

Title: Student Attendance

Reference: III. 30. 10

I. Purpose

To establish responsibility for recording and excusing absences and to outline procedures for monitoring and reconciling enrollment and attendance, for improving attendance, and for follow-up with students and parents in accordance with requirements set forth in the Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR).

II. Background

Each local school system must have a student attendance policy that contains certain elements outlined in COMAR 13A.08.01.05.

III. Definitions

- A. School Day: a day identified by Caroline County Public Schools for student attendance for learning.
- B. Present: A student is considered in attendance at school when participating in approved school-sponsored activities, on or off campus, during the school day.
- C. Present Full Day: A student is counted present if the student is present for greater than 50% of the school day.
- D. Present Half Day: A student is counted present for 1/2 day if the student is in attendance between 10% - 50% of the school day.
- E. Academic Year: The State of Maryland sets the minimum length of the academic year for students, 180 days (1080 hours).
- F. Compulsory Attendance: With certain exceptions, all children who between 5 and 18 years of age are required to attend a public school regularly during the entire school year. (Annotated Code of Maryland, 7-301).
- A. Absent: A student is considered absent when not physically present on school grounds and/or not participating in instruction or instruction-related activities at an approved off-grounds location for less than 10% of the school day.

G. Lawful Absence: Students are considered lawfully absent from school, including absence for any portion of the day, only under the following conditions (COMAR 13A.08.01.03.03):

1. Death in the immediate family - The local school system shall determine what relationships constitute the immediate family.
2. Illness of the student - The principal may require a physician's certificate from the parent or guardian of a student reported excessively absent for illness.
3. Court Summons
4. Hazardous weather conditions are interpreted as weather conditions that would endanger the health or safety of the student when in transit to and from school.
5. Work approved or sponsored by the school, the local school system, or the State Department of Education, accepted by the local superintendent of schools or the school principal, or their designees as reason for excusing the students. A number of activities or work situations that the principal/designee will consider as possibly excused activities when written approval is requested in advance include:
 - a. Visits to college campuses and participation in college orientation programs.
 - b. Scheduled interviews with prospective employers.
 - c. Short-term full-time work assignments in family businesses for students not enrolled in work-study programs.
 - d. Participation in activities sponsored by the Caroline County Public Schools, County or State agencies.
6. State Emergency
7. Observance of religious holiday
8. Suspension
9. Lack of authorized transportation - This does not include students denied public school transportation for disciplinary reasons.
10. Other emergency or set of circumstances which, in the judgment of the superintendent or designee, constitutes a good and sufficient cause for absence from school.

H. Satisfactory Attendance

According to the standards set by the Maryland State Department of Education, students with satisfactory attendance have ten (10) or fewer absences per school year.

I. Truants

1. Students who are unlawfully absent from school for a school day or any portion of a school day are truants.

2. Habitual truants are students who are unlawfully absent in excess of 20 percent of the school days within any marking period, semester, or year.

IV. Procedures

A. Responsibilities of Parents and Students

1. Parents and students are responsible for regular school attendance.
2. Upon returning from an absence, a student is required to bring a form of documentation in order to make the absence lawful. Notes from parents will be accepted for lawful reasons.
3. A written explanation of each absence is required from the parent/guardian within ten (10) school days of the student's return. Notes received after this deadline may or may not be accepted as documentation of a lawful absence.
4. Upon reaching his/her age of majority (18 years old or married), a student may assume the responsibility for absence notes and requests for late arrivals and early dismissals. The principal is responsible for informing the parent/guardian in writing that:
 - a. Eligible students may submit their own written explanations of absences.
 - b. When a student is exercising age of majority rights, any administrative follow-up on unexcused absences is conducted with the student. When that student is residing as a dependent child with his/her parent or guardian, additional notification of unexcused absences may be sent to the parent or guardian.
5. Only the reasons for absences specified in COMAR 13A.08.01.03.03 are to be considered as lawful. (See Section C.)
6. Any absence for reasons other than those specified in COMAR 13A.08.01.03.03 (See Section C.) may be considered lawful or unlawful by the principal /designee. Discretion is permitted and may be exercised in excusing absences for reasons other than those designated as lawful.
7. Absences not explained by written communication from a parent or a student who is exercising his/her age of majority right is to be considered as unlawful.
8. Students are to make up work missed for both lawful absences and for unlawful absences. It is the student's responsibility to make up the work missed in a timely fashion. Teachers must cooperate with students and parents in this effort. Make-up work will be subject to the grading policy announced by the teacher at the beginning of the school year. Failure to make-up work will have an adverse effect on student achievement.

B. Responsibilities of School Staff

1. Recording Absence and Cause of Absence

- a. The classroom teacher is responsible for taking student attendance each and every school day at the elementary level and each and every class period at the secondary level.
- b. The absence is coded lawful or unlawful according to the reason for the absence as set forth in COMAR 13A.08.01.03.03 and the amount of time missed. (See Section C.)
- c. Schools are required to maintain tardy and early dismissal logs. These logs are source documents and are maintained in the school for the current year and three additional years.
 - 1) Tardy and early dismissal are coded lawful or unlawful as set forth in COMAR 13A.08.01.03.03.
 - 2) A written explanation or request from the parent/guardian is required in order to make a tardy or early dismissal lawful.
 - 3) The clock that controls the bell schedule will be the clock that is used to determine if a student is coded tardy or early dismissal. This clock shall be calibrated to Standard Time on a regular basis.
- d. Students on home teaching who are in compliance with local and state regulations are considered present.
- e. Students who attend a school-sponsored activity (for example, field trips, athletic events, work-study, and college credit courses) are considered present.

2. Determining Present in Distance Learning Environments:

- a. In determining present on synchronous days:
 - i. Teachers would consider that Internet access can be limited or unexpectedly impeded.
 - ii. Teachers would determine if the student logged into the synchronous session.
 - iii. Teachers would assess if the student engaged in/attempted the assigned work from the session.
 - iv. Teachers would be informed if there are any technology or connectivity issues for the student and if the issue cannot be resolved quickly, provide the student with the learning in another fashion, such as via telephone.
- b. In determining present on asynchronous days
 - i. Teachers would accept assigned work the student has submitted from the asynchronous day.
 - ii. Teachers would be informed by the student and/or parent of any issues with accessing the assignment, see if the issue has been resolved, and provide the student the chance to make-up any assignment due to the issue.

3. Monitoring Attendance

- a. To ensure the accuracy of the official enrollment count that is submitted by law to the Maryland State Department of Education, the following procedures need to be followed during the months of September and October. These procedures ensure consistency in taking attendance and processing entries to and withdrawals from the system.
 - 1) In mid-September, the schools will review students with both the same name and same birth date. The schools will verify that both records are valid or request that the incorrect record be removed.
 - 2) During the last week of September, the schools will generate a list of students with no recorded attendance as of September 30. After reviewing the list, schools will withdraw as a "summer withdrawal" any student for whom there is no documentation to prove attendance at least one day in September.
 - 3) By the end of the 10th day in October, schools will generate a list of students present at least 1 day in September, absent September 30, and absent the first 9 days in October.
 - 4) Schools will review and monitor the list and withdraw those students who were absent on Sept. 30 and have not had at least 1 day of attendance in October. The withdrawal date must be the first school day after the last day in attendance. For students withdrawn under 18 years of age, schools must document their ongoing efforts to communicate with the students and their families to verify the students are continuing their education.
- b. Absences shall be recorded in an appropriate manner on each report card.
- c. Each school shall develop and implement an attendance plan that is based on a multi-tiered system of interventions for all students, which includes the following components:
 - 1) The principal, in cooperation with the school faculty, establishes the school's procedures for follow-up on student absences. Specific strategies will be identified for each of the following levels:
 1. Tier 1 (Universal) – All students receive prevention-related supports that promote and maintain satisfactory attendance
 2. Tier 2 (Supplemental) – Individual, targeted supports, in addition to Universal supports, for students who have a history of moderate chronic absence during the past school year, or face a hardship that makes attendance difficult.
 3. Tier 3 (Intensive) – Students receive intensive, individualized support in addition to Universal, and Supplemental for those with chronic absenteeism and/or face a hardship that makes attendance difficult.

- 2) Each school will develop motivational activities that will be used to reward good attendance.
 - 3) Schools will counsel students and parents/guardians of students who accumulate an excessive number of absences. Communication will be in the form of face-to-face contacts, telephone contacts, and written contacts.
 - 4) The school will refer habitual truants to Pupil Student Services for further action. The referral will include documentation of the school's efforts to date.
 - 5) Actions taken by Pupil Student Services may include investigating the cause of the student's absences, providing counseling regarding available services, and involving the Department of Juvenile Justice. Further action may include charging the parent in District Court for violation of Maryland's compulsory attendance law.
- d. Appropriate sections of the Student Attendance Policy and the Student Attendance Regulation will be annually disseminated to school staff, students, parents and community members to alert them to the consequences of not complying with attendance requirements.
 - e. Students enrolling in school after the opening day will have the same attendance requirements as those students enrolling the first day of school.

V. Date Effective: 01/01/2006

VI. Date Adopted: 06/01/2004

VII. Date Revised: 12/06/2005; 02/05/2013; 05/07/2013; 08/11/2020