

Portage Area School District

Standardized Attendance Procedures

Daily attendance is critical to the success of our students, school and district. We ask that parents and caregivers make every attempt to have their child at school on a daily basis. We understand that on occasion students fall ill and must be kept home for both their care and the good of our student body and staff. However we ask that parents and caregivers use sound judgment when having students miss school for reasons other than illness. Often these types of absences place students at a disadvantage. They may very well miss important instruction or experiences that are critical to their success in the classroom. In addition, such absences place a significant burden on both their classmates and teachers as instruction needs to be revisited, therefore slowing the pace and/or limiting content that is covered.

Pennsylvania school attendance laws allow for school districts to define what constitutes a legal absence from school. The Portage Area School District recognizes the following types of absences as “excused” if a signed and dated excuse is provided by the parent or caregiver within 3 school days of the student’s return to school.

Valid reasons for absences include:

1. Illness
2. Recovery from and accident
3. Required court appearance
4. Other urgent reasons approved by administration
5. Approved religious holidays
6. Pre-approved educational travel (form required)
7. Death of a family member

All other absences will be considered “Unlawful” if the student is under 17 years of age, and “Unexcused” if the student is 17 years of age or older.

1 UNLAWFUL ABSENCE

JR/SR HS - Letter informing parent of “unlawful” absence
ELEM – Phone call informing parent of “unlawful” absence.

2 UNLAWFUL ABSENCES

Letter informing parent of 2nd “unlawful” absence.

3 UNLAWFUL ABSENCES

Letter stating the student is now defined as “truant” and possible legal issues parents /caregivers may face if attendance concerns persist.

4 UNLAWFUL ABSENCES

Certified letter requesting a meeting to develop a Student Attendance Improvement Plan (SAIP).

5 UNLAWFUL ABSENCES

Certified letter stating next “unlawful” absence will result in a charges being filed with the district magistrate or juvenile probation.

6 UNLAWFUL ABSENCES

Charges will be filed with the district magistrate or juvenile probation defining the student as “habitually truant”.

Under 15 years old: Charges filed against the parent with local district magistrate or juvenile probation for violation of Pennsylvania school attendance laws.

15 & 16 years old: Charges filed with the local district magistrate or juvenile probation against both the parent and student for violation of Pennsylvania school attendance laws.

5 TOTAL ABSENCES

Letter sent to parent/caregiver informing them that they have reached the halfway point of allowed parental excuses.

10 TOTAL ABSENCES

Letter sent notifying each additional absence to be medically excused. If absence is not excused by a licensed medical provider, the absences will be consider “unlawful” or “unexcused” depending on the student’s age. (Excludes medically excused absences).

20 TOTAL ABSENCES

Letter sent to parent/caregiver informing them their student has reached a critical number of absences and is risking retention in current grade or not earning credit for scheduled courses.

25 TOTAL ABSENCES

Student will be retained as he/she will not earn credit for courses he/she has scheduled that academic year.

Definitions:

Chronic Absenteeism

Definition pending - Currently being defined by PA Department of Education and state legislature.

Educational Travel

Up to 5 days permitted to travel and experience various activities, locations and cultures to enhance a student’s educational experience

Excused Absence

A valid excuse, meeting the approved criteria, which has been provided to the school within 3 days of the student’s return to school.

Excuse

A document (written, faxed or emailed) provided by the parent, caregiver or medical professional detailing the reason the student was absent from school.

Fax Number: 814-736-9597

Email Address: HSAttendance@mustangmail.org

Truant

3 days of “unlawful” absence

Habitually Truant

6 or more “unlawful” or “unexcused” days of absence

Home School Visitor

School professional assigned to work with student and parent/caregiver not meeting the standard of attendance set by the district.

Homebound Education

Student is under the care of a licensed medical professional who can document and verify that the student is unable to attend school for an extended period of time (3 or more weeks). At such time, education will be provided in the home at a rate of 5 hours per week.

Unlawful Absence

Student is under 17 years of age and no valid excuse has been provide or the excuse provided does not meet the criteria of an excused absence

Unexcused Absence

Student is 17 years of age or older and no valid excuse has been provide or the excuse provided does not meet the criteria of an excused absence.