

# Ottawa County

## Attendance Policy and Absenteeism Protocol

### Introduction:

Hedy Nai-Lin Chang's research shows that regular attendance is critical in the development and learning of all students. We now realize it is not only those students who fit the traditional definition of truancy, but those who are chronically absent as well who have lower grades and are more likely to drop out than students with better attendance. Truancy, or unexcused absences, has been linked to serious delinquent activity in youth and to significant negative behavior in characteristics in adults (Bell, A.J., Rosen, L.A., and Dynlacht, D. 1994). Left unaddressed, truancy can have significant negative effects on the student, school, and community.

In an effort to better service the schools of the OAISD, below you will find the common language and coding that is recommended for each school to use in regards to attendance.

### Definitions:

- **Chronically absent** means absent for 10% or more of the enrolled school days in a school year, whether absenteeism is due to unexcused, excused. (For instance, missing 3 days of school the first month of the year; 8 days in the first half of the year; or 18 days in the entire school year.)  
\*\*\*Note: All absences for the school year should be counted, even if they have carried over from a different school. Attendance shall be continuous and consecutive for the school year (sec 1561) and not start over each semester/ trimester.
- **Disciplinary absence** means absences that result from school or district disciplinary action and are neither unexcused nor excused absences. (*Does not count against chronic absenteeism*).
- **Late Arrival/tardy** means arriving to school or class after start time unless excused = 1-10 minutes late
- **Early Dismissal** means leaving school or class early prior to dismissal, unless excused = 1- 10 minutes
- **Unexcused absence** means an absent that is neither excused nor disciplinary. Ten late arrivals and/or early dismissals = one unexcused absent.
  - **Truant** means a student who has 8 or more unexcused absences in a school year
  - MCL 712A.2(a)(4)
- **Excused absence** means the following:
  - Student illness/injury/residential treatment (with doctor's note or verified by parent)
  - Medical appointments (with doctor's note)
  - Religious holidays
  - Lice (3 days)

- Funeral/death in family
- Mandated court appearances (documented-only if children are required per subpoena).
- Placement by Juvenile Court in detention.
- Educational opportunities approved by school officials
- Travel (5 days with school official approval)
- **Unexcused absence** is any absence not accounted for above, examples of unexcused absences include, but not limited to:
  - Staying home to baby-sit
  - Overslept
  - Travel (more than 5 days in school calendar or any travel days without prior approval)
  - Needed at home
  - Weather
  - Missed bus
  - Child is not immunized
  - Sickness (not documented or verified by parent)
  - Chronic lice (over 5 days, CPS referral may be suggested/should be considered).
  - Willful truancy (skipping/student refuses to attend school per parent/guardian, or reported as a run away).
  - Failure to notify school

### **School Codes:**

In order for significant data to be collected, it is important schools use codes with consistent definitions. The following codes are necessary for tracking student attendance.

- **EA** – Excused Absence
- **UA** – Unexcused Absence
- **EM** – Excused Absence-medical (use only when a written doctor’s note is provided).
- **UT** – Unexcused Tardy-arrived to school 1-10 minutes late without approved excuse.
- **ET**- Excused Tardy-arrived to school 1-10 minutes late with approved excuse (use for appointments, but not missing an entire class period/hour).
- **LEU**- Left Early Unexcused- left school 1-10 minutes early without approved excuse.
- **LEE**- Left Early Excused-left school 1-10 minutes early with approved excuse.
- **LAE**-Late Arrival Excused-Primarily used for Elementary schools that do the AM/PM attendance.
- **LAU**-Late Arrival Unexcused-Primarily used for Elementary schools that do AM/PM attendance
- **IST** – In School Tutorial (Suspension, if applicable to building)
- **OSS** – Out of School Suspension

- **SS**– School sponsored event such as a field trip, athletic, or academic event.

**Attendance Policy: Chronic Absenteeism, 10%-Whether excused or unexcused:**

*At any time during the school year if a student has absences that have reached 10% of their school days as being absent, this should initiate the following steps by the district addressing concerns. It is recommended that these check marks be made at 30 days of school, 60, 90, 120, 150.*

OR

*At any time during the school year a student has tardies (late arrivals and early dismissals) that have reached 20% of their school days, or any combination of the above, the following steps should be initiated:*

At 5 days absent (or at 10% of their school days being absent) a district identifies a potential attendance problem

At 7 absences (or continued absences after identified attendance issue) district sends out an attendance letter addressing concerns of absences.

At 10 absences (or continued absences after identified attendance issue) district attempts to contact parent/guardian to discuss attendance issues and offer any support as needed. District also attempts to confirm that parent/guardian received attendance letter. Tier 1 and Tier 2 supports being reviewed by school (see handout).

At 12 absences (or continued absences after identified attendance issue) district attempts to contact parent/guardian and schedules school meeting to complete Truancy Meeting Forms and offer any resources that might be helpful. Tier 1 and Tier 2 supports being reviewed by school (see handout).

At 15 absences (or continued absences after identified attendance issue) and the district has exhausted all resources and interventions and attendance has not improved, a referral to the ISD is made via the Truancy Data Manager (TDM). After a referral has been made, all absences **must** have a doctor's note in order to be marked excused.

\*Schools can refer a student to truancy prior to 15 absences (especially elementary) as long as the student has missed 10% of the school year and the school has exhausted all efforts and tiered interventions to improve attendance.

\*\*Truancy officers reserve the right to accept referrals based on recommendation of the Truancy Collaborative.

**Laws:**

Mich. Comp. Laws Ann. § 380.1561 – Compulsory School Attendance Sec. 1561. (1) Except as otherwise provided in this section, for a child who turned age 11 before December 1, 2009 or who entered grade 6 before 2009, the child's parent, guardian, or other person in this state having control and charge of the child shall send that child to a public school during the entire school year from the age of 6 to the child's sixteenth birthday. Except as otherwise provided in this section, for a child who turns age 11 on or after December 1, 2009 or a child who was age 11 before that date and enters grade 6 in 2009 or later, the child's parent, guardian, or other person in this state having control and charge of the child shall send the child to a public school during the entire school year from the age of 6 to the child's eighteenth birthday. The child's attendance shall be continuous and consecutive for the school year fixed by the school district in which the child is enrolled. In a school district that maintains school during the entire calendar year and in which the school year is divided into quarters, a child is not required to attend the public school more than 3 quarters in 1 calendar year, but a child shall not be absent for 2 or more consecutive quarters.

Juvenile Truancy Laws - MCL 712A.2(a)(4):

(4) The juvenile willfully and repeatedly absents himself or herself from school or other learning program intended to meet the juvenile's educational needs, or repeatedly violates rules and regulations of the school or other learning program, and the court finds on the record that the juvenile, the juvenile's parent, guardian, or custodian, and school officials or learning program personnel have met on the juvenile's educational problems and educational counseling and alternative agency help have been sought. As used in this sub-subdivision only, "learning program" means an organized educational program that is appropriate, given the age, intelligence, ability, and psychological limitations of a juvenile, in the subject areas of reading, spelling, mathematics, science, history, civics, writing, and English grammar.

**References:**

Bell, A.J., Rosen, L.A., and Dynlacht, D.  
1994. Truancy intervention.  
The Journal of Research and Development in Education  
57(3):203–211.

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