

Hamilton County Department of Education  
Student Services  
3074 Hickory Valley Rd  
Chattanooga, TN 37421  
423.209.8400  
[www.hcde.org](http://www.hcde.org)

## 2014-2015 School Attendance Procedures

1. Families are notified of Attendance Law and Procedures via each school's Student Handbook. Schools must include the Attendance Notification Contract in their registration packets (to save paper schools may want to put the contract on the back of the registration form). When the signed form is returned, the school is required to keep a copy in a designated notebook or file. A copy of this signed form will be required in the event a truancy petition is filed.
2. When a student reaches five (5) **unexcused absences**, the school is responsible for sending the HCDE approved Attendance Notification Letter that is generated from PowerSchool. The school is required to keep a copy of this letter in a designated notebook or file. A copy of this letter will be required in the event a truancy petition is filed.
3. Upon receipt of the Attendance Notification Letter, if the parent disagrees with the number of absences, it is their responsibility to contact the school for an attendance meeting and to provide documentation to support claims.
4. When the student reaches **ten (10) or more unexcused absences**, the student will be referred to the School Social Worker. The school will need to fully complete the referral and attach a copy of the Student Registration Form, a copy of the signed Attendance Contract, and a copy of the Attendance Notification Letter. The referral must have the signature of the Principal or Principal designee.
5. If absences continue after the signed referral, the Social Worker may initiate interventions and/or court procedures. If court procedures are necessary, a Legal Notice is mailed by the social worker. This notice shall serve as intent to file a truancy or dependent and neglect petition with Hamilton County Juvenile Court, unless proper documentation is provided to the school within five (5) days of receipt of this notice.

**2014-2015 Hamilton County Department of Education  
Attendance Law/HCDE Policy/Procedures**

**Attendance Law Explained**

According to the law (Tennessee Code Annotated 49-6-3001(c)) every parent, guardian, or other person residing in this State having control or charge of any child between the ages of six (6) and seventeen (17), both inclusive, shall cause such child or children to attend a public or non-public school, and in event of failure to do so, shall be subject to the penalties hereinafter provided.

Any child who is habitually and unlawfully absent from school must be reported to the appropriate judge having juvenile jurisdiction in that county, the child to be dealt with in such manner as the judge may determine to be in the best interest of the child. The judge may assess a fine of up to fifty dollars (50.00) or five (5) hours of community service against the parents or legal guardians of Kindergarten through grade twelve (K-12) children if the child is absent more than five (5) days during any school year. (Tennessee Code Annotated 49-6-3007(f)).

**Hamilton County Department of Education Board Policy (6.200)**

**The following are legal reasons for excusing a student from attending school:**

Personal Illness- Students are excused who are sick and whose attendance would be detrimental to their health and the health of other students. A physician's statement may be required.

Death in Immediate Family- Students may be excused for three days in the event of a death in their immediate families including mother, father, step-parent, brother, sister, or grandparent. Extenuating circumstances may require a longer period of excused absence.

Family Illness- Students having an illness in the family which requires them to give temporary help will be excused from attendance after receipt of a physician's statement concerning the necessity of the student's assistance.

Religious Holiday- Students shall be excused on special or recognized religious holidays regularly observed by that particular faith. Prior approval is required should these days occur while school is in session.

Personal- Students who are absent for a good cause (doctor or dental appointment which cannot be scheduled at times other than school hours, court appearances, etc.) may be excused upon proof of appointment. Prior approval by parent or guardian, and the principal or his designee is required.

Approved School-Sponsored Activities- Students shall be marked present when participating in a school-sponsored activity away from the school building.

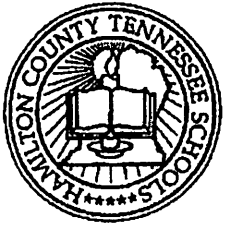
**HCDE attendance procedures for 2014-2015 are as follows:**

By law students must attend school daily. It is the parent's responsibility to report all absences to the school. HCDE will allow parent/guardian excuses to serve as documentation for three (3) personal illness days only. After three (3) parent/guardian excused personal illness days, parents must provide medical services documentation for the following: personal illness, family illness, or personal (as defined above). To avoid student absences being recorded as unexcused, a written statement signed and dated by the parent/guardian and any medical documentation should be presented to the appropriate school official within five (5) days of the student returning to school. HCDE will not begin legal actions until after a student is absent for more than five (5) days without adequate legal excuse (as defined above.)

**If the following conditions apply, a referral will be made to the school social worker:**

*After ten (10) or more unexcused absences:*

Parent/guardians will be notified via legal notice indicating that their child has become truant and a petition may be filed with Hamilton County Juvenile Court. If unexcused absences continue after the Informal Truancy Hearing at Juvenile Court, parent/guardians will be petitioned to attend a Formal Hearing before a Juvenile Court Judge at which time fines and community service may be assessed.



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**2014-2015  
Attendance Notification Contract**

- Tennessee State Law requires that all children between the ages of six (6) and seventeen (17), both inclusive, must attend school regularly.
- The Hamilton County Department of Education has determined that each child will be allowed three (3) absences per school year that may be excused by a note from a parent/guardian. These should only be used in cases when a child is sick, but the parent/guardian determines that a doctor visit is not necessary.
- After three (3) parent/guardian excused personal illness days, any further absences must be excused by professional documentation. These include doctors, mental health professionals, dentists, court, or other professional services. Other legal reasons for excused absences are death in immediate family, religious holiday regularly observed by that faith (prior approval required), and approved school sponsored activities. (HCDE Board Policy 6.200)
- Excuses must be turned in to the appropriate school official within five (5) days of the student returning to school.
- After five (5) unexcused days, the school will notify the parent/guardian that their child must attend school on a regular basis by mailing the Attendance Notification Letter.
- Upon receipt of the Attendance Notification Letter, if the parent disagrees with the number of absences, it is their responsibility to contact the school for an attendance meeting and to provide documentation to support claims.
- If a student acquires ten (10) or more unexcused days (no legal reason for absence as defined above) the school will make a formal referral to the School Social Worker.
- If the child continues to accrue unexcused absences after the referral, a Legal Notice will be mailed to the parent/guardian indicating that their child has become truant. This notice shall serve as intent to file a petition with Hamilton County Juvenile Court unless proper documentation is provided to the school within five (5) days of receipt of this notice.

**Please print all information except signature**

School \_\_\_\_\_

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_ Student Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

I, \_\_\_\_\_, have read and understand the information regarding Tennessee State Law and Hamilton County Department of Education Attendance Policy as they apply to my child.

Parent/Guardian Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**\*\*\*Return this form to your child's teacher\*\*\***