

Office of School Attendance and Participation

Attendance and Referral recommendation guidance for Parents or Guardians

Kent County Attendance Standards reflect the common definitions for *truancy* and *chronic absenteeism* adopted by the Kent ISD Superintendents' Association.

Kent ISD common attendance definitions:

- **Chronic absenteeism;** attendance is 90 percent or less of scheduled days to date. This definition includes *all counted absences* even if sanctioned by a parent/guardian. Chronic absenteeism can be measured at any point in the school year, such as fall count day, semester or trimester end, or when an attendance problem is identified. This category of absenteeism, if all interventions are unsuccessful, may often result in charges for the parent/guardian or the juvenile, depending on age and history.
- **Truancy;** ten unexcused absences in a school year. This definition focuses on absences not sanctioned by a parent/guardian, generally a student “skipping school,” and most often may result in charges for the juvenile if other interventions prove unsuccessful.

What absences are counted vs. uncounted:

Absences counted for attendance intervention:

- All absences both excused and unexcused. This includes proportional lost learning time absences. (*For example, a half day absence equals .5 day of lost learning time, a tardy of up to half a class period or 25 minutes equals .1 day of lost learning time, one class period of a five-class day equals .2 day of lost learning time.*)

Absences not counted for attendance intervention:

- Snow days and other non-scheduled school closings.
- Extenuating Medical absences. *Not intended for routine illness*, even if under a provider's care, but rather for very serious medical events, such as hospitalizations, *these are absences ordered and documented, with hand signature, by a licensed health care doctor, with specific dates school must be missed for medical necessity.* (This also includes significant life trauma, such as an immediate family member death, as confirmed and approved by appropriate school staff.) Blanket or “under the care of” excuses are not accepted as “medically absent” without an IEP or a 504 plan specifically addressing the medical issue and approval of appropriate school staff. Routine illnesses are, just like for adults at work, *counted absences*.

- Court dates: *required* court appearances for the student with court documentation, and related detention.
- Suspensions and expulsions.
- Preplanned absences that would not negatively affect the student's learning and educational performance as determined by the student's teacher(s) and building administrator in consultation. Generally, this would include assigned and required learning activities completed before and/or during the absence. It often may also include a report and/or presentation to the class, with a grading rubric established at the planning stage. ***This is at the school's discretion and individual school board policy.***

What will happen as a result of the first referral to the KISD truancy office?

- A ***Truancy Notice*** will be sent, via first class mail, to the home. It will direct the parent/guardian to contact the school to schedule a meeting to complete an *Individual Attendance Improvement Plan (IAIP)*. It also contains a response form for the parent(s) to use to share information and communicate needs to the school.
- The school will receive an e-mail copy of the *Truancy Notice*.
- The goal of the *Truancy Notice* is to help facilitate a meeting with the parent/guardian and school staff to establish a dialogue and to build a cooperative relationship resulting in an Individual Attendance Improvement Plan.

When should a second referral to the KISD truancy office be made?

- In short, when progress toward the goals of the *Individual Attendance Improvement Plan/Agreement* is not being seen.
- If attendance drops below 91 percent for any period of two weeks or more after the *Attendance Improvement Agreement* is signed.
- If a student is missing or not attending at all.

And

- When at least five different and sincere attendance interventions, by staff of different disciplines, have been made and documented.
- These interventions must also satisfy three statutory requirements.
 1. The statute requires a meeting between student, parent, and school. This is satisfied by the attendance improvement plan meeting.
 2. Outside agency support. Dependent on students age and needs, our office may refer student to Crisis Intervention Program with 17th Circuit Court.
 3. Educational counseling. The purpose is to determine if any educational or programming barriers exist. Educational counseling must be by a *School Guidance Counselor* or a *School Social Worker*.

What will happen as a result of the second referral to the truancy office?

- In most cases, a letter of ***Truancy Action*** will be drafted by Kent ISD Attendance office and submitted to the school for approval. This letter is fact specific and individually composed. It will contain a synopsis of attendance interventions and attempts to date, a warning of pending legal action, and directives to the parent/guardian.
- One directive is to meet with the building principal to write and sign an Individual Attendance Improvement plan for the student. If a plan is in place, it should be updated, revised as necessary, and signed.
- If it is requested, the Kent ISD attendance officer is available to facilitate these meetings.
- Just as with the *Truancy Notice*, the goal is still to build a collaborative relationship between the parent/guardian and the school personnel. Therefore, sincere attendance interventions should continue.

When should a third referral to the Kent ISD truancy office be made?

- If the parent/guardian refuses to meet with the principal and/or the attendance is not meeting the goals of the IAIP.

What will happen as a result of the third referral to the truancy office?

- In most cases, with school approval, a petition will be sent to the prosecutor's office.
- Usually all siblings in the school district with less than acceptable attendance will be included in the referral.
- Most referrals of students over 10 years, if not currently otherwise involved with the juvenile court, will be offered social work services by *Crisis Intervention Program*, a prosecution diversion program. This referral is made by the attendance office. Only if this is unsuccessful, will prosecution proceed.

What is a continuing pattern?

- By agreement, the members of the Kent School-Justice Partnership, any case that is referred (first, second, or third referral) to the Kent ISD attendance office in the last third of the prior school year (March 1), and the absenteeism pattern re-emerges during the first third (December 1) of the current school year, resulting in a referral, is a *continuing pattern*. A continuing pattern case picks up the process wherever it left off the prior spring.