

3515 (JH-R) Attendance, Absenteeism, and Truancy Procedure 3515 (JH-R)

Absences

The Board requires that school-aged children enrolled in the District attend school in accordance with all applicable state laws and Board policies. The educational program offered by the District is predicated upon the presence of the student and requires continuity of instruction and classroom participation in order for students to achieve academic standards and consistent educational progress.

Attendance shall be required of all students enrolled in the District during the days and hours that school is in session, except that the Principal may excuse a student for temporary absences when receiving satisfactory evidence of conditions or reasons that may reasonably cause the student's absence.

When students do not attend school or participate in their education, it is detrimental to learning. In order to support students and families, the District will abide by the following procedures to help truant students return to school and engage in their education.

Developing and Coordinating Strategies for Truancy Reduction

Administration will continue to seek truancy-prevention and truancy-reduction strategies along with the recommendations listed below:

1. Coordinate truancy-prevention strategies based on the early identification of truancy, such as prompt notification of absences to parents.
2. Assist school staff to develop site attendance plans by providing development strategies, resources, and referral procedures.
3. Encourage and coordinate the adoption of attendance-incentive programs at school sites and in individual classrooms that reward and celebrate good attendance and significant improvements in attendance.

School Attendance Committees

Each school in the District shall have an attendance committee. The committee will consist of an assistant principal, social worker, school counselors, and school nurse. The School Resource Officer will attend committee meetings when appropriate. The committee will meet monthly during the school year to look at student attendance data (and as appropriate, achievement data). The committee will work with necessary personnel when identifying students in need of intervention, and will develop a plan for each student that is truant or at risk of becoming truant.

Intervention Process to Address Truancy

When the attendance committee identifies a student who is habitually truant or who is in

danger of becoming habitually truant, an attendance intervention plan will be developed. This plan is meant to support the student and the student's parents/guardians. The student, their parent/guardian, and other staff members may be included in the planning process when appropriate. In any situation, if the Principal/designee believes that a student's attendance (regardless of whether absences are excused or unexcused) is negatively impacting their education, the same measures may be put in place.

The interventions shall include, but are not limited to the following:

When a student reaches 3 days of unexcused absences, the Principal will send the student's parent a letter which includes:

1. A statement that the student is in danger of becoming habitually truant;
2. A statement of the parent's responsibility to ensure that the student attends school; and
3. A request for the parents/guardians to develop a family-based plan for reducing the student's truancy (See Attendance Plan Template).

When a student reaches 5 days (10 half-days) of unexcused absences, the Principal will send the student's parent a letter which includes:

1. A statement that the student is now considered habitually truant.
2. An invitation to a mandatory meeting for the parents, where an Attendance Plan will be written and additional interventions will be explored to support the student's regular attendance.
3. A note that continued truancy may result in a referral to the New Hampshire Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF).

*Note - For children 13 and under, it is typically considered educational neglect.

Specific Interventions and Meeting Topics

1. Investigate the cause(s) of the student's truant behavior;
 - Ensure barriers such as language, transportation, or finances are not keeping the student from attending school.
2. Consider, when appropriate, modification of his/her educational program to meet particular needs that may be causing the truancy;
 - Specifically note the impact of the absences to date on the student's educational program.
3. Involves the parents in the development of an Attendance Plan designed to reduce the truancy;
 - An in person meeting is best, but may be done via phone or virtual meetings.
 - Note whether or not parents attend these meetings.
 - Should include a home visit if truancy is chronic.

4. Seeks alternative disciplinary measures, but still retains the right to impose discipline in accordance with the District's policies and administrative guidelines on student discipline; and
5. Determination as to whether school record keeping practices and parental notification of the student's absences have an effect on the child's attendance.

Parental Notification of Truancy Policy

Each school shall also ensure that the District's attendance policy and this procedure are included in or referenced in the student handbook annually.

Additional Interventions and Supports

The purpose of intervention is to change patterns or behaviors. The District recognizes that for some students and parents/guardians, positive reinforcement and support are more effective means of changing behaviors related to truancy. Some examples of positive reinforcement and intervention for schools and attendance teams to consider include:

- Developing a school based parent support group, utilizing parents who have previously struggled to help share their experiences.
- Having students and administrators calling home and sharing good news when at risk or truant students find small successes.
- Sending positive letters home when students reach a particular attendance threshold demonstrating a change in attendance behavior.
- Developing a token economy system to celebrate tier 1 (universal) attendance, as well as providing incentives when tier 2 and 3 attendance students