



J.B. Beck Administration and Education Center
2018 Church Street • Georgetown, SC 29440 • (843) 436-7000

Georgetown County Attendance Policies and

Procedures Excused and Unexcused Absences

When is an absence excused?

- ❖ When a student is ill and attending school would be harmful to the student's health, or could harm others.
- ❖ When the absence is due to a death or illness in the student's immediate family.
- ❖ When the student is observing a recognized religious holiday of his or her faith.
- ❖ When the student attending an activity approved in advance by the principal.

When is an absence unexcused?

- ❖ When the student is absent without the knowledge of his or her parents/guardian.
- ❖ When the student is absent with the knowledge of his/her guardian but without acceptable cause.
- ❖ While a suspension is generally not an unexcused absence for truancy purposes, the suspension may be an unexcused absence if a student has previously been placed under a court order for truancy.

Are there any other "UNEXCUSED" absences?

- ❖ GCSD reserves the right to require a doctor's excuse for an absence due to illness to be considered as excused, particularly when such absences are frequent or lengthy.
- ❖ GCSD reserves the right to withhold credit for high school classed if a student has more than 5 unexcused absences in a semester course or 10 unexcused absences in a year-long course.

Truancy

Who is truant?

- ❖ A truant student is a child who is in kindergarten through the age of 17 who has three unlawful absences in a row or a total of five unexcused absences during the school year.
- #### What is an attendance intervention plan?

- ❖ The school is required to create a written plan to address the student's unexcused absence without court involvement. The student and his or her parent/guardian should assist in the development of the plan. This plan will identify ways that the student, family and school will work together to increase the student's school attendance.
- ❖ If a parent/guardian refuses to cooperate, the student and the parent/guardian may be sent to court for truancy and a report may be filed against the parent/guardian with DSS for educational neglect.
- ❖ If the attendance intervention plan is not successful and the student continues to accumulate unexcused absences, the school may send the student and the parent/guardian to family court for truancy.

Court Order for Mandatory School Attendance

How many I be placed under a court order for truancy?

- ❖ The school will file a truancy petition with the court through the solicitor's office and attach a copy of the student's attendance intervention plan. The parent/student will be serve with the petition
- ❖ The parent/guardian and the student are scheduled to go to court so that a judge may address the student's school attendance. The student must continue to attend school prior to this date.
- ❖ The parent/guardian and the student may hire an attorney for the student or request to be appointed an attorney for the student for this hearing if they cannot afford one. A juvenile cannot appear in family court without their parent/guardian and must also have an attorney.
- ❖ There is no jury in family court and the case is heard by a judge. The judge must determine whether the student/parent failed to comply with the attendance intervention plan, has accumulated additional unexcused absences since the development of the plan and is a truant student.
- ❖ If so, the judge will order that the student must not have any more unexcused absences, and the judge may make additional orders, such as that the student must not have any discipline referral, tardies, class cuts or the student/parent may be called back to court for a contempt hearing.

How does the court order apply to me? How long does it last?

- ❖ The court order applies to both the student and the student's parent/guardian. The court order lasts until the child's 18th birthday. A student who has been court-ordered to attend school may not drop out of school at age 17. A parent/guardian or student sustained improvements for at least one school year.
- ❖ When a younger child is truant, the judge typically focuses on the compliance of the parent/guardian. When an older child is truant, the judge typically focuses on the compliance of the student. However, cases may be different depending on the circumstances

How to comply with the court order

How do I comply with an attendance order by the court?

- ❖ A copy of the court order should be given to the student and the parent/guardian after court.
- ❖ The student and the parent/guardian should both read the court order and speak with the student's lawyer after court about it means
- ❖ The student and the parent/guardian may also speak with the Student Information Services staff member from the school district regarding any questions they may have. ❖ Once placed under an attendance order, the student is not allowed to have any more unexcused absences. The student and the parent/guardian should speak with the representative from the school district about what qualifies as an excused or unexcused absence.
- ❖ If the student does make an error or violate the court order, he or she should not become reckless and start skipping even more school. A judge will generally show mercy to a student with only one violation as opposed to a student with many

violations.

What should I do if I've been placed under an attendance order?

- ❖ A student should go to school if suffering from minor discomfort like a headache or cramps. School attendance laws only allow an absence for illness when an attendance would endanger the student's health or harm others. A student may ask to see the school nurse or administration if needed.
- ❖ GCSD requires a student who is under a court order to attend school to provide a doctor's excuse for any absence to illness and will no longer accept a parent note. This means that the school must receive a written letter from a medical professional stating that the child was seen in their office for an illness due to the serious nature of the illness. The doctor's note should be received by the school within 3 school days of the absence.
- ❖ A student whose illness typically does not require a doctor's appointment, such as virus, should call the school attendance clerk and ask what to do. It may be necessary for the child to appear at school and request to be excused by the school nurse or administrator.
- ❖ A student whose family is financially unable to afford a doctor's visit should contact the school for assistance.

Failure to comply with the court order

What happens if I don't not comply with the court order?

- ❖ If a judge finds that a parent/guardian has violated the order, he or she may be held in contempt of the court and ordered to pay a \$50.00 fine per day or serve thirty days in jail for each unexcused absence the child has.
- ❖ If a judge finds that the student has violated the school attendance order, the student may be held in contempt of court and placed on probation or sentenced to the Department of Juvenile Justice for up to 90 days. The student may also be sentenced to reside on alternative placement, or may be ordered to have a psychological evaluation.
- ❖ A student who still has unexcused absences after being sentenced by the court and completing his or her sentence may be charged with truancy again until the student stop having unexcused absences, the court order expires, or the student turns 18.
- ❖ A parent/guardian who continues to be responsible for a student's unexcused absences may also be charged and sentenced to court repeatedly, and may be charged with educational neglect
- ❖ A student who continued to have unlawful absences after being sentenced to probation may also be charged with and sentenced for violating probation.

Summary

In accordance with the State Law, all persons five (5) through twenty-one (21) may attend the free public schools of this District including Kindergarten, except that students in graduating class who become twentyone prior to graduation are permitted to complete the term. The Board may waive the age restriction in any proper case upon receipt of proper petition.

Attendance is the presence of a student on days when school is in session. Students may be counted present only when they are actually at school, on homebound Instruction, or present at a school activity which is authorized by the school. This may include field trips, athletic contests, music festivals, student conventions and similar

activities.



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Georgetown County School District Attendance Policy:

JED-R

STUDENT ABSENCES AND EXCUSES Issued: 11/06 Rescinds: JED-R Issued: 9/97

Georgetown County Board of Education

There are two types of student absences: (1) excused and (2) unexcused. Upon return to school following an excused absence, the student will be given an appropriate amount of time, as determined by the student's teacher(s), to make up any missed work. It is the responsibility of the student to pursue this option with his/her teachers. Make up work missed during unexcused absences is totally at the discretion of the faculty and administration for each school. This decision will be made on an annual basis. It is the responsibility of each student's parent or guardian to explain the reason for the student's absences upon the student's return to school.

Unexcused Absences

Absences are considered unexcused when the students are willfully absent from school without the knowledge of their parents, or when students are absent with-out acceptable cause with the knowledge of their parents. After two consecutive unexcused absences or a total of four unexcused absences, school officials shall make every reasonable effort to meet with the parent or guardian to identify the reason for the continued absence. School officials shall develop an attendance improvement plan in conjunction with the student and parent or guardian.

School officials may utilize a team intervention approach. Team members may include representatives from social services, community health, substance abuse and prevention, and other persons the district deems appropriate to formulate intervention plans. The school plans to improve attendance should include but not be limited to:

- ❖ A method to designate a person to lead the intervention team. A team leader may be someone from another agency.
- ❖ Reasons for the unexcused absences.
- ❖ Actions to be taken by the parent(s), guardian(s), and student to resolve the causes of the unexcused absences.
- ❖ Actions to be taken by the intervention team members.
- ❖ Actions to be taken in the event unexcused absences continues.
- ❖ Signature of the parent(s)/guardian(s) or evidence that attempts have been made to involve the parent(s)/guardian(s)
- ❖ Documentation of involvement of the team members
- ❖ Guidelines for making revisions to the plan.

Judicial Intervention

If the intervention plan is not successful and further inquiry by school officials fail to cause the student and/or parent(s)/guardian(s) to comply with the plan or if the student and/or parent(s)/guardian(s) refuses to participate in intervention planning, school officials will refer the case to Family Court. Each referral must include a copy of the plan and any other pertinent information identified by the school district and the Family Court.

Transfer of Plans

Intervention plans should be forwarded to the receiving school upon student transfer to another public school on South Carolina. School officials will contact the parent(s)/guardian(s) and local team member to review the plan and revise as appropriate. Court ordered plans may be amended through application to the court.

Excused Absences

Excused absences shall include the following:

- ❖ Absences due to illness, injury, death in the family, or some other insurmountable condition. The fact that attendance was impracticable or inadvisable due to any of these reasons must be confirmed by the student's parent, guardian, or licensed physician to school officials, normally within 2 days of the student's return to school. Written documentation may be required in individual cases, at the discretion of the principal. ❖ Documented appointments with health care professionals.
- ❖ Documented absences for religious instruction or a religious holiday.
- ❖ Absence due to participation in an academic class approved by the principal.
- ❖ Absence due to participation in athletic tournaments and playoff game(s) ❖ Absence due to mechanical failure of the school bus.
- ❖ Absence due to Court appearances (official documentation must be provide).

For kindergarten through eighth grade only, absences due to other individual circumstances may be excused by the principal. All other absences are considered unexcused.

High School Credits

For high school students (grades 9-12), parents or guardians may document up to 5 days of illness in a semester course and 3 days in a half semester course. All other absences will be unexcused unless there is documentation from a physician or other health care provider. Semester course credit will not be awarded unless a student has been in attendance for a minimum of 85 days at 90 minutes of instructional time per day. Students enrolled in half-semester courses must be in attendance for a minimum of 42 days at 90 minutes of instructional time per day. Credit shall be denied to all students with more than 5 total absences in any semester course and 3 absences in any half-semester course. Students who have a passing grade in particular course may appeal the credit denial to the School Credit Review Committee. The committee will be established by the principal and will be composed of teachers, student, parents, and administrators.

LEGAL REFERENCES

- A. STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION REGULATION: R-43-274
- B. S.C. CODE § 59-65-10(2004, as amended)
- C. S.C. CODE § 59-65-50 (2004, as amended)