

**Attendance Protocol/Tardiness and Truancy Definitions:**

The intent of the procedures described below that will be followed by SAU#16 is to ensure that students are in school and learning. School attendance is critical to successful school performance. Parent(s)/guardian(s) have the legal obligation to see to it that their children attend school the entire school year. All persons having children under their control shall cause them to attend school as provided in New Hampshire State Law: RSA 193:1, Duty of Parent; Compulsory Attendance by Pupil: “A parent of any child at least 6 years of age and under 18 years of age shall cause such child to attend the public school to which the child is assigned or to an approved private school during all the time the public schools are in session.”

- 1) **Tardiness:** Being present on time is a life skill to be cultivated so students are expected to arrive at school on time. A pattern of tardiness puts students at a disadvantage in school. Tardiness is a disruption to the educational process: it sets a tone that de-values education, detracts from the lesson, is discourteous to the teacher and other students and results in a loss of instructional time. We ask that parent(s)/guardian(s) work with the school to ensure that students arrive on time.
  
- 2) **Absenteeism:** A parent(s)/guardian(s) duty is to verify his/her child’s absence with the child’s school. The administration’s duty is to determine whether the absence is excused or unexcused.
  - a) **Verified Absence**  
Contact occurs between parent(s)/guardian(s) and school and consensus is obtained, i.e., family vacations, etc.
  - b) **Excused Absence**
    1. Personal illness (may require physician’s documentation)
    2. Death in the family
    3. Professional appointments
    4. Religious holidays
    5. School-related functions
    6. College visitations
    7. Dismissal by a school official
  - c) **Unexcused Absence**
    1. Excessive parent/guardian-verified absences
    2. Failure to follow school’s tardiness procedure
    3. Truancy
  
- 3) **Truancy:** Any student who is absent from school and/or class without the knowledge and permission of his/her parent(s)/guardian(s) or school authorities is truant. Parent(s)/guardian(s) must verify all absences. While parent(s)/guardian(s) maintain the right to excuse children from school, not all absences are approved by the school administration, and the consequences for school-approved absences and non school-approved absences may differ. When questions arise as to whether an excused

**SAU #16 ATTENDANCE, TARDINESS AND  
TRUANCY POLICY**

absence is school-approved or non-school approved, the decision will be made by the school administration. Absences, even with the approval of the parent(s)/guardian(s), which are excessive and/or which interfere with the student's educational program will be interpreted as truancy and follow-up procedures may be instituted. A student shall be declared habitually truant when s/he has had 20 half-days of non-approved absences in one school year. A half-day absence is defined as missing up to half of the total minutes in a school's day. Missing more than half the total minutes in a school's day constitutes two half-day absences.

**Responsibilities of Parent/Guardian, School and Students:****1. Parent(s)/Guardian(s)/Students:**

- a) Will notify the school in advance of a student's absence, whenever possible.
- b) Students are responsible for making up all school work missed due to absences.

**2. School Administrator or Designee/Attendance Officer:**

- a) Shall determine if it is a valid absence and, if necessary, attempt to contact parent(s)/guardian(s) by telephone to confirm the cause of absence. However, it is the parent(s)/guardian(s)' responsibility to notify the school in advance if the student is going to be absent. Lack of parent(s)/guardian(s) contact with the school will result in an unexcused absence.

**3. Building Administrator:**

- a) Appropriate building administrator shall be notified daily of student absences.

**4. School:**

- a) Shall annually document the cumulative absences on each student, as the number of absences will determine the thresholds for intervention as described in these procedures.
- b) State law requires that student attendance be taken and recorded accurately during each school day. To meet this obligation, the school uses the following system:
  1. All teachers require regular attendance.
  2. Student presence is recorded in each class.
  3. Names of students not present are submitted to the Attendance Office daily.
  4. The attendance secretary and/or nurse may determine excused absences during the course of the school day (ex. A student is dismissed from school due to illness).
  5. Parent(s)/guardian(s) must give their consent for all absences.

**Protocol for Tardiness:**

Each school will decide upon the appropriate method of parent(s)/guardian(s) contact and resulting disciplinary action for excessive tardiness, which will be outlined in the school's student handbook.

**Protocol for Excessive Unexcused Absences:****1. 10 or more half-day unexcused absences:**

At 10 half-day unexcused absences, administration will review the absence list for the student population for possible action. Possible action may include one or more of the following:

- Contact by administration or designee to parent(s)/guardian(s).
- Letter(s) reviewing the policy sent to the parent(s)/guardian(s); it will advise the parent that, should absences continue, s/he may be contacted to attend a meeting to create a plan addressing the problem.
- A meeting with administration, parent(s)/guardian(s) and student to develop a plan.
- Special education referral/notification.
- A referral to the police, court/diversion and/or DCYF.

**2. 20 half-day unexcused absences:**

At 20 half-day unexcused absences, actions by administration will include one or more of the following:

- Contact by administration or designee to parent(s)/guardian(s).
- Letter(s) reviewing the policy sent to the parent(s)/guardian(s) advising that s/he will be contacted to attend a meeting to address the problem.
- Special education referral/notification.
- A referral to the police, court/diversion and/or DCYF.
- Report filed with DCYF by appropriate school personnel.
- CHINS petition/affidavit written by designated school personnel (\*).

(\*) – Each building’s administrator is responsible for identifying one person who is trained to file a CHINS petition/affidavit and attend all subsequent court hearings through the student’s adjudication.

Law Reference: RSA 193:1,2,7 and 16, RSA 193:8

Appendix Reference: JH-R

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