intervention includes an official referral to the school social worker. It is understood that the school social worker may not be able to attend due to scheduling conflicts. If concerns arise during the meeting of which the school social worker should be made aware, a SWARM Referral should be made. The Attendance Review Conference Form and the Attendance Contract should be discussed and completed during the meeting. After the conference is held, the Attendance Review Conference Form and Attendance Contract should be uploaded in the Infinite Campus Attendance Protocol Tab “Documents” section.

- During the Attendance Review Parent Conference, all documentation related to parent contacts, grades, discipline problems (if any), IEPs, and other relevant information will be brought to the committee meeting by the principal, counselor or assistant principal. The Attendance Review Committee will develop a plan of action that appropriately addresses the needs of the student and family to assist in improving the attendance. This may include direct services from the school such as tutoring, mentoring, attendance contracts, and referrals to appropriate community social service agencies. Also, the plan should identify the local school staff members responsible for student follow-up. **If the student is receiving Special Education services, consideration should be made to include attendance as an objective on the student’s IEP.**
- When the student has accumulated **eight (8) unexcused absences**, a [designated](#) member of the Attendance Review Team will complete a SWARM referral. The School Social Worker will contact the Parent/Guardian to schedule a Parent Conference (which may be via telephone, in-school or a home visit) to discuss any needed assistance and verify contact information.
- During this visit, or at any time when appropriate, school social workers shall assess the needs of the student/family to determine the appropriate intervention plan. Interventions may include referrals to community agencies to address emotional/mental health, public health, financial issues, attendance contracts, parent/student conferences, and home visits (when appropriate).
- When the student has accumulated **ten (10) unexcused absences**, the school will notify the parent/guardian via the 10-Day Superintendent’s Letter, which shall be sent certified mail, return receipt requested. This letter shall outline the consequences, indicating the student’s non-compliance with the Georgia Compulsory Attendance Law. The letter shall advise parent/guardian of the submission of a CHINS referral.
- The school social worker will prepare the CHINS packet and email the CHINS Complaint and the assessment to the RCSS Court Liaisons. This action should be documented in the Infinite Campus Attendance Protocol tab.
- The Court Liaisons shall review the CHINS packet and email the CHINS Complaint to the CHINS Chief Intake Officer or designated personnel. This action should be documented in the CHINS Protocol tab.

STUDENT WITHDRAWAL DUE TO EXCESSIVE ABSENCES

O.C.G.A. § 20-2-785 governs when excessive absences can lead to mandatory student withdrawal from school:

In the event that a student does not for a period of 30 consecutive days attend the public school in which he/she is enrolled or provisionally enrolled **AND**

- The parent/guardian of such student does not notify the school of such withdrawal from such school;
- The parent/guardian does not notify the school of enrollment or intent to enroll in a home study program or another school;
- Such student is withdrawn from such school without a declaration filed pursuant to Code Section 20-2-690(c); or
- Such student is 16 years of age or older and stops attending school without the conference required in O.C.G.A. § 20-2-690.1.

For students who meet the requirements above, the student's school shall:

- Refer the matter to the Department of Family and Children Services (DFCS) to conduct an assessment for the purpose of determining whether such withdrawal was to avoid educating such student; and
- Refer the matter to the RESA Student Affairs Officer of the regional educational service agency in which the student resides for the purpose of determining whether student has enrolled in a home study or another school and, if such student has enrolled in another school, to determine whether such school has received the student's education records from the student's previous schools.

The school **may make reasonable efforts at any time to determine the whereabouts of a student** who is withdrawn without a declaration or who stops attending such school.

Such efforts may include, but are not limited to:

- Contacting the student's parent/guardian to inquire about the student's whereabouts or whether such student intends to withdraw from the school or has enrolled or intends to enroll in a home study program or another school;
- Directing school personnel, including, but not limited to, school social workers and school security personnel, to conduct a wellness visit at the student's last known residence; and
- Referring the matter to the county or municipal law enforcement agency having territorial jurisdiction.

Each public school in which a student is enrolled or provisionally enrolled shall compile the student's complete education records and make records available for immediate release to any person or entity authorized by law to receive such records.

COURT INVOLVEMENT

- Upon filing a Complaint, the Juvenile Court will follow the procedures set forth in Title 15 of the Official Code of Georgia to process the Complaint and initiate Court proceedings.
- When the child appears in Juvenile Court and either admits to the charge or is found to be a Child in Need of Services (CHINS), the Court shall take action in accordance with the authority provided for the Court as set forth in Title 15 of the Official Code of Georgia.

OTHER AGENCIES INVOLVED WITH ATTENDANCE PROTOCOL

- **Juvenile Court.** The Juvenile Court is committed to developing programs and resources to work collaboratively to address truancy in Richmond County.
- **District Attorney's Office** will review a case, prosecute, and make a recommendation to Juvenile Court regarding a disposition.
- **Solicitor-General's Office.** Upon receipt of a warrant for the arrest of a parent, guardian, or other person in this state who has control or charge of a child or children shall prosecute that person(s) who has control or charge over the child or children which exceeds 5 unexcused days of absence.
- **Richmond County Health Department** works closely with school systems to support student attendance through:
 - Clinical services
 - Community-based programs
 - Epidemiology
 - Environmental health
 - Health screenings
 - Immunizations
- **Department of Family and Children Services (DFACS)** works closely with school systems via school social workers to support student attendance by providing the following services:
 - Diversion
 - Early Intervention Program Services
 - Parent Aide Services
 - Child Protective Services
- **Augusta Partnership for Children** maintains a comprehensive list of resources to assist families in Richmond County which includes but are not limited to:
 - Intervention Resources
 - Teen Parent Resources
 - Parent Support Groups and Networking
 - Individual/Family Counseling
- **Serenity Behavioral Health Organization** operates as the county behavioral health organization to provide information and services regarding:
 - Intervention Resources
 - Parent Support Groups and Networking
 - Individual/Family Counseling

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

As required, the agencies listed in the chart below are represented on the **Richmond County Attendance Protocol Committee**. Each agency representative has verified his/her support for this Protocol by signing a signature page.

O.C.G.A. §20-2-690.2 (a). Each of the following agencies, officials, or programs shall designate a representative to serve on the committee:	
Chief Judge of Superior Court	The Honorable John Flythe <i>Chief Judge of Richmond County Superior Court</i>
The Juvenile Court Judges of Richmond County	Judge Tianna Bias, Chief Judge Judge Rahmann A. Bowick Judge William M. Fleming Judge Katrell Nash
THRIVE The Court-Approved Community-Based Risk Reduction Program Established by Juvenile Court Per O.C.G.A. §15-11-10	Dr. Audrey Armistad, Program Director
The District Attorney of Richmond County	Mr. Jared T. Williams, Richmond County District Attorney
The Solicitor of State Court, Richmond County	Ms. Omeeka P. Loggins, Richmond County Solicitor General
The Department of Juvenile Justice	Mr. Emanuel Bryson, District Director Mr. George Williams Ms. Shalisha Hale
The Superintendent of Schools, Richmond County School System	Dr. Malinda B. Cobb, Superintendent of Schools Mr. Marcus Allen, Deputy Superintendent of Operations and Administrative Services Dr. Tommy Welch, Deputy Superintendent of School Improvement & Strategic Initiatives
Certified Employees, Richmond County School System	Dr. Glenda Collingsworth, Assistant Superintendent of Elementary Cluster 2 and Student Services Dr. Aronica Gloster, Director of Student Services Ms. Ca’Vana Lambert, Coordinator of Assessments and Research Ms. Kenya Beard, Court Liaison Ms. Megan Tabanico, Court Liaison Ms. Rasheeda Winn, Court Liaison
Local School Board Members, Richmond County School System	Ms. Shawnda Stovall, President (District 1) Mr. Edward D. Lowery, Vice-President (District 6) Mr. Charlie Hannah (District 2) Mr. Walter H. Eubanks (District 3) Ms. Shontae Boyd (District 4) Ms. Monique Braswell (District 5) Mr. Charlie Walker, Jr. (District 7) Ms. Mary Jane Abbott (District 8) Ms. Venus Cain (District 9 At-Large) Ms. Samantha Valentine (District 10 At-Large)
Certified Social Worker, Richmond County School System	Ms. LaShaun Coronel, School Social Worker
Sheriff, Richmond County Sheriff’s Office	Sheriff Eugene “Gino Rock” Brantley

Department of Family and Children's Services, Richmond County	Ms. Anita Brown , <i>Director</i>
Richmond County Health Department	Ms. Andrea Frazier , <i>Interim Director</i>
Serenity Behavioral Health Systems, Behavioral Health Organization	Mr. Chuck Williamson , <i>Chief Executive Officer</i>
Augusta Partnership for Children, Inc.	Ms. Candice L. Hillman , <i>Executive Director</i>
District Attendance Review Team, Richmond County School System	Mr. Marcus Allen Ms. Glenda Collingsworth Dr. Aronica Gloster Ms. Ca'Vana Lambert Ms. Kenya Beard Ms. Kourtney Bell Ms. Dominique Bond Ms. Lashaun Coronel, Ms. Kim Fletcher Ms. Amelia Holmes Dr. Gina Hudson Mr. Javon Jackson Mr. Matthew Johann Ms. Haley Lacuesta Mr. Demargo Lewis Dr. Stacey Mabray Ms. Cornelia Ryan Ms. Megan Tabanico Ms. Rasheeda Winn
Legal Representation for the Richmond County School System	Mr. W. Lawrence Fletcher , <i>Board Attorney</i>