



Attendance/Truancy “At a Glance” Process

State law requires that any person having a child under their control who is between the ages of 6 and 18 shall cause the child to regularly attend school. The state law now also requires the parent or guardian of a child who is enrolled in a 5-year-old kindergarten class to cause the child to attend school regularly until the end of the school term. Any student who misses a part of any day of school without an acceptable excuse is truant. If a student misses all or part of 5 or more days during a school semester without an acceptable excuse, s/he is considered to be a habitual truant.

Truancy significantly affects students as well as for the community as a whole. The economic prosperity of the county, its crime rate and the general quality of life are all greatly impacted by truancy. Waupaca County competes economically, in the state as well as nationally and internationally. An educated workforce that can understand and perform tasks beyond the simplest levels is critical to local economic success. Criminal justice issues and the need to protect our community are also significantly impacted by truancy. Experts in the juvenile justice field overwhelmingly recognize that one of the greatest predictors of a young person’s committing delinquent or criminal acts is a history of truancy. However, the biggest victims are the truants themselves. Statistics of the U.S. Census Bureau show that a person who graduates from high school can earn almost twice as much as someone who does not. An education will help students be informed citizens and have a better quality of life.

Wisconsin State Statute 118 states that each school board shall adopt a plan to address truancy. The following represents the School District of Manawa’s “at a glance” version of the plan to prevent and address truancy.

Explanation of Responsibilities, Rights, and Penalties Relating to State Statutes

The compulsory school attendance law [Wis. Stats. §118.15(1)(a)] requires that:

“...any person having under control a child who is between the ages of 6 and 18 years shall cause the child to attend school regularly during the full period and hours, religious holidays excepted, that the public or private school in which the child should be enrolled is in session until the end of the school term, quarter, or semester of the school year in which the child becomes 18 years of age.”

You, as a parent, guardian, or child (if over age 18), may request program or curriculum modifications if you feel the need to do so. Further, you may also wish to review eligibility for enrollment in a program for children at risk as we discuss alternatives that may assist improved attendance.

Please also be informed that if after evidence has been provided that: (1) the activities under W.S. 118.16(5) have been completed as set forth above and in the letter on the reverse side and (2) an evaluation has determined if learning or social problems may be the cause of your child’s truancy with appropriate action having been taken, the school attendance officer may file information on any child who continues to be truant with Waupaca County Circuit Court under Ch. 938 in accordance with §938.24. Filing information on a child under this subsection also allows concurrent prosecution of the child’s parent or guardian under §118.15(5). The penalties for violating this section include a fine of not more than \$500 or imprisonment of not more than 30 days or both. By working with us to resolve this matter, such action will not be necessary.

Process

A student arriving to school at or before 9:00 a.m. will be considered present for the full school day. Tardies will be documented. If a student leaves school at or after 2:00 p.m., the student will be counted as present for a full day. If a student arrives or leaves during the lunch hour, the student will be counted as present for either an a.m. or p.m. half day.

1. When a student is absent from school, the school office telephones the parent/guardian the morning of an absence if the parent/guardian has not already notified the school via the attendance reporting line to determine the reason for the absence. If the school office is unable to reach a parent to confirm the reason for the absence, the absence will be recorded as unexcused and a letter to confirm a student absence will be sent to the parent at the end of that school week requesting information which could lead to the absence being excused.
2. Students participating in school-sponsored events (such as, but not limited to: athletic contests, field trips, etc.) will have their participation noted in the Student Information System as "exempt school-related" for purposes of documenting time out of class. This information will not appear on attendance related letters to parents or on the report card attendance count.
3. If the absence is determined by school personnel to be an unexcused absence, the parent/guardian will be notified within 48 hours. The school will keep a communication log documenting notification attempts. A letter of concern documenting the unexcused absence will be sent to the parent.
4. When a student has accumulated 10 excused absences (for any reason), an informational letter will be sent to parents expressing concern regarding further absences due to the potentially negative impact on learning.
5. When a student has accumulated 5 unexcused absences/tardies, a second letter of concern is mailed requesting the family to work with the school to develop a plan to address the student's attendance concern.
6. Once 6 or more unexcused absences/tardies have occurred, each case is evaluated by the principal and school counselor to determine the proper course of action. Actions may include one or more of the following:
 - a. Sending a letter of concern to the parent. Statute 118 is quoted within the letter for informational purposes.
 - b. Making a home visit (principal with a second person such as the school nurse, school counselor, etc.) to provide one-time transportation to school and would include developing a plan and support systems to facilitate positive school attendance.
 - c. Requesting medical excuse verification.
 - d. Meeting at school with parent or guardian to develop a plan for positive attendance.
 - e. Making a referral to the school counselor.
7. If truancy concerns continue following the attempted actions described in number 6 above, a certified letter will be mailed to the parent and a request for law enforcement to issue a citation will be made. A citation for contributing to truancy may be issued by a local law enforcement official (Citation fines up to \$500 in a semester).
 - a. For students 12 years of age or older, the student may receive a citation as well as the parent.
 - b. For students under 12 years of age, the parent may receive a citation.
8. When all options are exhausted from the above list, the next step is to set up the Habitual Truancy Meeting. To meet communication requirements, the habitual truancy letter must be sent through certified mail and designate a date and time for a parent meeting. Regular mail delivery will also be used. Documentation of this mailing should also be maintained. The parent meeting needs to be set up within five school days of sending out the certified letter. The district will keep copies of the certified letter and receipts, as they will need to be sent along with the paperwork to Juvenile Intake. If the parent fails to attend the meeting, the district will document that the parents did not participate. Staff must allow parents the opportunity to reschedule and wait at least ten (10) school days after the initial notice before proceeding.
9. After the Habitual Truancy meeting, a court referral can be submitted if the student continues in the pattern of one or more unexcused partial or full days of school. If necessary, appropriate truancy paperwork may be submitted to Juvenile Intake in the student's county of residence.