

# Hamilton County Board of Education

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| Monitoring:<br>Review: Annually<br>in April | Descriptor Term:<br><br><b>Attendance</b> | Descriptor Code:<br><b>6.200</b><br><br>Rescinded: | Issued Date:<br><b>08/02/18</b><br><br>Revised:<br><b>06/20/24</b> |
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## STATEMENT

The Hamilton County Board of Education believes in the establishment of a tradition of regular school attendance for each student. This establishes the first step toward a successful academic career culminating in a high school diploma and this is an essential concept to learn for the job market.

Attendance is a key factor in student achievement and, therefore, students are expected to be present each day that school is in session.

## RECORDING

The Hamilton County Department of Education has a state approved system for maintaining attendance records for each student enrolled in the district.

It shall be the duty of the principal or teacher of all public and non-public schools to report promptly to the director of schools or his/her designated representative, the names of all children who have withdrawn from school or who have been absent three (3) days.<sup>1</sup> (This means a total of (3) three days during the school year and not necessarily (3) three consecutive days.)

The Attendance Supervisor shall oversee the entire attendance program, which shall include: <sup>2</sup>

1. All accounting and reporting procedures and their dissemination;
2. Providing documentation of enrollment status upon request for students applying for new or reinstatement of driver's permit or license; and
3. Notifying the Department of Safety whenever a student with a driver's permit or license withdraws from school.<sup>3</sup>
4. Report all children who have been absent for five days without an adequate excuse and have failed to show improved attendance with support through the *Tiered Attendance Interventions* to the Juvenile Judge.
5. Ensuring that all school-age children attend school.

The principal or designee shall be responsible for ensuring that:

1. Attendance is checked and reported daily for each class;
2. Written excuses are submitted and documented for absences and tardiness;
3. System-wide procedures for accounting and reporting are followed;
4. Notification in writing is provided to the director of schools and the parents of the student of any action taken by the school.

## EXCUSED ABSENCES

Conditions for which a student's absence may be excused are:

1. **Personal Illness:** Students are excused who are sick and whose attendance would be detrimental to their health and the health of other students. A physician's statement may be required.
2. **Death in Immediate Family:** Students may be excused for three (3) days in the event of a death in their immediate families including mother, father, stepparent, brother, sister, or grandparent. Extenuating circumstances may require a longer period of excused absence.
3. **Family Illness:** Students having an illness in the family which requires them to give temporary help will be excused from attendance after receipt of a physician's statement concerning the necessity of the student's assistance.
4. **Religious Holiday:** Students shall be excused on special or recognized religious holidays regularly observed by that particular faith. Prior approval is required should these days occur while school is in session.<sup>4</sup>
5. **Personal:** Students who are absent for a good cause such as a doctor or dental appointment which cannot be scheduled at times other than school hours, court appearances, etc. may be excused upon proof of appointment. Prior approval by the parent or guardian and the principal or his designee is required.
6. **Approved School-Sponsored Activities:** Students shall be marked present when participating in a school-sponsored activity away from the school building.

All other reasons for absence, including out-of-school suspensions and failing to report a reason, will be deemed an unexcused absence. Ten (10) consecutive or fifteen (15) total unexcused absences during any semester renders a student ineligible to retain a driver's permit or license, or to obtain such if of age.<sup>3</sup>

## EXPLANATION OF ABSENCES

By law students must attend school daily. HCDE will allow parent/guardian excuses to serve as documentation for three (3) personal illness days only. After three (3) parent/guardian excused personal illness days, parents must provide medical services documentation for the following: personal illness, family illness, or personal (as defined above). To avoid student absences being recorded as unexcused, a written statement signed and dated by the parent/guardian and any medical documentation should be presented to the appropriate school official within five (5) days of the student returning to school.

## HABITUAL TRUANCY

District personnel will intervene to address habitual truancy using a Tiered Attendance Intervention support structure for students and their families, as detailed below.

### Progressive Truancy Plan<sup>5</sup>

A student who is absent five (5) days without adequate excuse shall be reported to the Director of Schools, Attendance Supervisor or his/her designee who will, in turn, provide written notice to the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the student's absences or request an attendance hearing. Then, the Director of Schools shall implement the progressive truancy plan described below prior to referral to juvenile court.<sup>6</sup>

### Tier One

Tier One of the Progressive Truancy Plan shall apply to all students within the district and include schoolwide prevention-oriented supports to assist with satisfactory attendance. These supports shall include, but are not limited to:

1. Parents and students will be notified of attendance expectations and the Truancy Plan in the Student Handbook;
2. At three (3) unexcused absences, parents and students will be made aware of the number of absences and that five (5) unexcused absences will begin Tier Two.

### Tier Two

Tier Two of the progressive truancy plan shall be implemented after the accumulation of five (5) unexcused absences but before referral to a juvenile court.

Tier Two includes:

1. A conference with the student and parent, guardian, or other person having control of the student;
2. A resulting attendance contract, to be signed by the student, parent/guardian, and the attendance supervisor/designee. The contract shall include:
  - a. A specific description of the school's attendance expectations for the student;
  - b. The period for which the contract is effective; and
  - c. Penalties for additional absences and alleged school offenses, including additional disciplinary action and potential referral to juvenile court.
3. Regularly scheduled follow-up meetings to discuss the student's progress; and
4. A school employee shall conduct an individualized assessment detailing reasons the student has been absent from school. This employee may refer the student to counseling, community-based services, or other services to address the student's attendance problems.

### Tier Three

Tier Three shall be implemented if the interventions under Tier Two are unsuccessful.

Tier Three may consist of one or more of the following:

1. School-based community services;
2. Participation in a school-based restorative justice program;
3. Courses on Saturday or outside of school hours designed to improve attendance and behavior.

If any tier of progressive truancy intervention is unsuccessful, and the school can document that the student's parent or guardian is unwilling to cooperate with the truancy intervention requirements outlined in the plan, the director of schools/designee may report the student's absences to the juvenile judge without first having to implement subsequent intervention tiers, if any. <sup>3</sup>

## **PROCEDURAL DUE PROCESS**

The established policy should be reviewed periodically to ensure that procedural due process is provided.

1. Prior to its enactment, notice of the rules, regulations, and penalties are provided to students and parents.
2. All students receive a written copy of the policy. Students who arrive during the school year also receive the policy.
3. Policy is to be enforced by all in a fair, consistent, nondiscriminatory manner.
4. The policy provides for exceptions through an impartial hearing and appeals process.
5. Announce policy at student assemblies and parent meetings.

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Legal References:

1. TCA 49-6-3007(e)(2)
2. TCA 49-6-3006
3. TCA 49-6-3017(c)
4. TCA 49-6-2904(b)(5)
5. TCA 49-6-3009
6. TCA 49-6-3007(e)(3)(4)

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Cross References: