

Prairie Central CUSD #8

Absentee/Chronic Absentee/Truancy Procedures

Illinois law requires that whoever has custody or control of any child between six (by September 1st) and seventeen years of age shall assure that the child attends school in the district in which he or she resides, during the entire time school is in session (unless the child has already graduated from high school). Illinois law also requires that whoever has custody or control of a child who is enrolled in the school, regardless of the child's age, shall assure that the child attends school during the entire time school is in session.

Definition of Excused (Valid) Absence: There are two types of absences: excused and unexcused. Excused absences include: illness (including mental or behavioral health of the student), observance of a religious holiday or event, death in the immediate family, family emergency, situations beyond the control of the student, circumstances that cause reasonable concern to the parent/guardian for the student's mental, emotional, or physical health or safety, or other reason as approved by the building principal. Additionally, a student will be excused for up to 5 days in cases where the student's parent/guardian is an active duty member of the uniformed services and has been called to duty for, is on leave from, or has immediately returned from deployment to a combat zone or combat-support postings. The Board of Education, in its discretion, may excuse a student for additional days relative to such leave or deployment.

Identifying Causes of Unexcused Absences: When a student is absent without valid cause (unexcused), the cause of the unexcused absence must be identified. School personnel shall identify the cause through interviews with the student (if developmentally appropriate), communication with the parent or guardian, or by obtaining information from any school officials who may have information about the reasons for the student's attendance problem. Reasons for unexcused absences will be documented in the school's student information system.

Interventions and Supportive Services for Truant/Chronically Truant Students: Student attendance is critical to the learning process. Truancy is therefore a serious issue and will be dealt with in a serious manner by the school and district. Students who miss more than 1% but less than 5% of the prior 180 regular school days without valid cause (a recognized excuse) are truant. Students who miss 5% or more of the prior 180 regular school days without valid cause are chronic truants.

Students who are truants or chronic truants will be offered support services and resources aimed at correcting the truancy issue. These support services/resources shall include, but are not limited to: parent conferences, student counseling, family counseling, attendance and information about existing community services that are available and relevant to their individual needs.

If chronic truancy persists after support services and other resources are made available, the school and district will take further action, including referral to the Truancy Program. The Truancy Program procedures are as follows:

1. Referral to the Tri-County Attendance Assistance caseworker on the 4th day of unexcused absences. A letter from the coordinator will be sent to the parents.
2. On the 18th unexcused absence, the Regional Office will submit the Truancy Form to the State's Attorney's Office for filing in juvenile court. Letter #2 will be mailed to the parents.
3. If the student is found by the court to be "a truant minor in need of supervision," he or she may be:
 - a. Committed to the Regional Superintendent for a multidisciplinary case staffing, individualized service plan, or referral to comprehensive community based youth services.
 - b. Required to comply with an individualized service plan as specifically provided by the Regional Superintendent.
 - c. Ordered to obtain counseling or other supportive services.
 - d. Subject to a fine in an amount in excess of \$5.00, but not exceeding \$100.00, for each day of absence without valid cause as defined in Section 262a of the Illinois School Code.
 - e. Required to perform some reasonable public service work such as, but not limited to, the picking up of litter in public parks or along public highways or the maintenance of public facilities.
 - f. Subject to having his or her driver's license or privilege suspended.

Review of Absence Data: Each year, the District and school administration will 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 of the District's six (6) schools. The review will result in the identification of students who most need attendance support and how to best support them.

Additional Protocol:

- **Lawfully Employed Student:** The Superintendent will determine when a student's absence is justified due to employment.
- **Sounding Taps:** A student whose parent or guardian confirms that they will be sounding *Taps* at a military honors funeral held in Illinois for a deceased veteran will be excused.
- **Making Contact for Absences:** Office personnel will attempt to make contact by telephone with the parent or guardian of each absent student within two hours of the first class, unless prior parent/guardian notification has occurred.
- **Tracking Truants:** Each secretary/attendance secretary will report to the building administrator when a student is deemed truant or chronically truant by their number of unexcused absences.

- **Professional Development:** Reasonable efforts will be made to provide ongoing professional development to teachers and administrators regarding school attendance. Personnel will be encouraged to promote daily attendance for all students.
- **Extraordinary Circumstances:** The Building Principal will identify extraordinary circumstances for a student's absence, which shall include economic or medical necessity or family hardship. The Building Principal will consult with the Superintendent on extraordinary circumstances.
- **Services for 17-Year-Olds:** If a 17-year-old resident wishes to participate in the District's various truancy programs and resources, they must contact the Building Principal to discuss such options. The student must provide documentation of their dropout status for the previous six months.
- **Exclusion of Students:** Students who are 17 years old or older may be excluded for failing to meet minimum attendance standards according to provisions in the Illinois State Law. Building administrators will make the decision to exclude by analyzing data in addition to attendance rate such as credits earned, discipline records, services, etc. A parent or guardian has the right to appeal a decision to exclude a student.

The above Absenteeism and Truancy Policy was Adopted by the Prairie Central Board of Education on December 15, 2022.