

Students

ABSENCES AND EXCUSES

Excused Absences

A student's absence shall be excused for the following reasons:

1. Personal illness. Students who have been absent five (5) or more consecutive days, due to illness, must present a doctor's note verifying the illness in order for the absences to be excused.
2. Quarantine under the direction of a county or city health officer.
3. Medical, dental, optometrical, or chiropractic appointments. It is recommended that, whenever possible, these appointments be made before or after school, especially if the student is in an official attendance intervention program. Students are expected to come to school before and/or after the appointment if they would receive at least one hour of instruction.
4. Attendance at funeral services for a member of the immediate family.
 - a. Excused absence in this instance shall be limited to one day if the service is conducted in California or three days if the service is conducted out of state.
 - b. "Immediate family" shall be defined as mother, father, grandmother, grandfather, daughter, son, brother, sister or any relative living in the student's immediate household.
5. The illness or medical appointment during school hours of a child to whom the student is the custodial parent.
6. Upon advance written request by the parent/guardian and the approval of the principal or designee, justifiable personal reasons including, but not limited to:
 - a. When a student receives a subpoena to personally appear in court.
 - b. When required by a government agency to appear in person.
 - c. Participation in religious instruction:
 1. Student shall attend at least the minimum school day.
 2. The student shall be excused for this purpose on no more than four (4) days per trimester.
 - d. Observation of a holiday or ceremony of his/her religion. Attendance at religious retreats should not exceed four (4) days per trimester.

ABSENCES AND EXCUSES (continued)

Excused Absences (continued)

7. Attendance at an education conference on the legislative or judicial process offered by a nonprofit organization.

Unexcused Absences and Truancy

Any absence due to a reason that is not mentioned above is considered an unexcused absence. The definition of a truant is any student subject to compulsory full-time education who is absent from school without valid excuse three full days in one school year or tardy for more than 30-minutes without a valid excuse on three occasions in one school year or any combination thereof. Once students are designated as a truant, they may be assigned to Saturday School.

Attendance Interventions

Students with attendance concerns may be involved with one or more of the following involuntary attendance interventions:

1. Staff members may speak with the child and/or parent/guardian when they see a pattern of attendance or tardy concerns.
2. The school may send an attendance/tardy letter when there is a pattern of attendance or tardy concerns.
3. Students may be placed on medical verification if they have had ten (10) absences in a school year for illness that have only been verified by a parent/guardian. Once a student is placed on medical verification, subsequent absences for illness must be verified by a physician, or the school nurse for the remainder of the school year and/or the subsequent school year.
4. The District may send the following notices to parents/guardians in accordance with California Education Codes 48260, 48261, and 48262:
 - a. A first truancy notice after three unexcused absences
 - b. A second truancy notice after an additional unexcused absence
 - c. An habitual truant notice after an additional unexcused absence and either a meeting with a District employee or a conscientious effort to hold a meeting.

ABSENCES AND EXCUSES (continued)

Attendance Interventions (continued)

5. Students may be placed on a District Attendance Contract for any of the following reasons:
 - a. After the District has sent the first and second truancy notices
 - b. After students have had excessive absences
 - c. When students transfer from a school with a history of attendance concerns
 - d. When students have not been enrolled in a school for the entire school year
6. Students will be referred to the Abolish Chronic Truancy Program (A.C.T.) with the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office if they have ten (10) absences in one trimester or fifteen (15) or more absences in one school year.
7. Students may be referred to the Student Attendance Review Team (SART) if a they have a pattern of poor attendance or continue to have unexcused absences once enrolled in the A.C.T. Program.
8. Students may be referred to the Student Attendance Review Board (SARB) if they continue to have unexcused absences after the S.A.R.T. meeting or if they have a severe pattern of attendance/behavioral problems.
9. Students may be referred to the District Attorney Mediation Program at the request of the S.A.R.B.
10. Students may be referred for legal prosecution at the request of the S.A.R.B. or the A.C.T. Program.

Method of Verification

When students who have been absent return to school, they shall present a satisfactory explanation verifying the reason for the absence within four weeks of the date of the absence.

Verifications not received during this time period are considered unexcused and will not be changed. If parents do not communicate via written correspondence or via telephone the reason for the absence, or if a student fails to turn in a written note verifying the reason for the absence, to the appropriate school employee, then the absence is considered unexcused.

ABSENCES AND EXCUSES (continued)

Method of Verification (continued)

The following persons may designate an absence as excused or unexcused: the school administrator, the CWA Coordinator, or any employee designated by the Superintendent or the principal.

It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to ensure that the appropriate school personnel receive the verification of absences. It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to assess the maturity level of his/her child to determine if he/she should be responsible for turning in absence verifications or if it would be more secure for the parent/guardian to submit the verifications to the office or call the office directly.

Absence Verification

The following methods may be used to verify absences for most students:

1. Written note from parent/guardian or parent representative
2. Conversation, in person or by telephone, between the verifying employee and the student's parent/guardian or parent representative. The employee shall subsequently record the following:
 - a. Name of student
 - b. Name of parent/guardian or parent representative
 - c. Name of verifying employee
 - d. Date(s) of absence
 - e. Reason for absence
3. Visit to the student's home by the verifying school employee, or any other reasonable method which establishes the fact that the student was absent for the reasons stated. A written recording shall be made, including information outlined above.

Specialized Absence Verification Procedures

The interventions requiring this type of verification are:

1. Medical verification
2. A District Attendance Contract
3. The A.C.T. Program
4. A Student Attendance Review Team (SART) Contract
5. A Student Attendance Review Board (SARB) Contract
6. District Attorney Mediation
7. Court documentation that requires medical verification

ABSENCES AND EXCUSES (continued)

Specialized Absence Verification Procedures (continued)

Involvement with these attendance interventions requires that a student get written verification for any absences due to illness in order for that absence to be excused.

Absences may be verified by:

1. A neutral medical professional that is not a friend or relative of the parent/guardian.
2. The school nurse.

The written verification from a medical professional must include the following information:

- a. The date of the student's appointment
- b. The reason that the student was being treated
- c. The dates that the student will be absent from school
- d. The date that the student may return
- e. Physician's signature

(Note: Only absences on the date of the medical assessment and after will be considered excused)

Verification of Confidential Medical Services

When excusing students for confidential medical services or verifying such appointments, District staff shall not ask the purpose of such appointments but may contact a medical office to confirm the time of the appointment.

Abolish Chronic Truancy (A.C.T.)

The East Whittier City School District has joined in partnership with the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office to decrease the truancy rate and increase student attendance to help our students have more academic success. Any student who has ten (10) or more absences in a trimester or fifteen (15) or more absences in a school year, which have not been verified by a medical professional, will be referred to the A.C.T. Program.

ABSENCES AND EXCUSES (continued)Abolish Chronic Truancy (A.C.T.) (continued)

Participation in this program is involuntary and parents are required to attend a one time informational meeting. Students whose parents do not attend this meeting are still considered part of the program and held to its guidelines. Students will remain in this program until they leave the District or are promoted to high school. Attendance of students in this program will be monitored by the L.A. County District Attorney's Office. Once students are placed in this program, they must have written verification from a physician for any absence due to illness or be assessed by the school nurse on the date of the absence or the absence will be unexcused. Students continuing to have unexcused absences may be required to attend a S.A.R.T., S.A.R.B., or legal action in the court system may be commenced.

Alternative Learning Experiences

The East Whittier City School District recognizes that there are unique learning experiences that occur outside of the classroom that contribute to the education of the whole child. We have students that are involved in high levels of athletic competitions, fine arts performances, or other activities that promote athletic, artistic, social and/or leadership skills for our students.

Students may receive credit for attendance that counts towards attendance awards if they provide proof that they received tutoring for the minimum required minutes for their grade level from a credentialed teacher for each school day they were absent.

The District will consider excusing a limited number of absences due to these activities each year if the parents/guardians of the student meet with the principal and receive prior approval and the student is in good standing in regard to grades, attendance and behavior. If a student will be gone for five (5) or more consecutive days, it is requested that the parent consider enrolling the student in the Independent Study Program. (BP 6158)