

Attendance and Chronic Absenteeism Summary for Schools

Statutory References:

- 2024 Iowa Acts chapter 1153 (Senate File 2435)
- 2025 Iowa Acts chapter 52 (Senate File 277)
- 2025 Iowa Acts chapter 143 (House File 870)

2024 Iowa Acts chapter 1153 ([Senate File 2435](#)), signed into law on May 9, 2024, adopted changes to Iowa's attendance and truancy law established under Iowa Code chapter 299. 2025 Iowa Acts chapter 52 ([Senate File 277](#)), signed into law on May 6, 2025, and 2025 Iowa Acts chapter 143 ([House File 870](#)), signed into law on June 6, 2025, made additional modifications to Iowa Code chapter 299. The following provides a summary of district responsibilities related to attendance and chronic absenteeism and reflects changes to the law passed during the 2025 legislative session.

Definitions

Chronically absent means any absence from school for more than ten percent of the days or hours in the grading period established by a public school.

School official means an employee of a public school whose job duties involve identifying children who are at risk for becoming chronically absent, creating interventions to limit the rate of student absenteeism, and participating in the legal process related to student absenteeism.

Truant is defined as any child of compulsory attendance age who does not qualify for the specified exemptions, fails to follow the school board's attendance policy, and has been absent from school for at least 20% of the days or hours in the grading period.

Establish Board Policy

Set board policy that includes:

- The number of days or hours of required attendance,
- Reasons considered to be acceptable excuses for exempt absence from school related to absenteeism and truancy. The policy may *exceed* the requirements in the state code.
- Rules relating to children who are chronically absent. The policy or rules must contain provisions that clearly explain all of the following:
 - How a student is deemed chronically absent,
 - Interventions that may be used when a child is chronically absent, and
 - Actions associated with a child being chronically absent.

Coding Exemptions

Chronic Absenteeism data will be collected by the SRI collections, similar to previous years. Local truancy determinations and required actions are not applied to a student who, based on local discretion, meets one of the ten exemptions:

1. Completed requirements for graduation or obtained a high school equivalency diploma.
2. Excused for sufficient reason by any court of record or judge.
3. Attending religious services or receiving religious instructions. (see also [HF870](#))

4. Unable to attend school due to legitimate medical reason(s).
5. Individualized Education Program (IEP) that affects attendance.
6. Section 504 plan under the Federal Rehabilitation Act that affects attendance.
7. Military applicant undergoing military processing.
8. Engaged in military service.
9. Traveling to attend a funeral.
10. Traveling to attend a wedding.

Parent / Guardian Communication

When a child becomes chronically absent, a school official must notify both the county attorney and the child's parent or guardian (or the child, if emancipated). This notice may be delivered by regular mail, email, electronic or text messages, or in person, and must include details about the absences as well as the school's disciplinary policies. A school official may also choose to send a notice before a child reaches chronic absenteeism if any of the following conditions apply:

1. The county attorney and the school board agree on the number of absences that will trigger the notice.
2. This number of absences is stated in the school's student handbook.

The school must maintain a copy of the notice until graduation, turns 21 years of age or is no longer enrolled.

Engagement Meetings

If a child is absent from school for 15% or more of the days or hours in the grading period **and** the school official determines that the child's absences are negatively affecting the child's academic progress, the school official must investigate the cause and initiate a school engagement meeting. This meeting aims to identify attendance barriers and interventions to improve attendance. A school official may hold this meeting before reaching the 15% absence threshold. The meeting must include the child, their parent/guardian, and a school official.

During the meeting, participants will create and sign an absenteeism prevention plan, detailing the causes of absences and each participant's responsibilities. The school official will monitor compliance with the plan, contacting participants weekly for the rest of the school year. If participants fail to create a plan or if the child/parent/guardian does not comply with the plan or participate in the meeting, the county attorney may take legal action.

Truancy / County Attorney

The county attorney of the county where a public or accredited nonpublic school's central administrative office is located is responsible for enforcing attendance laws. Legal actions initiated by the county attorney will occur in the same county.

The county attorney enforces attendance laws, with actions taken in the county of the school's central administrative office. Violations of absenteeism prevention plans or attendance laws result in public offenses.

Additional Supports

See [2025-2026 Attendance Coding Technical Assistance](#) and [2025-2026 Attendance and Chronic Absenteeism FAQs](#).