



# Georgia Department of Education

## Policies and Procedures

Policy Title:	<b>Attendance, State Schools</b>		
Policy Number:	<b>SS-6007 JB</b>		
Release Date:	<b>07-13-06</b>	Last Revised:	

**Purpose:**

To describe the laws and rules governing student attendance.

**Applicability:**

This policy applies to all students enrolled in the State Schools.

**Policy:**

To ensure that the State Schools' adhere to state law and State Board of Education Rule, and that parents/guardians or other persons having control or charge of any child(ren) between their sixth and sixteenth birthdays enroll and send such child(ren) to a public or private school or utilize a home study program.

All children enrolled for 20 school days or more in the public schools of this state prior to their sixth birthday shall become subject to all of the provisions of O.C.G.A. § 20-2-690 through § 20-2-702 and the rules and regulations of the State Board of Education relating to compulsory attendance even though they have not attained six years of age.

**Definitions:**

*Truant* – any child subject to compulsory attendance who during the school calendar year has more than five days of unexcused absences.

*Student Attendance Protocol* – procedures to be used in identifying, reporting, investigating and prosecuting cases of alleged violations of O.C.G.A. § 20-2-690.1, relating to mandatory school attendance and appropriately addressing the issue with parents and guardians. The protocol shall also include recommendations for policies relating to tardiness.

*Student Attendance Protocol Committee* – a committee established by the chief judge of the superior court of each county for the purpose of ensuring coordination and cooperation among officials, agencies and programs involved in compulsory attendance issues, to reduce the number of unexcused absences from school, and to increase the percentage of students present to take tests which are required to be administered under the laws of the state.

**General Provisions:**

School Directors, teachers, and other designated personnel must make and keep proper attendance records and administer disciplinary measures necessary to maintain regular student

attendance. It shall be the duty of directors of each school to make available to the school social worker the names, ages, and residences of all pupils in attendance at their schools and classes in accordance with state rules and standards after the beginning of each grading period. Each school shall keep daily records of such attendance, verified by the teacher making such record. Such reports shall be open to inspection by the school social worker or duly authorized representative at any time during the school day.

The following procedures shall be observed in regard to attendance of students:

**A. Absences and Excuses:**

1. Excused absences are defined in the State Board of Education Rules. It is the policy of the State Schools to temporarily excuse students from school for the following reasons:
  - a. Personal illness or attendance in school that endangers a student's health or the health of others.
  - b. A serious illness or death in a student's immediate family necessitating absence from school.
  - c. A court order or an order by a governmental agency, including preinduction physical examinations for service in the armed forces, mandating absence from school.
  - d. Observing religious holidays, necessitating absence from school.
  - e. Conditions rendering attendance impossible or hazardous to student health or safety.
  - f. A student may be granted an excused absence not to exceed one day in order to register to vote or to vote in a public election.
2. A letter written by a parent/guardian and/or licensed physician explaining the reasons for absences must be presented to school authorities by all students on the date of return to school or no later than the following school day after a period of absence from school. Failure to submit a note within three schools days after a student's return from an absence will result in the absence being marked as unexcused. If a student has been absent from school 10 or more days during the school year, school administration and/or school social worker may require a doctor's statement verifying illness. Under certain circumstances, the record for previous year's absences may be reviewed with a doctor's note requested before 10 days expire.
3. Day students who become ill or injured while at school shall be dismissed from school only after parents/guardians have been notified. Exceptions to this policy shall be made only in cases of emergency. Residential students who become ill or injured while at school shall be sent to the residential dormitory after they receive authorization from the school nurse.
4. A day student shall be dismissed before the school day officially ends when a parent or guardian sends a written request or speaks by telephone with the director or director's designee, explaining the reason for early dismissal to the director or appears in person requesting the student's dismissal.
5. Individual students who have emergencies necessitating their absence from school for a portion of the school day must have been present for one-half of the instructional day in order to be included in the average daily attendance count.
6. Students shall not leave the school grounds during school hours without permission from the director or director's designee.
7. School Directors shall count students present when they are serving as pages of the Georgia General Assembly.

**B. Grades and Absences**

Final course grades of students shall not be penalized because of absences if the following conditions are met:

1. Absences are justified and validated for excusable reasons.
2. Make up work for excused absences was completed satisfactorily.

**C. Excessive Absences**

The following provisions apply to absences during a school year. The parental contacts are the minimum required. The director and/or school officials may require and/or initiate additional contacts with parents/guardians if deemed necessary to address the attendance issues of a particular student. Likewise, directors and/or school officials may make a referral to the school social worker at any time it is deemed appropriate.

1. After Five Absences:
  - a. Excused Absences: The director or teacher will contact the parent or guardian by telephone or schedule a parental conference regarding attendance when possible. If contact is unsuccessful, then a letter or postcard will be sent.
  - b. Unexcused Absences: The director or teacher must notify the parent, guardian or other person who has control or charge of the student of the five unexcused absences. The notice shall outline the penalty and consequences of such absences, and that each subsequent absence shall constitute a separate offense. After two reasonable attempts to notify the parent, guardian, or other person who has control or charge of the student, the director or director's designee shall send written notice by certified mail, return receipt requested. The letter is to include a copy of the Compulsory Attendance Law (O.C.G.A. § 20-2-690.1), which is attached to this policy. The notice shall also state that a potential consequence of truancy includes a possible disposition for unruly child in accordance with O.C.G.A. § 15-11-67, attached hereto.
2. After Seven Unexcused Absences by students 14 years old and older, schools and/or school social workers shall notify students they have only three unexcused absences remaining prior to violating the attendance requirements contained in subsection (a.1) of O.C.G.A. § 40-5-22, attached hereto.
3. After Ten Absences:
  - a. Excused: A letter will be sent from the director or director's designee to the parent, guardian or other person regarding attendance. This letter should not be sent for a child with documented, as defined in Section A above, illness unless school administration and/or the school social worker determines it necessary. In addition, an administrator shall confer with a school social worker to determine whether a referral is warranted, at this time.
  - b. Unexcused: A letter will be sent from a school administrator to the parent or guardian regarding attendance. If the student has ten or more school days of unexcused absences within the current academic year or ten or more school days of unexcused absences in the previous academic year and is between 14 and 18 years of age, his/her eligibility to obtain or retain an instruction permit or driver's license may be impacted.
4. After Fifteen Absences:
  - a. Excused: A school administrator shall confer with a school social worker to determine whether a referral is warranted, at this time.
  - b. Unexcused: A referral shall be made to the school social worker using the social work form.
  - c. If a referral is made to the school social worker, an administrator must sign the form and all relevant correspondence and documentation must be attached. The school social worker will work with the student and family in order to address the attendance problem. The school social worker shall involve agencies and services such as mental health, social service agencies, clinic assistant or school nurse, student and parent groups, truancy panel, and Department of Family and Children Services. If the school social worker interventions are unsuccessful, a complaint shall be filed in the appropriate court of law.
5. School days missed as a result of out-of-school suspensions shall not count as unexcused days for the purpose of determining student truancy.
6. Tardy/Early Check-Out:
  - a. After ten occurrences: A letter will be sent from the school administrator to the parent, guardian or other person regarding missed instructional time. This letter should not be sent for a child with documented illness unless school administration and/or the school social worker determines it necessary. In addition, the administrator shall confer with a school social worker to determine whether a referral is warranted at this time.
  - b. After fifteen occurrences: The school administrator shall confer with the school social worker to determine whether a referral is warranted at this time.

#### D. Notification

The State Schools shall provide to the parent, guardian, or other person having control or charge of each student a written summary of possible consequences and penalties for failing to comply with compulsory attendance. By September 1 of each school year or within 30 school days of a student's enrollment in the school system, the parent, guardian or other person shall sign a statement indicating receipt of such written statement of possible consequences and penalties. In addition, students age ten or older by September 1 shall sign a statement indicating receipt of written statement of possible consequences for non-compliance to the school's policy.

#### E. Student Attendance Protocol Committee

Pursuant to § 20-2-690.2, each State School shall participate in a student attendance protocol committee. The director or director's designee shall fully and actively assist in the planning, implementation and evaluation activities of student attendance protocol committee. The director, a certificated school employee and a certificated school social worker from each State School shall serve on the student attendance protocol committee. Each school shall consider and publicly announce its decisions regarding the recommendations of the student attendance protocol committee. In addition, each school shall report annual student attendance rates to the student attendance protocol committee and the State Board of Education by September 1 following each school year.

#### **Authority**

- O.C.G.A. § 15-11-10; 15-11-67; 20-2-85; 20-2-240; 20-2-690.1; 20-2-692.1; 20-2-693; 20-2-694; 20-2-695; 20-2-696; 20-2-697; 20-2-698; 20-2-701, 20-2-735; 20-2-736