

Student Attendance and Truancy

In South Carolina, all children are required to attend a public or private school or kindergarten beginning at age five and continuing until their 17th birthday. If a parent chooses not to send their children to kindergarten, a waiver must be signed. Waivers may be obtained at the local school. Parents also have the option of home schooling their children provided the requirements for home schooling are met.

In accordance with the Compulsory School Attendance Law and S.C. Code of Regulations, uniform rules have been adopted to ensure that students attend school regularly. Students are expected to attend school each day and are counted present only when they are actually in school, on homebound instruction, or are present at an activity authorized by the school principal.

The school year consists of 180 days. To receive credit, students must attend at least 170 days of each 180-day year course, as well as meet the minimum requirements for each course. Accrued student absences may not exceed 10 days during the school year. The first 10 absences may be lawful, unlawful, or a combination. Any absence in excess of 10 may cause the student to lose credit for the year. To receive credit for a 90-day/semester course, students must attend at least 85 days of the course, as well as meet all minimum requirements for the course. The first 5 absences may be lawful, unlawful, or a combination. Any absence in excess of 5 may cause the student to lose credit for such a course. All absences beginning with the sixth must be lawful.

A. Lawful Absences

1. Absences caused by a student's own illness* and whose attendance in school would endanger his or her health or the health of others. *Verified by a statement from a physician within two days of the student's return to school. Absences for CHRONIC or EXTENDED illness will be approved only when verified by a physician's statement.
2. Absences due to an illness or death in the student's immediate family verified by a statement from the parent within two days of the student's return to school.
3. Absences due to a recognized religious holiday of the student's faith when approved in advance. Such requests must be made to the principal in writing.
4. Absences for students whose parents/guardians are experiencing a military deployment. A principal may grant up to five days of excused absences provided that 1) the absence is preapproved, 2) the student is in good standing, 3) the student has a prior record of good attendance, and 4) missed work is completed and turned in within the school's allotted time period.
5. Absences due to activities that are approved in advance by the principal. This would include absences for extreme hardships. Such approval should be prearranged when possible.

B. Unlawful Absences

1. Absences of a student without the knowledge of his or her parents.
2. Absences of a student without acceptable cause with the knowledge of his or her parents.
3. Suspension is not to be counted as an unlawful absence for truancy purposes.

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C. Approval of Absences in Excess of Ten (10) Days and Award of Credit

For the purpose of awarding credit for the year, the district board of trustees, or its designee (principal), shall approve or disapprove any student's absence in excess of 10 days, regardless as to whether those absences are lawful, unlawful, or a combination of the two.

D. Truancy

Although the state requires students to only attend 170 of the 180 day school year, parents and students should be aware that SC Code of Regulations - Chapter 43-274 stipulates that a child ages 6 to 17 years is considered **truant** when the child has three consecutive unlawful absences or a total of five unlawful absences.

E. Tardiness

Punctuality is one of the most important skills that a person can learn. It is a skill that directly correlates to an individual's success in the business world. Parents should have students at school on time each day. Furthermore, secondary students are expected to be in their individual classes on time. Late arrival (tardiness) results in interruptions to the learning process – not only for the tardy student but for the other students in the class as well. Additionally, the tardy student misses important instruction. Each school has guidelines for the disciplinary consequences for tardiness.