



Indiana Department of Education

Dr. Katie Jenner, Secretary of Education

To: Superintendents and Principals

From: Catherine Danyluk, State Attendance Officer

Date: June 13, 2025

Subject: Updates to Indiana Attendance Guidelines

To ensure more students are attending school to maximize their future opportunities, Senate Enrolled Act (SEA) 482 requires the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) to:

- Establish guidance regarding chronic absenteeism,
- Provide a categorization for excused absences, and
- [Create a list of best practices](#) to prevent chronic absenteeism that will promote school attendance.

Pursuant to Indiana Code (IC) 20-33-2-3.2, “attend” means to be physically present: (1) in a school; or (2) at another location where the school’s educational program is being conducted (i.e. a work-based learning opportunity occurring outside the four walls of the classroom).

School corporations locally define “excused” and “unexcused” absences, and this memorandum serves to assist schools in defining and reporting attendance data and absences in accordance with new legislation. The following information delineates IDOE recommendations for defining these terms, legislative requirements, and guidance regarding Indiana’s attendance reporting requirements.

IC 20-18-2-2.4 defines “chronically absent” as missing ten percent (10%) or more of a school year for any reason.

Habitual Absence: IC 20-33-2-25 requires the superintendent or attendance officer to report a student who is habitually absent from school to an intake officer of the juvenile court or the Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS). SEA 282-2025 includes the responsibility for superintendents/attendance officers to report a child’s habitual truancy to the prosecuting attorney. Prosecuting attorneys must notify parents if an affidavit of habitual truancy is filed with their office.

IC 20-33-2-14 (b) requires the governing body of each school corporation to have a policy outlining the conditions for excused and unexcused absences. The policy must include the grounds for excused absences required by IC 20-33-2-14 through IC 20-33-2-17.8. Any absence



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that results in a student not attending at least 180 days in a school year must be in accordance with the governing body's policy to qualify as an excused absence.

IC 20-18-2-6.5 defines habitual truancy to include students absent from school for 10 or more days within a school year without being excused or being absent under a parental request filed with the school.

Legislative Requirements

IC 20-18-2-26.5 requires public school, including charter school, attendance officers to:

- Implement truancy prevention measures required under IC 20-33-2.5;
- Meet at least once annually with DCS and the intake officer for the juvenile court to discuss the effectiveness of truancy prevention measures (IC 20-33-2-39);
- Meet once annually with the State Attendance Officer (IC 20-33-2-39); and
- Establish a local truancy prevention policy (IC 20-33-2.5) that defines an “absent student” as a student who:
 - Is enrolled in kindergarten through grade 12, and
 - Is absent five days from school within a 10-week period without being excused (IC 20-33-2.5).
 - The policy must also specify that schools will notify absentee students’ parents of their responsibilities regarding their child’s attendance and participation in an attendance conference.

SEA 482 (IC 20-33-2-26 (8)(c)) denotes that before a prosecuting attorney files an affidavit, the prosecuting attorney may do the following:

- Conduct a meeting with the child, the child’s parent, school officials, and any relevant service providers.
- In preparation for a meeting, collaborate with the involved parties to develop an intervention plan to address the child’s truancy. The plan may include referrals to support services, counseling, academic assistance, or other resources the likelihood of further truancy.
- Make reasonable efforts to secure appropriate support services, including: mental services; family counseling; or educational support for the child and child's family, as applicable, for the purpose of addressing the root cause of truancy.
- Upon completion of the development of an intervention plan and meeting, the prosecuting attorney shall provide written notice to the child's parent summarizing the following: outcome of the meeting; services or other resources offered; and conditions for avoiding prosecution, if applicable.

SEA 482 (IC 20-33-8-16.5) requires effective July 1, 2025 except otherwise provided in IC 20-19-9-5 and IC 20-24-5-4.5(e), a public school, including a charter school, may not expel or



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suspend a student solely because the student is chronically absent or a habitual truant. This provision expires July 1, 2026.

Exception (Exempt) -students are counted as present

Under certain circumstances, the statute requires the school to authorize the absence and excuse of a student. In each of the following circumstances, the student is excused from school and is *not* to be recorded as absent, and is not to be penalized in any way by the school:

- Serving as a page or honoree of the Indiana General Assembly (IC 20-33-2-14)
- Serving on the precinct election board or as a helper to a political candidate or party on the day of a municipal, primary or general election (IC 20-33-2-15)
- Subpoenaed to testify in court (IC 20-33-2-16)
- Serving as an active duty member of the armed forces, including the National Guard for at least 15 days in a school year (IC 20-33-2-17)
- Serving with the Civil Air Patrol for up to 5 days (IC 20-33-2-17.2)
- Approved Educationally Related Non-Classroom Activity (IC 20-33-2-17.5).
- The student or a member of the student's household exhibits or participates in the Indiana State Fair for educational purposes (IC 20-33-2-17.7)
- HEA 1660 adds a new exception for a student who participates in a scheduled competition, exhibition, or event offered by the National FFA Organization, Indiana FFA Association, or 4-H Club (IC 20-33-2-17.8)

Non Exception (Exempt) Absences -students are excused and reported as absent

- **Administrator Approved** – This category could include an absence from school that has been reviewed and authorized by a school administrator. This approval is based on a variety of circumstances including but not limited to health issues, family emergencies, religious observations, or other personal/extenuating circumstances. The decision to approve is at the discretion of the school administrator, ensuring that the absence meets the criteria set forth by school policies.
- **Family Choice Planned** -This category could include an absence pre-arranged by the student's family for reasons such as vacations, family events, or other personal matters. This absence is generally considered a planned, non-emergency event that is scheduled in advance.
- **Family Choice Unplanned** – This category could include an absence that occurs unexpectedly due to unforeseen family circumstances or decisions such as a sudden emergency, an urgent need to attend to personal matters, School Nurse Request, weather, lack of transportation, or other impromptu situations. Even though the absence is not



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planned, it is still recognized by the school administration if it meets these criteria as determined by the school's policies.

- **Funeral/Bereavement** – This category could include an absence due to the death of a close family member or loved one that requires a student to attend a funeral or engage in related mourning and family responsibilities. The absence is approved based on the student's need to grieve, support their family, or participate in funeral-related activities
- **Medical** – This category could include an absence that occurs due to physical or mental illness, school avoidance, injury, or other health related conditions that require the student to seek treatment or recovery. This type of absence is excused when documented by a parent call in, a healthcare provider, or when the nature of the medical issue justifies the absence. The absence is approved based on the student's need for rest, medical care, or recovery that ensures the student's health and wellbeing are prioritized while maintaining compliance with school policies.
- **Religious** – This category could include an absence for the observance of religious holidays, practices, or events that are significant to a student's faith.

Unexcused Absences: An unexcused absence is any absence without authorization.

Providing Education for Students with Long-Term Medical Conditions: A long-term provider note is necessary when a student has been injured or suffers from an illness and is anticipated to be absent for a minimum of 20 instructional days over the course of the school year. 511 Indiana Administrative Code (IAC) 4-1.5-9 requires a school to provide instruction to students under these circumstances if the parent provides documentation from a licensed healthcare provider with prescriptive authority indicating the student will meet the 20-day criteria due to a medical condition. This long-term medical documentation provides the information necessary for a school to create a plan for meeting the student's educational needs during these absences. Further consultation with the licensed healthcare provider may be necessary to determine the student's ability to engage in educational activities and instruction during these absences. If the student is also a student with a disability, the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) case conference committee will determine services during these absences.

For additional information, refer to IDOE's [State Attendance Officer webpage](#) or contact [Catherine Danyluk](#), state attendance officer.