



PARENT'S GUIDE TO UNDERSTANDING STATE ATTENDANCE LAWS Chapter 28A.225 RCW- COMPULSORY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AND ADMISSION

The law requires that parents of children eight years of age (ages six and seven, if enrolled in school) and under eighteen years of age have their children in school every day. When a child is ill, or must be out of school, the absence needs to be excused by a parent or guardian in accordance with WAC 392-401-020 and district policy. When a child has unexcused absences, or excessive excused absences, the school must take steps to work with the child and parent/guardian in an attempt to improve the child's attendance. Whether excused or unexcused, absences from school can have long term effects on a child's ability to be successful in school and ultimately their chances of graduating.

DISTRICT POLICY

Absences

- At the elementary level an absence is defined as missing more than 75 minutes of either an a.m. or p.m. session.
- At the secondary level an absence is defined as missing three or more periods. Any secondary student who misses ten (10) minutes or more of a class period is considered absent for that period. At Glacier View JH and Emerald Ridge HS an absence is defined as missing two or more class periods.
- Upon returning to school following an absence, students must clear their absence with either a note or phone call by a parent/guardian stating the date and reason for the absence. Failure to clear this absence will result in an unexcused absence.
- A student must arrange for all make-up work following an absence.

Excused absences

- Absences may be excused if the absence meets one of the criteria provided in WAC 392-401-020.
- Permission to be absent from school for reason(s) other than illness may be granted when requested by the parent/guardian and agreed upon by the school authorities. Absences will be excused if they are for illness, medical/dental appointments, bereavement, religious observance, family emergency, related to student's pregnancy or parenting needs, court appearances, or if the student has received an approval by the school for a personal planned absence. School related activities, which require a student to miss class, count as excused absences. Students who leave during the school day for medical/dental appointments are expected to return to school when finished.
- These excuses become a part of the student's attendance record. School officials may request additional verification for an absence whenever they have reasonable grounds to believe the reasons stated in an excuse are not legitimate or a pattern of absenteeism exists. A doctor's note may be required. Failure to provide the required doctor note would result in unexcused absences.

Unexcused absences

- Any absence from school is unexcused unless it meets one of the criteria provided in WAC 392-401-020.
- An absence will be considered unexcused if:
 - (a) no parent/guardian or caregiver phone call or written note is received by the office within a reasonable time,
 - (b) the reason given does not meet the condition of an excused absence, or
 - (c) in secondary, when a student misses ten minutes or more of a class period without teacher or office permission or fails to report to where he/she is directed.
- Unexcused absences will result in progressive disciplinary action and may lead to the filing of a truancy petition.
- Every effort must be made to get students to school who missed their transportation. Arriving to school on time is a student/parent responsibility. Missed transportation, a missed ride, traffic conditions, weather conditions or car problems may not always be a valid excuse for an absence or tardy.

WHAT CAN PARENTS DO?

If you are looking for strategies to support and improve your child's attendance, here are several things you can do:

- Partner with your child's school and work together to create an intervention plan
- Contact your child's school or district for community resources
- At home, be consistent with rules and set boundaries

LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

EXCUSED ABSENCES - ELEMENTARY SCHOOL ONLY

<p>*ELEMENTARY ONLY* After the 5th EXCUSED absence in a 30-day period or 10th EXCUSED absence in a school year (unless prior notice approved by the school or doctor note and an academic plan is in place to ensure the child does not fall behind).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The parent is invited to attend an <i>Attendance Conference</i> to identify the barriers to attendance and create an intervention plan. The conference must include at least one school district employee such as a nurse, counselor, social worker, teacher, or community human services provider, except in those instances regarding the attendance of a child who has an IEP or Section 504 plan, in which case the reconvening of the team that created the program or plan is required. ➤ <i>Note: If a regularly scheduled parent-teacher conference day is to take place within thirty days of the absences, the school district may schedule this conference on that day.</i>
<p>UNEXCUSED ABSENCES</p>	<p>Pertains to all students.</p>
<p>Each Unexcused Absence</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The parent/guardian will receive notification of their child's absence via the district Robo call.
<p>After the 3rd Unexcused absence in a 30-day period</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The school will make an attempt to contact the parent/guardian to find out why the student has been absent. If the parent has an approved reason per WAC 392-401-020 and district policy, the absence will be excused. ➤ If the absences are not able to be excused, the school will send a letter to the parent/guardian scheduling an attendance conference.
<p>Attendance Conference</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ An administrator will meet with the parent and student to assess the Barriers to School Attendance and create an Intervention Plan ➤ <i>Note: If the parent is not present for the conference, the school may meet with the student alone. The signed "Attendance Intervention Plan and Agreement" will be sent home to the parent.</i> ➤ The school will provide support to the student and parent/guardian based on the Intervention Plan created at the conference and will continue to monitor attendance.
<p>**SECONDARY ONLY** Between the 2nd and 5th unexcused absence in a school year</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The school must administer an Assessment and take data-informed steps to eliminate or reduce the student's absences, consistent with the Assessment results.
<p>No later than the 5th unexcused absence in a 30-day period or 10th unexcused absence in a school year</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ If the attempts to substantially reduce the student's absences have not been successful and the student is enrolled, at least six years of age and under the age of eighteen, a petition must be filed with the juvenile court. ➤ The petition will be stayed for up to 180 school days, or one calendar year. During the stay, the school will continue to provide intervention, support, and monitor attendance. Interventions at this stage may include a referral to a Community Truancy Board and/or a conference with a truancy probation officer from the juvenile court. ➤ At 20-days of consecutive absences; whether excused or unexcused, the student will be withdrawn from school.
<p>Community Truancy Board (CTB)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ A CTB is a board composed of local community members, school district employees and the juvenile court. CTBs were created to increase the support for students and families in the community in hopes of avoiding further involvement by the Pierce County Juvenile Court. The board meets with the student and family and works to re-evaluate the barriers to attendance and build on the intervention plan created at the school.
<p>Progress Reports</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Progress reports will be filed with juvenile court during the course of the petition. At any point after the petition is filed, and before the end of 180 school days, the school will determine one of two courses of action: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Lift the Stay - all attempts to substantially reduce a student's absences have not been successful. The stay will be lifted and the court will notify the parent and child of a court Truancy Workshop date and a Trial date. ○ Dismiss- the student's attendance has substantially improved and there is no need for further court involvement.

CONTACTS

If you have questions or need assistance, please contact your student's school, or the Equity and Education Department:

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