

ATTENDANCE PROTOCOL

I. Attendance Referral Process

The primary goal of this attendance protocol is to address unexcused absences for students ages six to fifteen. Absences stemming from out of school suspensions, while concerning, shall not warrant a School Social Work referral unless deemed necessary by school administration.

- **Three (3) unexcused absences:** Teachers will communicate with parents regarding student attendance via e-mail, phone, parent conference or postcard. (If a principal opts to complete this communication in another way, it should be documented on their website.) Documentation should be kept by teachers throughout the school year. Teachers will utilize International Welcome Center translators to assist in communicating with parents who do not speak their primary language.
- **Five (5) unexcused absences:** Each school will utilize a CSIS generated letter in order to communicate with parents. This must be adhered to as the Georgia Law referencing attendance states that the school is required to contact parents by two reasonable attempts.
- **Five (5) consecutive unexcused absences:** The school staff or designee may contact the school social worker to investigate the reason for absences, so the appropriate follow-up or resource referrals may be completed prior to the withdrawal at 10 consecutive unexcused absences.
- **Seven (7) unexcused absences:** A School Social Work referral will be generated by principal or principal designee listing specific school-based interventions (telephone calls, letters, conferences, etc.) that have occurred prior to making the referral. Each intervention should be documented thoroughly.

Schools implementing Truancy Intervention Panels (TIP) will convene a panel review for the purpose of exploring the underlying causes of the student's absences.

- **Students over the age of 16:** Attendance referrals shall not be initiated to the School Social Worker as this population is not governed by the Compulsory Attendance Law. Local schools will develop programs, strategies and/or interventions to address this population. However, should a parent and/or student request School Social Work assistance, a referral should be made at that time.
- **Ten (10) or more unexcused absences:** Students and/or parents will be subject to a referral(s) to juvenile court, magistrate court and/or Department of Family and Children Services for truancy and/or educational neglect. Detailed information pertaining to the student, local school and school social work interventions will be necessary when filing a Complaint with DFCS, Juvenile and/or Magistrate Court. Prior to any action to commence judicial proceedings to impose a penalty on a parent, guardian or other person residing in the state who has control or charge of the child, notification shall be provided.
- **Excessive Absences (excused or unexcused):** At the discretion of local school administration, a referral to the School Social Worker can be made at any time it is deemed appropriate for excessive excused/unexcused absences. Previous years' attendance records may be taken into consideration when making a referral.

II. School Social Work Interventions

The School Social Worker may implement one or more of the following interventions once a referral has been received:

- Parent contact via letter, phone call, e-mail, technology, home visit, and/or conference;
- Student contact through support groups, incentive programs, and/or conferences;
- Conference with the teacher regarding student and/or participation in the RTI process;
- Referral to community resources including financial assistance, counseling services, and/or mentoring programs;
- Implement an attendance agreement acknowledging the consequences set forth by the Compulsory Attendance Law which may be signed by the student;
- A Truancy Intervention Panel may convene when deemed necessary by the School Social Worker;
- A court referral or Department of Family and Children Services referral may be necessary if truancy concerns are not resolved.

III. School-Based Interventions

- Schools will establish a Truancy Intervention Panel with the assistance of their School Social Worker. Local schools will have the option to choose a hybrid or school-based panel, based on local school administration and resources available to the school.
 - Hybrid Truancy Intervention Panels incorporate school personnel in addition to community representatives
 - School-based Truancy Intervention Panels rely solely on the expertise of school personnel
- Schools will utilize various printed materials to communicate the content of Georgia's Compulsory Attendance Law to students and parents, including the Family Information Guide.
 - Truancy Information Brochure prepared by the Cobb County School District and Cobb County Attendance Protocol Committee
 - The Truancy Intervention Panel will establish an action plan to determine the responsibilities of parent and school.

IV. Truancy Intervention Panels

- Truancy intervention panels address student attendance and academic concerns. These panels are designed to foster an environment in which families and students are empowered to create their own solutions.
- The scheduling of truancy intervention panel reviews will be accomplished through consultation between the key stakeholders among local schools. Among these stakeholders are school administration, school social work, truancy coordinator, school counselors, teachers, and community volunteers.

V. Referral to Juvenile Court

- The School Social Worker or Truancy Coordinator will complete the Truancy Complaint and attach all pertinent school information/documents, i.e. Attendance records, IEP, TIP notes, attendance contracts, etc. (Truancy or Educational Neglect Complaints).
 - In order to fully complete the Truancy Packet – the information must include that the school has sought to resolve the expressed problem through available educational approaches (i.e. RTI, parent conferences, truancy intervention panels or other interventions). The packet must reflect if the

parent or legal guardian has been informed and has complied with the identified strategies to resolve the expressed problem.

- A certified letter (return receipt requested) must be mailed to the parent/guardian(s) by the school.

VI. Warrant Application

- In order to file an application with the Magistrate court the following has to be completed by the school social worker and Truancy Coordinator:
 1. Receive written approval from the school principal and school social worker supervisor
 2. Complete a written summary of interventions sent to the Truancy Coordinator (M.A.P. form)
 3. A certified letter must be mailed to the Parent (s) by the school (with a request return receipt)
 4. A copy of the certified letter and postal receipt will be sent to the Truancy Coordinator by the school social worker
 5. The truancy coordinator will ensure that all supplemental documents are completed and copied for filing of the warrant.

VII. Definitions

Attendance contract: Student attendance contracts are utilized as an agreement between the school personnel and student and/or parent/guardian to ensure student attends school on a daily basis unless a valid excuse is provided.

Attendance group: Student attendance groups are comprised of students that have demonstrated a pattern of poor school attendance.

Excused absence: The reason for a student being absent meets the established criteria set forth by the school board policy for consideration for excused absences.

Excuse note: Notes may be tendered by parents and guardians. An excuse note must include: the date(s) of the student's absences, nature of the student's absence, and signed by the parent and /or guardian. Excuse notes originating from a medical professional must be written a stationary that includes the doctor and/ or practice contact information. Excuse notes may be submitted electronically.

Georgia Compulsory Attendance Law O.C.G.A 20-2-690.1: This law provides the requirements for parents and students as it relates to school enrollment and attendance. In addition, this code section sets forth the parameters regarding the prosecution and sentencing of parents.

Juvenile court: This court operates under the legal authority granted to it by Georgia law. Juvenile courts provide services to deprived, unruly, truant and delinquent youth.

Magistrate court: This court operates under the legal authority granted to it by Georgia law. Magistrate court employs magistrate judges who are charged with reviewing warrant applications to judge the basis of the accusation and determine whether or not a warrant should be granted.

Medical Documentation: Medical verification may include standard doctor notes that include date(s) of student absence from school, the doctor and/ or practice contact information. These notes include dentist, doctors, psychologist, psychiatrist, etc.

Parent or Guardian: Any individual that has the legal right to provide for the care and control of a student.

Student: Any individual who has met the enrollment requirements established by the Cobb County Board of Education and state law.

Truant: In accordance with the Georgia Compulsory Attendance Law 20-2-690.1 a student is considered truant when he or she has accrued five or more unexcused absences.

Unexcused absence: It does not meet the established criteria set forth by the school board policy for consideration for excused absences. These reasons include: missing the school bus, attending appointments with parents to translate, baby-sitting, not having anything clean to wear, weather conditions that do not necessitate school closures and not wanting to attend school that day.