

Attendance and Chronic Absenteeism Summary for Schools

[Senate File 2435](#), [Senate File 277](#), [House File 870](#), and [Senate File 2219](#) established and modified Iowa's attendance and truancy law under Iowa Code chapter 299. The following provides a summary of district responsibilities related to attendance and chronic absenteeism.

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

Each school district board shall adopt an attendance 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 state code.
- Rules relating to children who are chronically absent. The policy or rules must clearly explain:
 - 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.

Attendance 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 eleven 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 [HF 870](#))
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.
11. Participation in school-sponsored activity, program, competition, or project.

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's board agree on what 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 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 the absences are negatively affecting academic progress, the school official must investigate the cause and initiate a school engagement meeting. The purpose of the meeting is to identify barriers to attendance and develop interventions to improve attendance. 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. Violations of absenteeism prevention plans or attendance laws may result in public offenses.

County Attorneys may initiate proceedings when, (1) Participants fail to enter into an absenteeism prevention plan, (2) Parent or guardian violate a term of the absenteeism prevention plan; or (3) The student's parent or guardian fails to participate in the school engagement meeting.

Additional Supports

- [Attendance Coding](#)
- [Attendance and Chronic Absenteeism FAQs](#)