

## STUDENT ABSENCES AND EXCUSES

Code **JH** Issued **7/17**

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Purpose: To direct the superintendent or designee on allowing and excusing student absences.

The school year consists of 180 school days. High school students must attend 85 days of each 90-day semester to receive one-half unit of credit or 85 days of a 4x4 course to receive one credit (45 days of a 4x4 course to receive one-half credit). Students must attend 170 days through the course of the school year to receive one unit of credit.

Students in grades K through 12 may not be eligible for promotion if they have more than 10 absences. The superintendent or designee shall approve or disapprove any student's absence in excess of 10 days, whether lawful, unlawful, or a combination thereof, for students in grades K through 12. For the purposes of awarding credit for the year, the superintendent must approve or disapprove absences in excess of 10 days regardless as to whether those absences are lawful, unlawful, or a combination of the two.

Consistent with state regulations, parents/legal guardians have the right to appeal attendance violation decisions and/or question the school records regarding attendance. The appeal should be made in writing to the school principal or designee. The decision of the principal or designee may be appealed to the associate superintendent or designee. The decision of the associate superintendent or designee may be appealed to the superintendent or designee by written request for appeal within 10 days of receipt of the decision of the associate superintendent or designee. The decision of the superintendent or designee is final.

The superintendent or designee shall utilize a written intervention plan for improving student attendance. The purpose of the plan shall be to link students with attendance problems and their families to all appropriate school and community resources.

The superintendent or designee shall take all reasonable, educationally sound, and corrective actions prior to resorting to the juvenile justice system.

All absences require a written explanation from the parent/guardian within three (3) school days of return from the absence. Written explanation of absences must include the student's name, parent/guardian's full name, date(s) of absence(s), documentation of the reason for absence, and a parent/guardian's signature. Per South Carolina Department of Education guidelines, **text messages and emails are not** acceptable documentation for student absences. All documentation required by the school is subject to review and must be approved by the principal.

Absences in excess of ten days per year will not be considered excused with a parent/guardian note unless they are accompanied by official medical or legal documentation.

If a student fails to provide a valid excuse to school, he/she shall automatically receive an unlawful absence. If a student provides a false (or forged) excuse, the student shall be referred to the school administration for appropriate action.

**Lawful absences** shall include but are not limited to:

- absences caused by a student's own illness and whose attendance in school would endanger his or her health and the health of others; the principal shall require a physician's certificate from the parent/legal guardian of a student reported continuously absent for illness.

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- absences due to an illness or death in the student's immediate family
- absences due to a recognized religious holiday of the student's faith
- absences due to activities that are approved in advance by the principal. Approved activities include the following:
  - state and national competitions
  - ceremonies honoring outstanding students
- work approved or sponsored by the school, the school district, or the state department of education, accepted by the associate superintendent or school principal or their designees as reason for excusing the student
- out-of-school suspension
- in-school suspension
- field trips approved by the principal or designee

**Unlawful Absences** include but are not limited to:

- absences of a student without the knowledge of his/her parents/legal guardians
- absences of a student without acceptable cause with the knowledge of his/her parents/legal guardians

### **Participation in After-School Activities**

No student who misses all or any portion of a school day, unless excused by the principal, shall be permitted to participate later that day or evening in any extracurricular or school-sponsored or authorized or related school activity.

Adopted 7/22/81; Revised 9/24/84, 9/9/85, 7/11/88, 10/12/98, 1/23/06, 7/17/17

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Legal references:

A. Federal Law:

1. McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Improvements Act of 2001, 42 U.S.C.A. Section 11431, *et seq.*
2. Every Student Succeeds Act, Pub. L. No. 114-95, 129 Stat. 1802.

B. S. C. Code, 1976, as amended:

1. Section 59-38-10 - South Carolina Education Bill of Rights for Children in Foster Care.
2. Section 59-46-50 - Interstate compact on educational opportunity for military children.
3. Section 59-65-50 - Nonattendance reported to court having jurisdiction of juveniles.

C. State Board of Education Regulations:

1. R43-274 - Student attendance.