

LOUDOUN COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

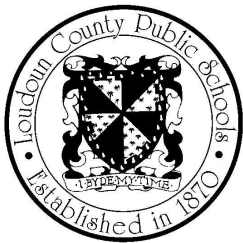
Attendance 101

2016-2017 School Year



After a pupil has been absent for five days without indication of the parent's awareness and support of such absence, principals or their designees are required to make a reasonable effort to ensure that direct contact is made with the parent to obtain an explanation for the nonattendance and explain to the parents the consequences of continued nonattendance.

-State Superintendents Memo Number 185



Welcome Back!

This booklet has been created to help each school continue in its responsibility of working with students with nonattendance and truancy issues.

The procedures listed constitute the approved Truancy Referral Process for Loudoun County Public Schools.

Please note that new forms have been created for the 2016-2017 school year. **We ask that you destroy all unused forms prior to this school year.** For your convenience, forms are available on the Intranet (<http://www.intranet.lcps>). Follow the path: Pupil Services—Office of Student Services—Attendance.

Mrs. Jennifer Wall, Supervisor of Student Assistance Services, is available to provide assistance. Please feel free to call her or your school's designated attendance officer should you have any questions.

Loudoun County Public Schools

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Intervention and Prevention

A Proactive School-based Approach Determination of Thresholds

After how many absences is it required that we notify the parents or the attendance officer?

The school sets the threshold for contacting the parent, either as an "awareness" or to require appropriate supporting documentation i.e. doctor's note, judicial note, etc. School administrators should also set an "excessive absence" level as well as a total unexcused level. The *Code of Virginia* requires that the attendance officer be contacted upon the 5th unexcused. This would be done via a "formal referral" as per LCPS' Attendance 101 protocol to follow in this manual. **The referral will require documentation of parental contact from the school administration concerning the attendance issue/s prior to the formal attendance referral.** Page four of this manual details the calculated threshold points for excessive absences based on either a cumulative monthly 10% or 15% nonattendance calculation. This is based on the total number of days of membership up to the last school day for each successive month of attendance.

Establishing a Framework

The core of proactively addressing student nonattendance and chronic absenteeism is the very simple, basic premise that a student cannot maximize learning if he or she is not present for instruction. Student achievement and academic success are tied to quality, consistent instruction. If a student is not present, he or she misses the opportunity to engage in instruction. See LCPS School Board Policy §8-14 Compulsory Attendance.

To proactively address student nonattendance and chronic absenteeism, the school's administration should establish a framework and protocol for identifying these potentially at-risk students. To do this, schools should determine and set thresholds for the number of excessive absences, number of tardies, and number of "unexcused" absences that will be proactively monitored. Phoenix SIS reports should be run and monitored on a regular basis by the school using these established thresholds. This can be done on a monthly basis to successfully capture students with attendance issues and/or students that are developing a pattern of nonattendance.

Schools should also set thresholds for determining when to send an "awareness" or warning letter to parents/guardians concerning their student's nonattendance. Additionally, the administrator may want to set an excessive threshold point for requiring a doctor's note and/or submission of other appropriate documentation to support/justify further absences and/or tardies by the student to be considered excused by the principal. This is helpful in establishing unexcused absences prior to making a formal referral to the attendance officer. Note that upon receipt of a justifiable formal attendance referral, the attendance officer will require the submission of a doctor's note/appropriate documentation for any further absences or tardies as part of the formal referral process.

Establishing a proactive monitoring system can be successfully accomplished by establishing regularly scheduled administrative attendance meetings with the school's designated attendance officer. At the secondary level this would be a set monthly meeting and at the elementary level this could be a set quarterly meeting. The building principal or assistant principal would need to be the school's main point of contact.

Intervention and Prevention (continued)

The purpose of the established routine attendance meetings with the attendance officer is to review the threshold reports generated by Phoenix SIS to identify students who meet or surpass the thresholds for nonattendance. The participation of additional staff members at these monthly meetings can help by providing necessary input to help identify students with special circumstances, by providing additional background or pertinent information, and by assisting in follow-up contact with students and/or parents. The attendance team may include such additional staff as the assistant principal/s, deans, attendance secretary, school counselor/s, and/or nurse. Based on the circumstances, some schools have included the school social worker, parent liaison, and/or school-based probation officer.

Documentation is vital. Accurate data entry is vital. This ensures compliance with the *Code of Virginia* and supports accurate state reporting. Each school's framework may vary, but establishing a working framework is essential to successfully addressing nonattendance issues early.

Standard Elementary Handbook Wording: Attendance Per updates from 9/22/10 principals' meeting

Whenever a student is absent from school, documentation is required to verify the reason for the absence. Parents/Guardians are required to notify the school as to the reason for the absence. This may be done through the school's Absentee Phone-in line. Any absence not confirmed by the parent/guardian will be considered unexcused. If the parent/guardian has not called the school to verify the absence, the school will make a reasonable effort to call the parent/guardian to verify the day's absence. Upon the student's return to school, a written explanation from a parent or guardian is required for each absence. The note should include: date(s) of the absence, reason for the absence, and signature of the parent/guardian.

Students are excused for personal illness, a death in the family, medical or dental appointments, court appearances, religious holidays, illness in the immediate family, or emergencies that require the student to be absent.

If a student is absent, whether excused or unexcused, for more than 10 days or 10% of the total number of days membership, whichever is determined appropriate by the principal, the school will send a letter to the parents/guardians requiring a physician's note for all further absences. At the principal's discretion, contact may be made sooner or waived due to extenuating circumstances. A copy of the attendance letter sent to the parents/guardians will be placed in the student's cumulative folder.

At the point at which a student accumulates five unexcused absences, a referral **will/may** be made to the attendance officer.

Occasional tardiness for valid reasons is not a serious offense; however, repeated or habitual tardiness encourages the formation of undesirable personal habits and disrupts the orderly instructional process of the school. When a student arrives tardy, parents must escort their child to the office and assist him/her in obtaining a tardy pass to class. This is required to ensure the safety and well-being of the student. In addition, the school may require the parent or guardian to provide justification to determine the reason for the student's tardiness. If this does not occur and documentation is not provided by the parent/guardian, as to the reason for the tardy, the tardy may be considered unexcused. If a student is tardy more than ten times, a letter **will/may** be sent to the parent/guardian as notification of the school's concern for the student's nonattendance, and a physician's note may be required. If the pattern of tardiness does not improve, a referral may be made to the attendance officer.

Spanish Version is Available Upon Request

Absentee Threshold Points

Monthly Absentee Threshold Points

2016 - 2017

Date	Total Days of Enrollment	Absentee Point	
		<u>10%</u>	<u>15%</u>
08/29/16	1	N/A	N/A
09/30/16	24	2	3
10/31/16	44	4	7
11/30/16	60	6	9
12/21/16	75	8	11
01/31/17	95	10	14
02/28/17	114	11	17
03/31/17	137	14	21
04/28/17	151	15	23
05/31/17	173	17	26
06/9/17	180	18	27

Quarterly Absentee Threshold Points

2016 - 2017

Quarter	Absentee Point	
	<u>10%</u>	<u>15%</u>
End of 1st Quarter 11/4/16 ~ 48 days of enrollment	4+	7+
End of 2nd Quarter ~ 1/26/17 45/93 days of enrollment	9+	13+
End of 3rd Quarter ~ 4/6/17 48/141 days of enrollment	14+	21+
End of 4th Quarter ~ 6/9/17 39/180 days of enrollment	18+	27+

Truancy Referral Process

The truancy referral process was created to assist you in following the proper steps when referring truant and excessively absent students to the attendance officers for follow-up and possible court proceedings. **Only formal referrals will be accepted.**

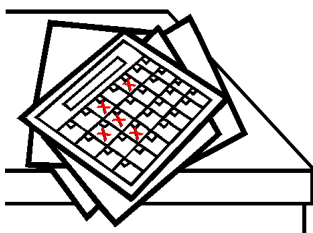
It is important to note that this process should be initiated **after** a student has been absent for **five unexcused** days (not necessarily consecutive) without indication that the parents/guardians are aware of and support the absences **and** an administrator has contacted the parent/guardian to determine the reason for the absences and the school has done its due diligence prior to referral.

NOTE TO ADMINISTRATORS

Please use your discretion to determine the legitimacy of the excuse given by the parents/guardians for the child's absence from school. If the parent's/guardian's reason for the child's absence is questionable, it would be entirely reasonable to request a bonafide doctor's excuse or other appropriate documentation for justification of the absence. This is particularly important with students who have had a history of absenteeism or if you feel the parents/guardians may be contributing to the child's absenteeism.

5

Unexcused absences (NOT necessarily consecutive absences)



The school administrator will make contact with the parents/guardians to determine that they are not aware of and/or do not support five of the student's absences.

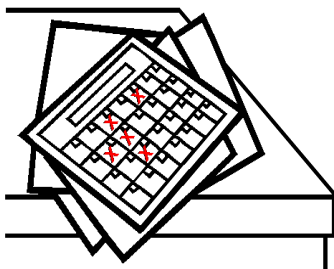
A "Reason and Plan for Nonattendance" form, Exhibit A, will be completed by the school, listing the specific dates of absences and the documented excuse given for each absence. The school's due diligence working to notify and communicate with the parents/guardians to improve the student's attendance must be thoroughly documented as part of the formal referral. This is referred to the attendance officer who makes contact with the parents/guardians and the child to develop a plan to help improve the student's attendance. The attendance officer completes the section entitled "Plan to Resolve Nonattendance" and sends a letter to the parents/guardians requiring a doctor's note for any and all further absences. The **"Reason and Plan for Non-attendance"** form must be attached to the completed **"School Referral Form for Truancy," Exhibit B**, when submitted to the attendance officer. The school administrator must note on the referral the dates and details of his/her contact with the parent/guardian of the student in question.

Remember to document contact information on the "School Referral Form for Truancy," Exhibit B, and the "Reason and Plan for Nonattendance Form," Exhibit A or use Exhibit F if using Excel to document contact attempts for absences.

If the student misses an additional day...

6

6th unexcused absence



The school shall notify the attendance officer of the sixth unexcused absence. The **attendance officer** will schedule a meeting **within 15 days** from the additional unexcused absence to include the parents/guardians, the child, the school administrator, and him or herself to develop and document a formal attendance plan.

The attendance officer will send a certified letter to the parents/guardians to confirm the scheduled conference and to notify the parents/guardians that their attendance is required by the *Code of Virginia* §22.1-258.

The **"Administrator 6th Day Conference Form," Exhibit C**, will be completed at this meeting to document the formal attendance plan.

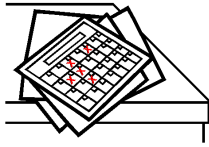
This "6th-day Meeting" constitutes a formal **truancy conference** that must be documented on the student's Other Information Tab/Truancy Conference Held in Phoenix SIS, see Exhibit D. This is done by the attendance officer.

Conference notes are documented on the "Administrator 6th Day Conference Form," Exhibit C.

If the student misses one more day...

7

7th Unexcused absence



The school shall notify the attendance officer of the seventh unexcused absence, documenting the specific date and the reason for nonattendance. The attendance officer may then file a petition on the student in court. The school will provide the attendance officer with a completed "**Attendance Referral Documentation**" form, **Exhibit E**, so that the process of filing a truancy petition in court may begin. Please attach all requested information to this form. It is recommended that the school also keep a copy of this documentation for its records.

Excessive Absence Procedure with Noncompliant Parents/Guardians

If the school determines that the parents/guardians are aware of and support the student's excessive absences, the school will schedule a conference either in person or via the telephone with the parent to express concern regarding the excessive absences and develop a plan to address the nonattendance. The principal or administrative designee, will send a certified letter (it may be helpful to send a copy of the same letter uncertified and possibly via the student) to the parents/guardians which includes:

- A. The dates of the absences;
- B. The obligation of the parents/guardians to assist the school in correcting attendance issues; and
- C. The principal's determination of the requirement of the parents/guardians to provide a note from a physician to medically excuse the student from school and/or other appropriate documentation as determined by the principal to justify the specific dates of absence.

Any further absences that are not justified by a physician's note or other required appropriate documentation should be considered unexcused. When the student accumulates five unexcused absences, the school will refer the student to the attendance officer through a formal attendance referral. The referral must include copies of any letters sent, notes about any contact with the parent/guardian, and any doctor notes received by the school. The attendance officer will make direct contact with the parents/guardians to begin the formal referral process.

The school will notify the attendance officer of the next absence, 7th, without a doctor's note. The attendance officer will file a petition against the parents/guardians.

Procedure for Tardies

Attendance officers may initiate complaints against parents/guardians when students are continuously late to school when the excessive tardies **are combined** with at least five unexcused absences not solely vacation related and the school administration has documented the chronic, excessive nature of the absences and/or late arrivals, and has made contact with the parents/guardians to express concern regarding the absences and excessive tardies.

Referrals to attendance officers should include:

- *A. Dates and time of arrival to school;
- *B. Reasons for late arrival;
- C. "School Referral Form for Truancy," Exhibit B, completed and signed; and
- D. Copies of any communication to parents/guardians regarding late arrivals and/or absences.

*This information is to be documented on the "Reason and Plan for Nonattendance," Exhibit A. A print-out/report should be run from the student's Daily Attendance Detail in Phoenix SIS. This may be attached to this form for documentation of the attendance/tardy note information.

Attendance officers will review each referral with the referring administrator and/or school principal to formulate appropriate action to be taken prior to filing a complaint with the Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court. In the event that court intervention is required, school administrators may be asked to document the impact of the absences and late arrivals on the student's success in relation to instructional time missed, to include the appropriate teacher documentation to this effect on the student's report card.