

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

Student absenteeism affects a wide spectrum of people: students whose education is shortchanged, teachers whose instructional plans are disrupted and who will have to spend additional time when students return to school, parents/guardians who may not be aware of their child's absence and who have committed considerable financial support to the operation of the schools, school officials who must contact parents/guardians and locate absent students and judges who occasionally rule on truancy cases.

In accordance with state law, all children between six and 18 years of age must attend school regularly during the full period and hours, religious holidays excepted, that the public or private school in which the child should be enrolled is in session until the end of the school term, quarter or semester of the school year in which the child becomes 18 years of age unless they have graduated from high school, have a legal excuse as defined by the Board or fall under one of the exceptions outlined in state law.

Students enrolled in five-year-old Kindergarten shall attend school regularly during the full period and hours that Kindergarten is in session during the school year, except as noted above. In addition, the School Board expects students who are 18 years of age or older who are enrolled in the District to attend school regularly and abide by provisions of this policy and its implementing rules similar to students of compulsory attendance age.

Procedures shall be developed to enhance the full attendance requirement. These procedures shall be in accordance with recommendations of the county truancy committee and state law and shall be approved by the Board.

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LEGAL REF.: Wisconsin Statutes: 118.15 118.153 118.16
118.162 118.165

Jefferson Municipal Code 9.29, 9.30

CROSS REF.: JEA-R, Student Attendance/Truancy Guidelines and Procedures
JEAA, Summer School Attendance

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STUDENT ATTENDANCE / TRUANCY GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES

A. General Attendance Procedures

1. Regular attendance is a responsibility that must be shared by the student, parent/guardian and school. When a student is absent from school, his/her parent/guardian shall contact the school prior to 9:00 a.m., or, in the case of an absence later in the day, as soon as is reasonably possible, to notify the school of the child's absence and to explain the reason for the absence. Failure to contact the school shall result in a telephone call from the school, electronically or personally, to the home or place of employment of the parent/guardian.
2. All teachers shall emphasize the importance and necessity of good attendance. Teachers must clearly inform their students that when they are absent from school they have missed valuable instructional time and shall be expected to complete assignments and/or lessons covering the material missed. While no student shall be denied credit in a course or subject solely because of absences, teachers should clearly show the relationship between missed lessons and the student's progress in the class. Where assigned lessons are a part of the grading requirement, lessons not completed due to absenteeism, or other reasons, will have a negative effect on the student's grade in the course or subject.
3. Students who are absent from school shall be expected to make up all work missed, including assignments and examinations, and shall receive credit for work completed. Students truant from school may be subject to consequences ranging from detentions to citations, in a worst case scenario.
4. Each student enrolled in the School District of Jefferson shall be provided a copy of these student attendance/truancy guidelines and procedures.

B. Types of Absences

1. Excused Absences – It shall be the policy of the School District of Jefferson to encourage good student attendance. Students are required to attend all their scheduled classes and study halls unless excused by a parent or guardian. The following examples of parent reasons include:
 - (a) Personal illness
 - (b) Severe illness or death in the family
 - (c) Religious observations
 - (d) Impassable roads or extreme weather conditions
 - (e) Required court appearances
 - (f) Health appointments
 - (g) Temporary situations of pressing family need that warrant an excused absence for the period of time necessary. This is not to be used to circumvent the state's compulsory attendance law.
 - (h) Family vacations

Students may be excused for the above reasons for no more than ten (10) days in a school year.

Please note all excused absences above count toward the cumulative ten- (10-) day count.

Also, with the advanced approval of the principal, students may be excused from school attendance for college visitations, job interviews, and family vacations.

2. Unexcused Absences (Truancy) – Students shall be considered truant if they are absent from school for all or part of one or more school days, with or without parent/guardian approval, for reasons other than those stated above and the principal or teacher has not been notified of the legal cause of such absence by the parent/guardian of the absent student. Truancy also means intermittent attendance carried on for the purpose of defeating state’s compulsory attendance law. Students shall be expected to retain for future reference and use all materials presented during their unexcused absences. All students with unexcused absences shall be permitted to make up missing work and examinations missed during such absences as determined by the teacher. Students with unexcused absences may be assigned consequences.
3. Habitual Truancy – “Habitual truant” means a student who is absent from school without an acceptable excuse for part or all of five or more days on which school is held during a school semester.
4. Tardiness – A pattern of excessive tardiness shall be brought to the attention of the student’s parent(s)/guardian(s). If it appears that the student is negligent and no steps are taken to correct the situation, appropriate action will be taken. It is the responsibility of the parent(s)/guardian(s) to ensure students are at school on time.

C. Attendance Monitoring Procedures

1. The principal, or the principal’s agent at each of the district’s schools is designated the “school attendance officer” to deal with matters relating to school attendance and truancy. The school attendance officer shall:
 - a. Determine daily which students enrolled in the school are absent from school and whether that absence is excused or unexcused (truancy).
 - b. Annually, on or before August 1, determine how many students enrolled in his/her school were absent in the previous year and whether the absences were excused. This information shall be submitted to the designated administrative assistant, who shall prepare a report of such information for submission to the State Superintendent of Public Instruction.
 - c. (May) visit any place of employment in the district to ascertain whether any minors are employed there contrary to law and shall report all cases of illegal employment to the proper school authorities and the Department of Workforce Development.
 - d. Have access to information regarding the attendance of any child between the ages of six and 18 who is a resident of the district or who claims or is claimed to be in attendance at a private school located in the district.

2. An excuse from a parent/guardian is required for any absence from school. For absences more than three (3) consecutive days or more than ten (10) cumulative days a meeting with the school principal or designee and/or the school nurse, counselor, and social worker may be required to develop a plan to help improve the student's attendance. Consultation with the student's physician, dentist or other qualified professional, knowledgeable about the student's condition, may be required in order for the absences to be excused.

If a student is truant part or all of five or more school days during a school semester, "habitual truancy" procedures shall be followed.

D. Truancy Procedures

1. The school attendance officer shall notify the parent/guardian of a child who has been truant and direct the parent/guardian to return the child to school no later than the next school day on which school is in session or to provide an excuse. Telephone contact shall be attempted upon determination of truancy and a written log maintained. A written notice shall be sent to the parent/guardian. The notice under this paragraph must be documented and given before the end of the second school day after receiving a report of a truancy.
2. The school attendance officer shall meet with a student who has been truant immediately upon his/her return to school and take appropriate action.
3. After a student is truant for all or part of 10 school days during a school year, a meeting may be held with the student's parent/guardian, attendance officer and student services representative to discuss the student's truancy. (If a student is truant part or all of five or more school days during a school semester, "habitual truancy" procedures shall be followed.) At the meeting, the parent/guardian shall be provided with the following information:
 - a. Specific number of unexcused absences (truancies) recorded and public and private agencies available to help in family or discipline problems which may be causing the truancy.
 - b. Opportunities for educational counseling to the child to determine whether a change in the child's curriculum would resolve the child's attendance problem.
 - c. The opportunity to consent to an educational evaluation of the child to determine whether learning problems may be the cause of the child's attendance problem.
 - d. The opportunity to consent to the release of student records between the district and defined private or public agencies to permit district personnel to communicate about the student and coordinate efforts to improve school attendance.

Habitual Truancy

1. When a student initially becomes a habitual truant, the following procedures shall be implemented:
 - a. The school attendance officer shall serve notice in accordance with State law. Local law enforcement agencies shall be involved in filing formal truancy charges under the applicable ordinance(s).
 - b. A meeting shall be conducted to discuss the child's truancy. The attendance officer may request that representatives from law enforcement, the Jefferson County Department of Human Services, and other agencies attend this meeting. During this meeting, parents/guardians may be requested to consent to the release of their child's student records to permit the school and Jefferson County Department of Human Services to exchange information.
 - c. In cases where the student has participated solely in the traditional school program, the school team shall consider modifying the student's educational program in accordance with state law with input from the student, the student's parent/guardian and other agency representatives.

Program modifications include, but are not limited to, the following: modifications within the current academic program; a school work training or work study program; enrollment in any alternative public school or program or nonsectarian private school in the district; home-bound study and enrollment in any public educational program outside the district.
2. The Board or its designee shall approve all modified educational program plans. In cases where the student has already participated in a modified educational program and the school team determines that the existing modified educational program continues to be appropriate, the school attendance officer shall file a truancy referral with the Jefferson County Department of Human Services.
3. In situations where the school has made a first-time attempt to develop and provide a modified educational program for the student, or has significantly altered the content of the previously developed modified educational program and the student is absent from the modified educational program without an acceptable excuse for part or all of five or more days on which school is held during a school semester, the school attendance officer shall file a truancy referral with the Jefferson County Department of Human Services. After the school has filed a truancy referral with the Jefferson County Department of Human Services, the school attendance officer shall continue to monitor the student's attendance and file an additional truancy referral each time the student accumulates two additional unexcused absences (truancies) from the modified educational program.
4. The school attendance officer shall inform the child's parent/guardian each time a truancy referral is filed.
5. Before any proceeding may be brought against a child for habitual truancy or violation of an ordinance or against the child's parent/guardian for failure to cause the child to attend school

regularly, the school attendance officer shall provide evidence that appropriate school personnel have performed the duties specified in state law.

E. Permission to be Excused from Regular School Attendance

1. Upon the child's request of the Board and with the written approval of the child's parent/guardian, any child who is 16 years of age or over and a child at risk may attend, in lieu of high school or on a part-time basis, a technical college if the child and his/her parent/guardian agree, in writing, that the child shall participate in a program leading to the child's high school graduation.
2. Any child who is 16 years of age may be excused from regular school attendance by the Board upon the child's request and with the written approval of the child's parent/guardian if the child and his/her parent/guardian agree, in writing, that the child shall participate in a program or curriculum modification leading to the child's high school graduation, and in the opinion of the Board of Education, the programs offered in the School District of Jefferson do not meet the needs of the individual student. Program or curriculum modifications for purposes of this requirement may include the following.
 - a. Modifications within the child's current academic program. If it is the determination of the Board to approve a modified program or curriculum for a student, the district's obligation to pay for such educational services shall be determined in accordance with state law.
 - b. A school work training or work-study program.
 - c. Enrollment in any alternative public school or program located in the school district.
 - d. Enrollment in any nonsectarian private school or program located in the school district which complies with federal nondiscrimination requirements (Title VI of the Civil Rights Act – nondiscrimination on the basis of race, color or national origin). Enrollment in such school or program shall be pursuant to a contractual agreement which provides for the payment of the child's tuition by the district.
 - e. Home-bound study, including nonsectarian correspondence courses or other courses of study approved by the Board or nonsectarian tutoring provided by the school in which the child is enrolled; or
 - f. Enrollment in any public educational program located outside the school district in which the child resides. Enrollment of a child in such program may be pursuant to a contractual agreement between school districts.
3. Any child who is 17 years of age or over may be excused from regular school attendance by the Board upon the child's request and with the written approval of the child's parent/guardian if the child and his/her parent/guardian agree, in writing, that the child shall participate in a program or curriculum modification leading to the child's high school graduation or leading to a high school equivalency diploma, if in the opinion of the Board the programs offered in School District of Jefferson do not meet the needs of the individual student. Program and curriculum modifications include those identified above.

4. A written agreement is required between the child, his/her parent/guardian, the Board and a representative of the high school equivalency program or program leading to the child's high school graduation prior to a child's admission to such program(s). The agreement must state the services to be provided, the time period needed to complete the high school equivalency program or program leading to high school graduation and how the performance of the student shall be monitored.
5. The Board is responsible for monitoring the written agreement on a regular basis. In no case, however, can the agreement be monitored less frequently than once per semester. If the Board determines that a child is not complying with the agreement, the Board shall notify the child, his/her parent/guardian and the high school equivalency program or program leading to high school graduation that the agreement may be modified or suspended in 30 days.
6. Upon the child's request and with the approval of the child's parent/guardian, any child who is 17 years of age or over shall be excused by the Board from regular school attendance if the child began a program leading to a high school equivalency diploma in a secured correctional facility, a secured child caring institution, a secure detention facility, a juvenile portion of a county jail and the child and his/her parent/guardian agree that the child shall continue to participate in such program.

A written agreement is required between the child, his/her parent/guardian, the Board and a representative of the agency providing the program prior to a child's admission. The agreement shall specify that the child is excused from regular school attendance while he/she is enrolled in the program and making progress toward completion of the program or successfully completes the program. If the agency providing the program determines that the child is not making progress toward completion of the program, the agency shall notify the child and his/her parent/guardian that the agreement may be suspended within 30 days. If the agency suspends the agreement, the agency shall notify the child, his/her parent/guardian and the Board.

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