

Absenteeism and Truancy Policy

The Illinois School Code requires that any school, including a nonpublic school, receiving public funds through participation in the federal /state milk, breakfast, and/or lunch programs shall develop and communicate to its students and their parent or guardian, on an annual basis, an absenteeism and truancy policy, that contains certain provisions. The following is the Absenteeism and Truancy Policy to be implemented by those schools participating in the federal/state milk, breakfast, and/or lunch programs.

Absence/Absent

A student is deemed absent if the student is not physically present for instruction in Core Subjects and/or Non-Core Subjects whether for part of the school day or for the entire school day, and whether unexcused by the student's parent/guardian or excused by the student's parent/guardian due to illness, doctor appointments, a family emergency, non-school activities, vacations, or any other reason provided by the parent/guardian.

Definitions

1. "Valid cause" for absence includes:

the student's illness, including the mental or behavioral health of the student,
the student's attendance at a verified medical or therapeutic appointment or appointment with a victim services provider,
the student's observance of a religious holiday,
death in the student's immediate family,
the student's attendance at a civic event,
a family emergency,

As determined by the school administrator, such other situations beyond the control of the student, or such circumstances which cause reasonable concern to the student's parent for the mental, emotional, or physical health or safety of the student.

If the student is an expectant parent or parent, "valid cause" for absence includes the fulfillment of a parenting responsibility including, but not limited to, arranging and providing child care, caring for a sick child, attending prenatal or other medical appointments for the expectant student, and attending medical appointments for a child,

If the student is a victim of domestic or sexual violence, "valid cause" for absence includes addressing circumstances resulting from domestic or sexual violence, including, but not limited to, experiencing domestic or sexual violence, recovering from physical or psychological injuries, seeking medical attention, seeking services from a domestic or sexual violence organization, seeking psychological or other counseling, participating in safety planning, temporarily or permanently relocating, seeking legal assistance or remedies, or taking any other action to increase the safety or health of the student or to protect the student from future domestic or sexual violence. A school administrator may require a student to verify his or her claim of domestic or sexual violence prior to approving a valid cause for an absence of 3 or more consecutive days that is related to domestic or sexual violence.

2. A “truant student” is one who is subject to compulsory school attendance and who, without valid cause, is absent from such attendance for a school day or portion of the school day, when such absence amounts to more than 1% but less than 5% of the past 180 school days.
3. A “chronic or habitual truant” is defined as a student subject to compulsory school attendance and who, without valid cause, is absent from such attendance for 5% or more of the past 180 regular attendance days.
4. “Truant minor” is defined as a chronic truant to whom available supportive services, including prevention, diagnostic, intervention and remedial services, alternative programs and other school and community resources either have been offered and refused, or have failed to result in the cessation of chronic truancy.

Policy

1. School attendance is compulsory in the State of Illinois. The responsibility of compliance with the law belongs to the parents, but the school is required to keep a record of daily attendance. The record is placed in the student’s permanent file at the end of each school year.
2. A student who is subject to compulsory school attendance shall not be absent from attendance without valid cause. A student who is absent without a valid cause is a truant student.
3. When a student is truant: The School Administrator or delegate shall be in contact with the parent/guardian and the student when a student is absent without “valid cause”, when the school has not been notified by a parent/guardian of the student’s absence and reason, when the student returns to school after an absence without a written doctor’s or with a note of questionable validity, or when the student continues to be absent for no apparent reason. The School’s contact with the parent/guardian is for the purpose of determining the reason for the student’s absence and further discussion if the absence is without valid cause. If the parents/guardians cannot be reached, the School will contact all parties listed as emergency contacts in the student’s file. If the administration is unsuccessful in reaching the parents/guardians or the emergency contacts, the School will notify police and request a well-being check on the student/family.
4. The School is to determine the reason or cause for a student’s unexcused absences by interviewing the student, his or her parent or guardian, and any school officials who may have information about the reasons for the student’s attendance problem.
5. When a student is truant or chronically truant, the School will use the following diagnostic procedures to identify the causes of unexcused student absenteeism: Interviews with the student, meetings or requests for meetings with the parent/guardian, and meetings with any school officials who may have information about the reason for the student’s attendance problem. The school is to offer the following interventions and supportive services for the truant student and chronically truant student: meet with the student, and meet with or request to meet with the student’s parent/guardian to persuade the family and the student

to regular attendance, encourage heightened engagement in School activities by the parent/guardian and student, and suggest student counseling with the school counselor if one is provided by the School, or with a specific outside provider or providers, family counseling with the Diocese of Rockford Catholic Charities counselling office or with a specific outside provider or providers, and provide parents with information about existing community services that are available to the student relative to his or her needs. The School is not required to pay for any services. Where the student is chronically truant, the above steps will be repeated.

6. When efforts to persuade the student to regular attendance fails, and the student's absences without "valid cause" exceed more than five percent (5%) of the total student attendance days in the school year, the student is deemed a truant minor and written notice shall be sent to the parent/guardian stating that the student's truancy is being reported to the Illinois State Board of Education. This may be done through the truancy department of the Regional Office of Education. Additionally, the School may drop the student from enrollment.
7. The School is required to regularly collect and review its chronic absence data and determine what systems of support and resources are needed to engage and encourage the habit of daily attendance for chronically absent students and their families to promote academic success.
8. The School is required to post this *Absenteeism & Truancy Policy* on the School's website and include it in the School's Parent/Student Handbook. School administrators are also required to notify parents where/how this policy can be accessed by providing them with the *URL* address. This policy is also published on the Education page of our Diocesan Catholic Education Website.
9. The School is required to submit its Absenteeism and Truancy Policy to the Illinois State Board of Education; and to review and re-evaluate its Absenteeism and Truancy Policy every two years and submit its revised policy or a letter to the Illinois State Board of Education stating the policy was re-evaluated and no changes were deemed necessary. This statement must be submitted electronically to the Illinois State Board of Education via their Web Application Security system no later than September 30 of the year it is due.

Chronic/Habitual Truancy. If a student meets this definition of Chronic/Habitual Truancy, St. Mary School reserves the right to expel the student from St. Mary School.