



WHAT'S UP WITH ATTENDANCE?

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE IN A PANDEMIC



We know that there is a positive relationship between regular school attendance and student achievement. Regular school attendance can be impacted by conditions relating to a student's disability or mental healthcare needs. Some students may require medical or behavioral healthcare services that are only available during school hours.

Additionally, the Pandemic has created attendance challenges that include necessary home quarantine, COVID-19 illness, lack of transportation, and anxiety about returning to the school.

While some students are attending in person classes others are enrolled in distance learning programs, attendance policies vary from school to school and districts to district across Nevada. We offer the following information in response to concerns voiced by families about unclear and inconsistent attendance policies.

REQUIREMENTS IN NEVADA FOR PUBLIC SCHOOLS, CHARTER SCHOOLS AND VIRTUAL LEARNING:

Students between the ages of 7 and 18 are required to attend school until graduation.

Once a student is enrolled in kindergarten or first grade the school district's attendance policy applies.

Attendance requirements for preschoolers in school district programs are not addressed directly in the State law.

Parents will want to review the attendance requirements during the school enrollment process and may be asked to agree to follow the policy at that time. School districts should also send notices to parents to inform parents of any changes to the attendance policy. ⁽¹⁾ Each school district should inform parents and students of the potential impact of excessive absences on earning class credit and promotion to the next grade. ⁽²⁾

Developed in part under a grant from the U.S. Department of Education, # H328M200003. Endorsement is not assumed.



WHAT'S UP WITH ATTENDANCE?

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE IN A PANDEMIC



EXCUSED ABSENCES:

- Parents may give the school written evidence, i.e., a parent note, that is satisfactory to the school which explains that the student's physical or mental condition prevented the child from attending school. In most situations, the school will accept the parent note and excuse the absence. ⁽³⁾
- Parents may make request to the school in advance of absences. The teachers or principal shall give his or her written approval for a student to be absent if an emergency exists or upon the request of a parent. The student is only considered truant if they do not have approval of the teacher or principal. ⁽⁴⁾
- Nevada legislation recently clarified that a certificate in writing from a qualified physician, mental health professional or behavioral health professional which states that the child is not able to attend school must be accepted as satisfactory evidence by the school district. ⁽³⁾
- Excused absences must not negatively affect the STAR rating system of accountability for public schools. (SB249, 2021)

UNEXCUSED ABSENCES:

- A student's absence is generally unexcused when the school does not receive or does not accept the written evidence showing the absence is related to a medical or mental healthcare need. ⁽⁴⁾

STUDENTS RECEIVING SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES OR SECTION 504 ACCOMMODATIONS

- Both IEP's and Section 504 Plans can include accommodations that address absences based on the student's individualized needs.

Families play a key role by advocating for good instruction and they understand that attendance is tied to school success.

- 1. NRS 392.040
- 2. NRS 392.122
- 3. NRS 392.050
- 4. NRS 392.130
- 5. NRS 387.215
- 6. NAC 387.286

COVID-19 RELATED SITUATIONS:

- Students should not be penalized for absences related to COVID-19 isolation or quarantine; and schools should follow the current advice from local public health officials. Students should receive alternate options for instruction, parents will want to work with their student's school to ensure that learning continues. Late arrival and absences due to delays in transportation or staff shortages should not affect a student's attendance record.

INCORRECT SCHOOL ATTENDANCE RECORDS

- Incorrect school attendance records may lead to excessive absence and truancy referrals. Parents will want to make sure that they agree with the school on number of absences. If parents do not agree they should talk with the teacher or attendance office and document their conversations. Parents may also want to send a letter to the principal documenting their concerns. A school may withdraw a student if the student is absent more than 10 days in a row if the school can't locate the student or the reason for the absence is unknown. ⁽⁵⁾

PHYSICIAN VERIFIED ILLNESS OR DISABILITY

- A student who has a physician verified illness or a disability that keeps them from attending school, should not be counted absent when they are receiving at least 5 hours a week of individual instruction at home or in a medical facility under the supervision of a licensed teacher employed by the school district. This instruction may be in-person or through electronic telecommunication. ⁽⁶⁾

Contact Nevada PEP for more information, support, and assistance.

It is important for both parents and educators to advocate for students with disabilities to receive a Free Appropriate Public Education.

