



## Absenteeism and Truancy Policy FAQ

### Who is required to submit an absenteeism and truancy policy?

School districts; charter schools established under Article 27A of the School Code; alternative schools and programs, including Regional Safe Schools Programs established under Article 13A of the School Code, Alternative Learning Opportunities Programs established under Article 13B of the School Code, and optional education programs established under Section 2- 3.66 of the School Code; and any other school serving students in any of the grades kindergarten through 12 that receives public funds, including, but not limited to, nonpublic schools that receive public funds and special education cooperatives must submit an absenteeism and truancy policy to the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE).

Nonpublic schools participating in the federal/state milk, breakfast, or lunch programs are regarded as receiving public funds and are therefore subject to this requirement. ISBE will email participating nonpublic schools to inform them that they are required to submit such a policy.

### What must be included in the absenteeism and truancy policy?

Section 22-92 of the School Code sets forth the four required components of an absenteeism and truancy policy. These components are set forth below, followed by a more detailed explanation of each.

1. A definition of a valid cause for being absent.
2. The diagnostic procedures that will be used to identify the causes of unexcused absences.
3. The identification of interventions and supportive services for truant or chronically truant students.
4. Incorporation of the chronic absenteeism report and support provisions of School Code.

#### 1. A definition of a valid cause for being absent.

The absenteeism and truancy policy must include a definition of a valid cause for absence in accordance with [Section 26-2a](#) of the School Code. Section 26-2a lists the following as a valid cause for absence:

- A. Illness, including the mental or behavioral health of the student;
- B. Observance of a religious holiday;
- C. Death in the immediate family or family emergency;
- D. Other situations beyond the control of the student, as determined by the Board of Education in each district [or nonpublic school administration]; or
- E. Such other circumstances that cause reasonable concern to the parent for the mental, emotional, or physical health or safety of the student.

Items A – E above must be included in the absenteeism and truancy policy at a minimum. A school or district may elect to include additional items in its definition of a valid cause for absence.

## 2. The diagnostic procedures that will be used to identify the causes of unexcused absences.

The absenteeism and truancy policy must explain how the school or district will diagnose the causes or reasons for a student's unexcused absences. Specifically, the policy must include:

A description of diagnostic procedures to be used for identifying the causes of unexcused student absenteeism, which shall, at a minimum, include ***interviews with the student, his or her parent or guardian, and any school officials who may have information about the reasons for the student's attendance problem.***

Thus, a school or district must define the procedures it will follow to determine why a student is missing school without a valid cause. These must include the interviews mentioned above and may include other methods as deemed appropriate.

## 3. The identification of interventions and supportive services for truant or chronically truant students.

The absenteeism and truancy policy must identify the interventions, strategies, and supportive services that the school or district will make available to truant or chronically truant students to improve their attendance. Per the law,

... [t]hese services shall include, but need not be limited to, ***parent conferences, student counseling, family counseling, and information about existing community services that are available to truant and chronically truant students and relevant to their needs.***

Therefore, the school or district must provide information on the availability of these supportive services to students who need them. This may include information on the when, where, and how services will be provided. The school or district may employ additional interventions beyond those listed above.

## 4. Incorporation of the chronic absenteeism report and support provisions of School Code.

The absenteeism and truancy policy must incorporate the provisions relating to chronic absenteeism in accordance with Section 26-18 of the School Code.

Per Section 26-18 of the School Code, every school district, charter school, alternative school, or any school receiving public funds ("covered entity") is required to:

... collect and review its chronic absence data and determine what systems of support and resources are needed to engage chronically absent students and their families to encourage the habit of daily attendance and promote success. The review shall include an analysis of chronic absence data from each attendance center or campus of the school district, charter school, or alternative school or other school receiving public funds.

Therefore, the school or district must collect and regularly review its chronic absence data in order to identify the students who most need support and how best to support them.

Each covered entity is also encouraged under Section 26-18 to provide a system of support to students who are at risk of reaching or exceeding chronic absence levels with strategies such as those available through the Illinois Multi-tiered Systems of Support Network. It is also encouraged to make resources available to families such as those available through ISBE's Family Engagement Framework to support

and engage students and their families to encourage heightened school engagement and improved daily school attendance.

The review and reporting requirements set forth in Section 26-18(c) must be fully incorporated into the absenteeism and truancy policy maintained by the covered entity.

### **Are there any additional requirements for an absenteeism and truancy policy?**

There are two additional requirements for absenteeism and truancy policies:

1. The policy must specify the date of adoption (indicated by month, date, and year) and any revision dates. Policies must be updated every two years. 105 ILCS 5/22-92(b)
2. A school or district must post its absenteeism and truancy policy on its website, if any, and incorporate the policy into its student handbook. 105 ILCS 5/22-92(a)

This ensures that each absenteeism and truancy policy is communicated appropriately to families and is kept current and responsive to community needs. For covered entities that update the adoption date listed on a policy whenever the policy is updated, the date of adoption (indicated by month, date, and year) is sufficient to meet additional requirement No. 1.

### **When and how are absenteeism and truancy policies submitted?**

1. By no later than September 30, 2022,\* or by September 30 of the first full school year a school becomes subject to the requirements set forth in Section 22-92 of the School Code and the Part 207 rules, each school or district must file its policy with ISBE through ISBE's Web Application Security (IWAS) system and must submit an updated policy every two years thereafter by no later than September 30 of the year due. \* **ISBE extended the deadline for submission of policies in the 2022-23 school year to January 13, 2023, due to the date the new administrative rules went into effect.**
2. If, after review and re-evaluation of its absenteeism and truancy policy, the school or district determines that no updates are necessary, a copy of board minutes clearly indicating that the policy was re-evaluated and no changes were deemed to be necessary, or a signed statement from the board president indicating that the policy was re-evaluated and no changes were deemed to be necessary, shall be submitted electronically in IWAS. In instances in which a school does not have a board or board president, the school's chief school administrator may submit the signed statement.
3. Please note that all entities must also submit a copy of their policy to their regional superintendent of schools. ISBE will grant each regional superintendent access to the IWAS application that contains the absenteeism and truancy policies for every school and district in their region, which will satisfy the requirement for schools and districts to submit their absenteeism and truancy policies with the regional superintendent without any additional action required. However, nothing shall prevent the regional superintendent from collecting the policy through any other means.