

REGULATION MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Related Entries: IKA, IKA-RA, JEA-EA, JEB-EA, JGA-RB, JFA-RA

Responsible Office: Office of Shared Accountability

Student Attendance

I. PURPOSE

To establish responsibility for recording and excusing absences and to outline procedures for monitoring and improving attendance and for follow-up with students and parents in accordance with requirements set forth in the *Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR)*

II. PROCEDURES

A. All Schools

1. Recording Absences

- a) The classroom teacher is responsible for taking student attendance. The document used by the teacher to record attendance is the source document. Source documents may differ for elementary and secondary schools and are described below.

(1) Elementary and Middle School Source Documents

Each teacher is responsible for recording the attendance of students in his/her class. Attendance is to be recorded on attendance rosters that are generated at each school at the beginning of the week. After teachers record attendance on the roster, it is returned to the attendance secretary who enters the information into the Web-based Daily Attendance System.

(2) High School Source Documents

Each teacher is responsible for recording the attendance of students in his/her class. Teachers record attendance directly in the Web-based Period Attendance System.

After recording the attendance, the teacher must enter his/her password, which serves as an electronic signature to confirm source of entry.

- b) Source documents will be retained in the school for the current year. At the end of the current year, the source documents retained in hard copy form will be sent to Central Records where they will be retained for three additional years for auditing purposes.
- c) The daily attendance records of each student are electronically maintained by the Office of the Chief Technology Officer (OCTO). A hard copy of a school year's cumulative Monthly Report of Student Attendance will be retained by Central Records for three years.

2. Determining what constitutes an absence

- a) For reporting purposes, Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) defines an absence in accordance with the definition of "Days Absent" in the Maryland Student Records System Manual.
- b) The Maryland Student Records System Manual is hereby incorporated by reference.

3. Determining Whether an Absence Is Lawful or Unlawful

- a) A written explanation of each absence is required from the parent/guardian within three days of the student's return to school.
- b) Requests for late arrivals or early dismissals must be authorized by the parent/guardian.
- c) Upon reaching his/her age of majority (18 years old or married), a student may assume the responsibility for absence notes and requests for late arrivals and early dismissals. The principal is responsible for informing the parent/guardian in writing of the following:
 - (1) Eligible students may submit their own written explanations of absences.
 - (2) When a student is exercising age of majority rights, any administrative follow-up on unlawful absences is conducted with the student. When that student is residing

as a dependent child with his/her parent or guardian, additional notification of unexcused absences may be sent to the parent or guardian.

- d) Students presently enrolled in public schools are considered lawfully absent from school, including absence for any portion of the day, only under the following conditions¹:
- (1) Work approved or sponsored by the school, the local school system, or the State Department of Education, accepted by the local superintendent of schools or the school principal, or their designees, as reason for excusing the students. A number of activities or work situations that the principal/designee should accept as lawful when approval for the absence has been requested five school days in advance in writing from the parent/guardian/eligible student are included below:
 - (a) Visits to college campuses and participation in college orientation programs (see local student handbook for limitations).
 - (b) Scheduled interviews with prospective employers.
 - (c) Short-term full-time work assignments for students not enrolled in a cooperative education program.
 - (2) Death in the immediate family.
 - (3) Illness of the student. The principal may require a physician's certificate from the parent or guardians of the student in cases in which a student has chronic or extended absences for an illness.
 - (4) Illness of a student's child. In the case of students who also are parents, when these students are absent due to their children's illnesses or medical appointments, the absences should be excused.
 - (5) Court summons

¹ Lawful absences are to be considered as excused absences

- (6) Hazardous weather conditions. Hazardous weather conditions shall be interpreted to mean weather conditions which would endanger the health or safety of the student when in transit to and from school.
 - (7) Observance of religious holiday.
 - (8) State emergency
 - (9) Suspension
 - (10) Failure to provide MCPS authorized transportation to eligible students. This does not include students denied MCPS authorized transportation for disciplinary reasons.
 - (11) Other emergency or set of circumstances which, in the judgment of the superintendent or designee, constitutes a good and sufficient cause for absence from school.
- e) Any absence for reasons other than those specified above may be considered either lawful or unlawful by the principal/designee. Discretion is permitted in designating absences as lawful for reasons other than those above. Normally, requests for family travel are not lawful absences.

A student's absence may be deemed lawful at the discretion of the principal/designee based on the following considerations:

- (1) Recommendations from the student's teacher(s) concerning the possible effect of the anticipated absence on the student's academic progress and the options available for make-up work before making a decision to approve the absence.
 - (2) Number of lawful and unlawful absences student has accumulated to date.
 - (3) Purpose or special significance of the absences.
 - (4) Duration of the absence.
- f) For consideration of discretionary absences, notice and request must be provided prior to the absence.

- g) In unique and specific circumstances, absences can be considered authorized and should not be reported as either lawful or unlawful. In these cases, students are to be considered present. Such circumstances are when a student is not physically in the classroom but remains under the direct supervision of MCPS. Examples include, but are not limited to:
 - (1) Service as a volunteer student aide in MCPS outdoor education programs.
 - (2) Sports participation
 - (3) Student government
 - (4) Field trips
 - (5) Health room visit
 - (6) Home and hospital teaching
 - (7) In-school suspension
- h) Students who are removed from school by their parent for more than 15 consecutive school days are to be withdrawn, and parents must be informed that the student will be withdrawn and that MCPS assumes that they will fulfill their responsibility to continue the student's education at the destination.

4. Monitoring Attendance

- a) The absence of students is reported to parents on the report card.
- b) The principal, in cooperation with the school faculty, establishes the school's procedures for follow-up on absences, annually submits the procedures to the community superintendent for approval by July 1, and distributes approved procedures to parents and students at the beginning of each school year.
- c) The Department of Student Services, in collaboration with other MCPS offices and outside agencies, will develop and implement a continuum of interventions designed to support regular school attendance.

- d) Unlawful absences should be considered disciplinary infractions that can result in nonacademic consequences as determined by the individual school's discipline committee and outlined in MCPS Regulation JFA-RA, Student Rights and Responsibilities. The consequences for this infraction would range from a minimum of a conference to a maximum of administrative detention. Schools should consider consequences that place emphasis on the importance of increasing student engagement in learning opportunities, including community service and other academic after-school learning experiences.
- e) Each school will establish a formal process to promote student attendance. This process will monitor data, provide targeted interventions, and include incentives.

B. Elementary School (Including Kindergarten)

- 1. At the beginning of the school year, elementary school principals will request that parents notify the school when their child is to be absent for any reason on any given day.
- 2. Whenever possible, parents of elementary school-age children will be contacted by noon of each first day of absence, if the parents have not previously notified the school of the absence.
- 3. Elementary school students with excessive absences and/or tardies, both lawful and unlawful, may be referred for appropriate intervention. At the discretion of the principal/designee, students who demonstrate a pattern of absences may be referred to appropriate staff and/or outside agencies for intensive interventions designed to increase regular attendance.

C. Middle Schools

Middle school students with excessive absences and/or tardies, both lawful and unlawful, may be referred for appropriate intervention. At the discretion of the principal/designee, students who demonstrate a pattern of absences may be referred to appropriate staff and/or outside agencies for intensive interventions designed to increase regular attendance.

D. High Schools

High school students with excessive absences and/or tardies, both lawful and unlawful, may be referred for appropriate intervention. At the discretion of the principal/designee, students who demonstrate a pattern of absences may be

referred to appropriate staff and/or outside agencies for intensive interventions designed to increase regular attendance.

Regulation History: Formerly Regulation No. 515-1, September 12, 1980 (directory information updated), revised December 1986; revised October 28, 1993; revised August 19, 1997; revised November 3, 2005; revised May 12, 2010.