



QUARTERLY UPDATE

Ohio Coalition for the Education of Children with Disabilities

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Every Minute Counts. Truancy in Ohio.

The new definition of Truancy in Ohio is:

- Absent 30 or more consecutive hours without a legitimate excuse.
- Absent 42 or more hours in one school month without a legitimate excuse.
- Absent 72 or more hours in one school year without a legitimate excuse.



This document contains links to other resources. Clicking the title of each article will provide you with more information from the source.

House Bill 410 Requirements— Ohio Department of education.

In 2016, both the Ohio House and Senate passed House Bill 410, which adopts nationally accepted best practices to support students and families and to keep students engaged in school and on a path to success. Student absence is counted based on hours of missed instruction, which includes time missed due to tardiness and early pick-up.

Your local school district is required to send a notice to parents when a student reaches the following criteria for absences, either excused or unexcused:

- Missing 38 or more hours within 30 days
- Missing 65 or more hours within the school year

This letter simply serves as a notification of missing hours.

Resources

Truancy During COVID-19

[Ohio Department of Education – Reset and Restart Education](#)

[Ohio Department of Education – COVID-19 Health and Prevention Guidance for Ohio K-12 Schools](#)

[HB 410 Requirements \(ohio.gov\)](#)



Communication to Avoid Truancy

During COVID-19 your child is most likely attending school online or some type of hybrid instruction, which will include logging in to show that he or she is attending school. Be sure to communicate any difficulties your student is having logging in. If a student is not logged in at a designated time of day, he or she could be considered absent.

Record keeping is important; therefore, document all forms of communication with your school district and compare your record keeping with what the school has on file. If you do not agree with the absences on file for your child, disputes must be handled at the school. Please contact your child's school immediately and inquire about his or her attendance record. In some instances, producing a doctor's excuse and/or a note from the parent or guardian could make a

difference so be sure to date and keep a copy of each school excuse.



Chronic Illness and Truancy

Chronic health problems may lead to frequent absences. If your child has a chronic health problem, such as asthma, diabetes, a seizure disorder, or sickle cell anemia, that causes frequent absences from school, please work with the school nurse to explore possible options. Be sure to ask about creating a health plan and or 504 Plan that will remain on file at your child's school, being sure to update the information as needed.

Attendance Information



The laws of the State of Ohio (ORC 3321.04) require that every parent, guardian, or adult having charge of any child between the ages of six (6) and eighteen (18) must send the child to public, private, or parochial school for the full term that school is in session, unless excused by proper legal certificate. Attendance must begin with the first week of school.

Aligned with the [Ohio Department of Health's Health Guidelines for K-12 schools](#), other considerations when updating local attendance policies may include:



- Temporary internet outage for individual students or households;
- Unexpected technical difficulties for individual students or households, such as password resets or software upgrades, occurring at inopportune times, such as during a teacher-led remote learning lesson;
- Student absence due to COVID-19 until alternative arrangements can be made;
- Additional flexibilities to support students and families as they engage in remote learning.

Absences

Within 120 minutes (2 hours) after the start of each school day, the school is required by law to attempt to contact the parent or guardian of each student who is absent without a legitimate excuse. It can be difficult to contact working parents; it is helpful if parents or guardians contact the school if they know their child is going to be absent for the day.

Check with your school district to be clear on timelines for notification about your child's absence. Agreeing on preferred methods of communication, such as a phone call, a note, or an email to excuse your child's absence, is a good place to start the communication process. The school might require that a parent or guardian contact them "within a timely manner." Your district might list a specific number of days the

parent or guardian must be in contact with the school district regarding the absence. Consider including the number of days absent, dates, and reason for absence in the note. Keep in mind that only school officials have the authority to excuse a student from school.

You may request a copy of your student's attendance record in the school office at any time.



Family Vacations

The school calendar includes school "holidays" or vacation time. Whenever possible, family vacations should align with school vacation days. Vacation is not an approved reason for absence in the state of Ohio. If the absence is for educational purposes, the parent/guardian will need to contact the school prior to the absence to obtain work assignments that must be completed upon the student's return to school.

Age of Majority

Students who are 18 years old may legally write their own absence notes.

Examples of Excused Absences

Ohio recognizes the following as valid reasons for absence from school:

- Personal Illness
- Illness in the Family
- Death in the Family
- Religious Holidays
- Medical/Dental Appointments (with a note from a doctor)

Emergencies/Circumstances (Subject to interpretation by your school district)

Local Attendance Policies may be updated to follow COVID-19 Protocol.

Suspensions

Suspensions are **unexcused** absences per Ohio Administrative Code 3301-18-01. However, suspensions do not count toward truancy triggers for a student. Students may only be suspended from school after a due process hearing.

To review the code, visit LAWriter Ohio Laws and Rules using the link below. 3321.01 Compulsory school age-requirements for admission to kindergarten or first grade - pupil personnel services committee.

<http://codes.ohio.gov/orc/3321.01>

Additionally, per Ohio House Bill 410, any student who is identified as a "Habitual Truant" will be assigned to an Absence Intervention Team and placed on an Absence Intervention Plan. "Habitual Truant" refers to unexcused absences only.

Failure to adhere to the plan may result in referral for Truancy. The criteria for "Habitual Truant" are as follows:

- 30 consecutive hours of unexcused absences
- 42 hours of unexcused absences in one month
- 72 hours of unexcused absences in one school year





Examples of Unexcused Absences

- Any absence not excused by Ohio Standards
- Any absence for which a parental note was not received within the district's required timeline for notification of an absence

Per Board Policy, once a student has reached fifteen (15) excused or unexcused absence days in a school year, all further absences will be considered unexcused unless accompanied by a doctor's note.

Truancy, or skipping school, is a significant problem in schools across the United States. It has also been statistically identified as a warning sign that students may be heading for more troublesome activities and potentially

even delinquency.

Teachers, parents, and administrators need to identify students and put strategies in place to help minimize truancy levels.

Truancy occurs most often in students aged between twelve and eighteen. Perhaps the biggest reason for a student failing to attend school is disengagement. While sickness and family commitments are a valid cause for occasional absence from school or a particular class, truancy is not.

When internal factors are to be considered, such as bullying, peer pressure, and/or self-esteem concerns, there are school Social Workers and Guidance Counselors on hand to help with these issues.

Disengagement of a student from education occurs for numerous reasons, and each student must be managed individually. Early intervention is very important. Schools must work to solve the issue in partnership with parents.

For teachers, the engagement of students is crucial for preventing truancy. Negative perceptions of school need to be identified and reformed. Learning needs to occur in concrete, creative, nurturing, and productive ways.





Tips to Minimize Truancy

- Break down barriers; make sure that families are made aware of supports that will enable them to stay connected. COVID-19 has made it difficult to keep up with the day-to-day changes that occur.
- Create a positive classroom environment, with hands-on activities, group discussions, and active participation.
- Build positive relationships with students and parents.
- Discuss trancies with parents or guardians.
- Implement incentives for attendance.
- Implement options for credit recovery.
- Identify students who are struggling early and respond positively to help them.
- Identify socialization issues.
- Maintain and communicate high expectations of all students.
- Be objective with truant students.
- Talk to your child about attendance and truancy.
- Volunteer at your child’s school.
- Monitor your child’s feelings about school and socialization.
- Pay attention to their friends and acquaintances.
- Continue to maintain communication with your child’s school and teachers.
- If your child is a habitual truant, consider counseling.
- If possible, take your child to school and pick them at the end of the day or establish a carpool.
- Encourage recreational interests outside school.
- Continue being supportive if your child is anxious.

Do not:

- Give poor grades based on poor attendance
- Ignore health and safety risks
- Ignore at-risk behaviors and characteristics
- Give up on helping the student
- Punish truancy with suspension or expulsion

Additionally, as a parent, you can:

- Continue to maintain an active interest in your child’s education and schoolwork.

Chronic and long-term truancy needs to be handled by a team including the whole family, offering meaningful incentives for attendance, and collaboration between schools, parents, and others, including social service providers and mental health workers.

Student absence impacts on their educational development and achievement. Some truancy occurs without parental knowledge; other times it happens with parental permission. Either way, it is detrimental to the student.

When is it time to ask for help?

Frequently asked questions/concerns:

My child's school often asks me to pick him up early due to behavioral concerns. What are my rights? Will this count as an absence?

Document all requests for early pickups. Set up an IEP meeting to review the student's behavior plan and explain concerns about early release and truancy.

I received a letter stating that I will be reported to Children's Services due to chronic truancy. What do I do now?

Contact the school principal, social worker, or guidance counselor immediately to set up a meeting to discuss the student's attendance. Provide the school with a written excuse or an excuse from any doctor appointments.

The school bus is late every day, and now my child is being marked tardy or absent.

Contact the school principal and teacher immediately to discuss this issue. Document each time this issue occurred.

I received a subpoena and must appear in court due to chronic truancy.

Contact the school principal, social worker, or guidance counselor immediately to set up a meeting to discuss the student's attendance. Provide



the school with a written excuse or an excuse from any doctor appointments.

I do not have internet, so my child is not able to log on.

Contact the school principal, social worker, and teacher immediately to discuss this issue. Document each time you made an attempt to resolve this issue until the issue is resolved. If the district is not willing to help in this situation, there might be a community agency that could support the parent and student with this need.

My child's school-issued Chromebook is not working properly.

Contact the school principal and teacher immediately to discuss this issue. Document each time you made an attempt to resolve this issue until the issue is resolved.

I have not heard from my child's teacher regarding assignments.

Contact the school principal and teacher immediately to discuss this issue. Document each time you made an attempt to resolve this issue until the issue is resolved. If this issue is not resolved in a timely manner, set up a meeting with the building principal.

Resources

Ohio Coalition for the Education of Children with Disabilities;
www.ocecd.org

Disability Rights of Ohio:
www.disabilityrightsohio.org

Ohio Department of Education:
www.education.ohio.gov

Ohio Parent Mentor Project:
www.ohioparentmentor.com

Cool SIS (School Information System) <https://www.coolsis.com/blog/tips-minimize-truancy>



OCECD

OHIO COALITION FOR THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

If you need assistance with the language translation of this newsletter, please contact us at 1-844-382-5452.

Si necesita ayuda con la traducción de este documento, por favor contáctenos al 1-844-382-5452.

To remove your name from our mailing list, or if you have questions, please contact kellyb@ocecd.org or call 1-844-382-5452.

OHIO COALITION FOR THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

The Ohio Coalition for the Education of Children with Disabilities (OCECD) is a statewide nonprofit organization that serves families of infants, toddlers, children and youth with disabilities in Ohio, educators and agencies who provide services to them. OCECD works through the coalition efforts of over 35 parent and professional disability organizations and over 70 individual members which comprise the Coalition. OCECD has also been funded since 1984 to serve as the Parent Training and Information Center (PTI) for the state of Ohio from the federal government, U.S. Dept of Education, Office for Special Education Programs.

Established in 1972, currently employing 28 staff in 15 offices who are primarily parents or family members of children or adults with disabilities or persons with disabilities, the Coalition's mission is to ensure that every Ohio child with special needs receives a free, appropriate, public education in the least restrictive environment to enable that child to reach his/her highest potential. Throughout Ohio, the Coalition's services reach families of children and youth, birth through 26 years of age, with all disabilities.

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