

HARALSON COUNTY SCHOOLS ATTENDANCE PROTOCOL

Purpose: The goal of the Haralson County Schools Attendance Protocol is to establish a process for providing effective intervention strategies to improve student attendance.

The administrators, faculty, and staff of Haralson County Schools recognize that, in order to receive maximum benefit from the instructional program, students are expected to attend school each day. It is understood that good attendance habits positively impact the learning process. While administrators and teachers are responsible for providing quality instruction in an environment where learning can flourish, parents/guardians and students must assume responsibility for being punctual and attending school regularly.

Although circumstances may necessitate that a student be absent from school, optimal learning takes place when the student is present and involved in classroom activities. Accordingly, it is critically important that parents/guardians make every effort to have their children attend school.

School attendance is compulsory in Georgia between the ages of six (6) and sixteen (16). Children enrolled in the public schools prior to their sixth birthday are subject to this law and the rules of the State Board of Education governing compulsory attendance, even though they have not attained six years of age. A child who has not attained six years of age but has attended in excess of 20 days, shall be subject to the compulsory attendance law [O.C.G.A. §20-2-150(c)].

In accordance with the requirements of compulsory school attendance laws in Georgia and guidelines adopted by the State Board of education, the following definitions and explanations are provided to assist students and parents in understanding the provisions for absences and tardies as they relate to school attendance.

Excused (lawful) Absence: A lawful absence is any absence permitted by the policies and regulations of Haralson County Board of Education in accordance with State laws and State Department of Education policies and regulations.

Unexcused (unlawful) Absence: Unlawful absences are absences from school for any reasons other than those considered excusable under Georgia Law or School Board Policy.

Chronically Absent: Absent for any reason, excused or unexcused, on 10 percent or more of the school days in the school year.

Truant: The State Department of Education defines truant as any child subject to

compulsory attendance who during the school calendar year has more than 10 days of unexcused absences.

Excuses: An excuse is written documentation that explains a student's absence. Excuses for absences will be provided by the parent/guardian in writing on the day the student returns to school, and will contain the student's name, date of the absence, reason for the absence, and the signature of the parent/guardian. All written excuses will be evaluated by the Principal and/or Student Attendance Team to determine if the absence is excused or unexcused.

Medical Excuses: An excuse provided by a doctor's office or medical facility stating that a student is excused from school. Medical excuses must not be photocopied, corrected, "whited out", or otherwise altered. As with written parent excuses, medical excuses will be evaluated by the Principal and/or Student Attendance team to determine if the absence is excused or unexcused. Excuses may be faxed directly to the school. Contact your school or visit the website for fax numbers.

STUDENT ATTENDANCE TEAMS

To ensure that families in Haralson County receive the level of support they might need to solve school attendance issues, each school will staff a Student Attendance Team that may include at least one administrator or administrator's designee, school counselor, general education teacher, special education teacher, and school nurse. The SAT will be responsible for meeting with parents of students to determine whether they are chronically absent or truant, hearing appeals for absences, and offering recommendations to improve student attendance. In making the determination for Truancy or Chronic Absenteeism, the SAT will consider whether absences are excused, unexcused, or medical and verify any subsequent documentation provided by families. In families where there are children at more than one school, every effort will be made to have all the meetings at one school.

DISTRICT ATTENDANCE TEAM

Students with a combination of excused and unexcused absences will be referred by the Student Attendance Team to the District Attendance Team for Chronic Absenteeism. The DAT may include the school system Family Engagement Coordinator, the Family and Community Liaison, a school nurse, a school counselor, a DFCS representative, a therapist from a local mental health provider, and a representative from the local medical community. District Attendance Team meetings will be held to help families connect with school, district, and community resources, particularly in the areas of physical, mental, and behavioral health. The goal of the DAT meetings is to make the supports and resources necessary for school attendance available to students and the families of students who are repeated absent due to illness or for other excused reasons.

DISTRICT TRUANCY TEAM

If the School Attendance Team determines that a student has accumulated seven (7) **unexcused absences** (28 block absences at HCHS), the student and the student's family will be referred to the District Truancy Team. The DTT may include the school system Family Engagement Coordinator, the Family and Community Liaison, a school counselor, a School Resource Officer, the school system Probation Officer, a DFCS representative, a representative from the Department of Juvenile Justice, and a member of local law enforcement. Prior to meeting with the DTT, families will have met with the School Attendance Team. The School Attendance Team will have worked with the family to determine if there were excused absences, medical or otherwise. The purpose of the District Truancy Team is to offer a final intervention prior to students and families entering the court system if the number of unexcused absences reaches ten (10). The goal of the DTT is that students who are served by them will have no more unexcused absences.

DENIAL OF DRIVER'S PERMIT OR LICENSE

Pursuant to OC.G.A. § 40-5-22 regarding the denial of driver's permits and licenses, any student age 14 or older who accumulates 7 unexcused absences will receive a letter from the school via first-class mail notifying the student that he/she has only 3 absences remaining before violating the state's attendance requirements. Once the student reaches 10 unexcused absences, his/her name will be turned in to the State Department of Education and his/her driver's permit or license may be denied.

HARALSON COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL

Due to scheduling differences at Haralson County High School, including but not limited to the 4 x 4 Block and Semester system, their absences will be calculated by block rather than by day. The Absence Response Flow Chart for HCHS is kept separate from the chart for the other schools to minimize confusion. The denial of course credits based on absences is part of the Procedures and Policies specific to the high school and are not included or addressed in this protocol.