

STUDENT ABSENCES/EXCUSES/DISMISSALS

I. Student Attendance Policy

Student attendance is a cooperative effort and the Regional School Board involves parents and students in accepting the responsibility for good attendance.

Each parent/guardian or person having control or charge of a child within the compulsory attendance age is responsible for such child's regular and punctual attendance at school as required under provisions of the law.

Parents of students who are absent must inform the school of the reason for the absence no later than upon the student's return to school. Absences are excused for the following reasons:

- for high school students, one school day per school year to engage in a civic event.
- a maximum of three (3) school days per academic year for participation in a 4-H educational program or activity; no credit will be provided for a student whose participation in a 4-H educational program or activity occurs during scheduled Standards of Learning assessments or during any period of time that the student is suspended or expelled from school; the student's principal or assistant principal may request a representative of 4-H to provide documentation of a student's participation in order for the student's absence to be excused
- subject to guidelines established by the Virginia Department of Education, students who are members of a state- or federally-recognized tribal nation that is headquartered in Virginia shall be granted one excused absence per academic year to attend such nation's pow wow gathering provided that the student's parent provides the student's school advance notice of the absence in the manner required by the school
- Excused absences are counted in the tally of absences. They are the result of the following: 1) personal illness (if over 3 days, the school may require verification from the doctor) 2) court appearance 3) death in the family 4) religious holidays 5) college visits (4 days per year for juniors and seniors) requires documentation from the college 6) extenuating circumstances which are determined by the school administration 7) home school district closed for inclement weather

Failure to comply with this requirement within three (3) days of the return to school will result in the absence being permanently coded as unexcused. Absences are excused for the following reasons:

funeral, illness (including mental health and substance abuse illnesses), injury, legal obligations, medical procedures, suspensions, expulsions, religious observances, and military obligation and are included in the student handbook located on the school's website.

The director by regulation, establishes procedures for appropriate interventions when a student engages in a pattern of absences for less than a full day, the explanation of which, if it were a full-day absence, would not be an excused absence.

The director's regulations include procedures for excusing students who are absent by reason of observance of a religious holiday. Such regulations will ensure that a student is not deprived of any award or of eligibility or opportunity to compete for any award, or of the right to

take an alternate test or examination, which the student missed by reason of such absence, if the absence is verified in an acceptable manner.

Students shall attend school for a full day unless excused by the director or the director's designee. A full-time student is defined as one actively enrolled and participating in 7 out of 8 periods per semester.

An attendance officer, or the director or the director's designee when acting as an attendance officer pursuant to Va. Code § 22.1-258, may complete, sign, and file with the intake officer of the juvenile and domestic relations district court, on forms approved by the Supreme Court of Virginia, a petition for a violation of a school attendance order entered by the juvenile and domestic relations district court pursuant to Va. Code § 16.1-278.5 in response to the filing of a petition alleging the pupil is a child in need of supervision as defined in Va. Code § 16.1-228.

Nothing in this policy shall be construed to limit in any way the authority of any attendance officer or the director to seek immediate compliance with the compulsory school attendance law.

II. Compulsory Attendance Procedures

Whenever a student fails to report to school on a regularly scheduled school day and no information has been received by school personnel that the student's parent is aware of and supports the absence, or the parent provides a reason for the absence that is unacceptable to the school administration, the school director, director's designee, attendance officer or other school personnel or volunteer notifies the parent by phone, email or other electronic means to obtain an explanation. School staff records the student's absence for each day as "excused" or "unexcused." Early intervention with the student and parent or parents takes place for repeated unexcused absences.

A. Upon Fifth Absence Without Parental Awareness and Support

If (1) a pupil fails to report to school for a total of five scheduled school days for the school year, and (2) there is no indication that the pupil's parent is aware of and supports the absence; and (3) a reasonable effort to notify the parent has failed, then the director or director's designee or the attendance officer makes a reasonable effort to ensure that direct contact is made with the parent in person, or through telephone conversation, or through the use of other communication devices to obtain an explanation for the pupil's absence and to explain to the parent the consequences of continued nonattendance. The director or director's designee or the attendance officer, the pupil, and the pupil's parent shall jointly develop a plan to resolve the pupil's nonattendance. Such plan shall include documentation of the reasons for the pupil's nonattendance.

B. Upon Additional Absences Without Parental Awareness and Support

If the pupil is absent for more than one additional day after direct contact with the pupil's parent and school personnel have received no indication that the pupil's parent is

aware of and supports the pupil's absence, the director or director's designee shall schedule a conference with the pupil, the pupil's parent and school personnel. Such conference may include the attendance officer and other community service providers to resolve issues related to the pupil's nonattendance. The conference shall be held no later than 10 school days after the tenth absence of the pupil, regardless of whether the student's parent approves of the conference. The conference team shall monitor the pupil's attendance and may meet again as necessary to address concerns and plan additional interventions if attendance does not improve. In circumstances in which the parent is intentionally noncompliant with compulsory attendance requirements or the pupil is resisting parental efforts to comply with compulsory attendance requirements, the director or director's designee shall make a referral to the attendance officer. The attendance officer shall schedule a conference with the pupil and pupil's parent within 10 school days and may (i) file a complaint with the juvenile and domestic relations district court alleging the pupil is a child in need of supervision as defined in Va. Code § 16.1-228 or (ii) institute proceedings against the parent pursuant to Va. Code § 18.2-371 or § 22.1-262. In filing a complaint against the student, the attendance officer shall provide written documentation of the efforts to comply with the provisions of this policy. In the event that both parents have been awarded joint physical custody pursuant to Va. Code § 20-124.2 and the school has received notice of such order, both parents shall be notified at the last known addresses of the parents.

III. Report for Suspension of Driver's License

In addition to any other actions taken pursuant to this policy, if a student who is under 18 years of age has 10 or more unexcused absences from school on consecutive school days, the director may notify the juvenile and domestic relations court, which may take action to suspend the student's driver's license.

IV. Attendance Reporting

Student attendance is monitored and reported as required by state law and regulations. At the end of each school year, the attendance officer reports to the director the number of pupils by grade level for whom a conference was scheduled pursuant to Part II (B) above. The director or director's designee shall compile and provide this information to the local divisions annually.

V. Dismissal Precautions

The director or director's designee do not release a student during the school day to any person not authorized by the student's parent/guardian to assume responsibility for the pupil. Students are released only on request and authorization of parent or guardian. The director establishes procedures for release of pupils who are not residing with or under the supervision of a parent/guardian. The burden of proof on the authority of the person to receive the student is on the requesting party. A formal check-out system is maintained in the school.

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46.2-323, 46.2-334.01, and 54.1-3900.

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8 VAC 20-730-20.

Cross Refs.: Pol 3013 Driver Education
 Pol 8002 Student Conduct