

STUDENT ABSENCES AND EXCUSES

Code **JH-R** Issued **9/17**

The board designates the principal of the school to promptly approve or disapprove any student's absence of more than 10 days in a school year.

Unlawful Absences

A student ages six to 17 years who has three consecutive unlawful absences or a total of five unlawful absences is considered truant as defined by State Board of Education regulation.

A student ages 12 to 17 years who fails to comply with the school's intervention plan and accumulates two or more additional unlawful absences is considered a habitual truant.

When a student ages 12 to 17 years who has been through the school intervention process, has reached the level of a habitual truant, has been referred to family court, and has been placed on an order to attend school, and continues to accumulate unlawful absences, that student is considered a chronic truant.

Intervention

In order to encourage and assist students in attending school regularly, the administration will administer the appropriate intervention procedures.

Once a student is determined to be truant, school officials will make every reasonable effort to meet with the parent/legal guardian to identify the reasons for the student's continued absence, including telephone calls, home visits, written messages, and emails.

A written intervention plan will be developed by school administrators in conjunction with the student and the parent/legal guardian. The intervention plan must include, but is not limited to, the following:

- a designated person to lead the intervention team (may be someone from another agency)
- reasons for the unlawful absences
- actions the parent/legal guardian and student will take to resolve the causes of the unlawful absences
- documentation of referrals to appropriate service providers and, if available, alternative school and community-based programs
- actions to be taken by intervention team members
- actions to be taken in the event unlawful absences continue
- signature of parent/legal guardian or evidence that attempts were made to include them
- documentation of involvement of team members
- guidelines for making revisions to the plan

School officials may utilize a team intervention approach to include representatives from social services, community mental health, substance abuse and prevention, and other persons deemed appropriate in formulating the intervention plans.

Referrals and judicial intervention

The district will not refer a child ages six to 17 years to the family court to be placed on an order to attend school prior to the written intervention plan being completed by the school with the

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parent/legal guardian. The district will not use a consent order from any local school or district as an intervention plan.

Refusal by the parent/legal guardian to cooperate with school intervention plans can result in a referral of the student to family court and the filing of a report against the parent/legal guardian with social services in accordance with law.

The district will inform the parent/legal guardian and/or the student of their right to have legal representation and their right to a trial.

If the situation continues to where the student is classified as a habitual truant, school officials may file a petition for a school attendance order. Once a school attendance order has been issued by the family court and the student continues to accumulate absences to the point of becoming a chronic truant, school officials may refer the case back to family court. The school and district will exhaust all reasonable alternatives prior to petitioning the family court to hold the student and/or parent/legal guardian in contempt of court.

Transfer to another school

If a student transfers to another public school in the state, the district will forward the student's intervention plan to the receiving school.

Approval of Absences in Excess of 10 Days

After 10 lawful or unlawful absences, or a combination thereof, the principal of the school will approve or disapprove each succeeding absence.

Furthermore, in order to more fully clarify unusual or unexpected mitigating circumstances, each school principal should evaluate individually and approve the following lawful absence situations:

- family educational trips
- community and church related performing groups
- organized competitive events or related activities

Make-Up Work

Students whose absences are approved should be allowed to make up any work missed in order to satisfy the 120-hour attendance requirement. Examples of make-up work that address both time and academic requirements of a course may include after-school and/or weekend make-up programs and extended-year programs.

All make-up time and work must be completed within 30 days from the last day of the course. The board or its designee may extend the time for a student's completion of the requirements due to extenuating circumstances that include, but are not limited to, the student's medical condition, family emergencies, and other student academic requirements that are considered to be a maximum load. Make-up requirements that extend beyond 30 days due to extenuating circumstances must be completed prior to the beginning of the subsequent new school year.

Proficiency-based credit

On a limited case-by-case basis, students who have excessive absences approved by the board may be permitted to demonstrate course proficiency without satisfying the 120-hour attendance requirement. Credits will only be awarded in this manner through a proficiency-based course credit system approved by the South Carolina Department of Education.

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School principals will exert every realistic effort to provide assurance that this administrative rule is adhered to in a fair and consistent manner. Principals will place special emphasis on coordinating implementation affecting students within the same family.

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