

Compulsory Attendance Reminders SWVPP & Kindergarten (November 2019 School Leader Update)

Each year, the Iowa Department of Education (Department) receives questions on compulsory attendance age for both preschool, specifically students enrolled in the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program (SWVPP), and Kindergarten students. Detailed below is a review of Iowa law for compulsory attendance.

The law includes the following for **SWVPP** students:

“A child who has reached the age of four by September 15 and who is enrolled in the statewide preschool program under chapter 256C shall be considered to be of compulsory attendance age unless the parent or guardian of the child submits written notice to the school district implementing the program of parent’s or guardian’s “intent to remove the child from enrollment in the preschool program.” Iowa Code § 299.1A(3) (2013).

Under this legislation, children who are four by September 15 and are enrolled in the SWVPP are of compulsory attendance age. Those changes were signed into law with an effective date of July 1, 2013.

The purpose of this state law is to allow a school district to remove from its enrollment a child who is not regularly attending the district’s program. The law does not change the parameters of the program; it is intended only to hold parents accountable for ensuring regular attendance on behalf of their students. Requirements for program length and duration are set locally. The law allows school districts to provide a quality education for children and to efficiently allocate public resources. If a child who is enrolled in SWVPP is not attending regularly, the district is to follow its compulsory attendance policies and procedures unless and until the parent provides the district with written notice of intent to withdraw the child from the SWVPP.

The law includes the following for **Kindergarten** students:

“A child who has reached the age of five by September 15 and who is enrolled in a school district shall be considered to be of **compulsory attendance** age unless the parent or guardian of the child notifies the school district in writing of the parent's or guardian's intent to remove the child from enrollment in the school district.” Iowa Code § 299.1A(2) (2013).

The purpose of this change is to increase attendance for children in kindergarten. If a child who is enrolled in kindergarten is not attending school, because the child is now of compulsory attendance age, the district is to follow its compulsory attendance policies and procedures unless and until the parent provides the district with written notice of intent to withdraw the kindergarten child from school. The Department is currently updating its materials on compulsory attendance to account for this legislative change.