

**CHRONIC ABSENCE AND TRUANCY**

Note: The following administrative regulation may be revised to reflect the district personnel responsible for duties related to attendance supervision and matters related to chronic absence and truancy. Pursuant to Education Code 48240-48246, the district may appoint an attendance supervisor, join a consortium of districts to employ an attendance supervisor, or contract with the County Superintendent of Schools to supervise the attendance of district students. See AR 5113.11 - Attendance Supervision.

Education Code 48273 **mandates** that the district adopt rules and regulations related to reports of district referrals to a school attendance review board (SARB). See the section on "Reports" below for language fulfilling this mandate.

**Definitions**

Note: The following definition of "chronic absentee" is provided in Education Code 60901 for purposes of reporting student attendance within the California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System. This definition is also used in the template adopted by the State Board of Education to assist districts in completing the local control and accountability plan. Chronic absence includes absence for any reason (i.e., excused and/or unexcused absences).

*Chronic absentee* means a student who is absent for any reason on 10 percent or more of the school days in the school year, when the total number of days the student is absent is divided by the total number of days the student is enrolled and school was actually taught in the regular schools of the district, exclusive of Saturdays and Sundays. (Education Code 60901)

*Truant* means a student who is absent from school without a valid excuse three full days in one school year, or tardy or absent for more than any 30-minute period during the school day without a valid excuse on three occasions in one school year, or any combination thereof. (Education Code 48260)

*Habitual truant* means a student who has been reported as a truant three or more times within the same school year, provided the district has made a conscientious effort to hold at least one conference with the student and his/her parent/guardian after either of the two previous reports. (Education Code 48262, 48264.5)

*Chronic truant* means a student who has been absent from school without a valid excuse for 10 percent or more of the school days in one school year, from the date of enrollment to the current date, provided the district has met the requirements of Education Code 48260, 48260.5, 48261, 48262, 48263, and 48291. (Education Code 48263.6)

Note: As provided above, definitions of the various categories of truancy are based on the number of absences from school without a valid excuse. Education Code 48260 defines a "valid excuse," for purposes of classifying a student as a truant, as any of the reasons specified in Education Code 48205 (i.e., illness, quarantine, health services appointments, funeral service attendance, jury duty, illness or medical appointment of student's child, justifiable personal reasons, service on precinct board, time with family member called to active duty or on leave from active duty, and religious exercises), Education Code 48225.5 (i.e., entertainment or allied industries work permits and nonprofit organization performances), or other

## CHRONIC ABSENCE AND TRUANCY (continued)

reasons at the discretion of school administrators. AR 5113 - Absences and Excuses reflects the reasons that students may be excused from school pursuant to Education Code 48205 and provides information about methods of verification of student absences.

For purposes of classifying a student as a truant, *valid excuse* includes, but is not limited to, the reasons for which a student shall be excused from school pursuant to Education Code 48205 and 48225.5. A valid excuse may include other reasons that are within the discretion of school administrators and, based on the facts of the student's circumstances, are deemed to constitute a valid excuse. (Education Code 48260)

(cf. 5113 - Absences and Excuses)

(cf. 5113.2 - Work Permits)

### Addressing Chronic Absence

Note: The following **optional** section may be revised to reflect district practice.

For further information about strategies to address chronic absence, see CSBA's policy brief [Improving Student Achievement by Addressing Chronic Absence](#) and the California Department of Education's (CDE) [School Attendance Improvement Handbook](#). Also see AR 5113 - Absences and Excuses for language requiring students with frequent absences due to illness to provide written verification from a health care practitioner.

When a student is identified as a chronic absentee, the Superintendent or designee shall communicate with the student and his/her parents/guardians to determine the reason(s) for the excessive absences, ensure the student and parents/guardians are aware of the adverse consequences of poor attendance, and jointly develop a plan for improving the student's school attendance.

(cf. 5113.11 - Attendance Supervision)

(cf. 6020 - Parent Involvement)

The student may be referred to a student success team or school-site attendance review team to assist in evaluating his/her needs and identifying strategies and programs to assist him/her.

(cf. 5146 - Married/Pregnant/Parenting Students)

(cf. 5147 - Dropout Prevention)

(cf. 6164.2 - Guidance/Counseling Services)

(cf. 6164.5 - Student Success Teams)

(cf. 6173 - Education for Homeless Children)

(cf. 6173.1 - Education for Foster Youth)

(cf. 6173.2 - Education of Children of Military Families)

(cf. 6175 - Migrant Education Program)

## **CHRONIC ABSENCE AND TRUANCY (continued)**

A student who is struggling academically may be offered tutoring or other supplemental instruction, extended learning opportunities, and/or alternative educational options as appropriate.

*(cf. 6158 - Independent Study)*

*(cf. 6176 - Weekend/Saturday Classes)*

*(cf. 6178.1 - Work-Based Learning)*

*(cf. 6179 - Supplemental Instruction)*

*(cf. 6181 - Alternative Schools/Programs of Choice)*

*(cf. 6183 - Home and Hospital Instruction)*

*(cf. 6184 - Continuation Education)*

Whenever chronic absenteeism is linked to a health issue or nonschool condition, the Superintendent or designee may recommend school or community resources and/or collaborate with community agencies and organizations to address the needs of the student and his/her family.

*(cf. 1020 - Youth Services)*

*(cf. 5141.6 - School Health Services)*

### **Addressing Truancy**

An attendance supervisor or designee, peace officer, probation officer, or school administrator or designee may, as applicable, arrest or assume temporary custody during school hours of any minor student found away from his/her home who is absent from school without a valid excuse. Any person arresting or assuming temporary custody of a minor student shall deliver the student and make reports in accordance with Education Code 48265 and 48266. (Education Code 48264, 48265, 48266)

*(cf. 3515.3 - District Police/Security Department)*

The Superintendent or designee shall investigate a complaint from any person that a parent/guardian has violated the state compulsory education laws contained in Education Code 48200-48341. (Education Code 48290)

When a student has been identified as a truant as defined above, the following steps shall be implemented based on the number of truancies he/she has committed:

1. Initial truancy

- a. The student shall be reported to the Superintendent or designee. (Education Code 48260)

## CHRONIC ABSENCE AND TRUANCY (continued)

Note: When a student is classified as truant, Education Code 48260.5 requires notification of his/her parents/guardians by the most cost-effective method possible, which may include email or a telephone call. The CDE's web site and [School Attendance Improvement Handbook](#) provide sample letters.

- b. The student's parent/guardian shall be notified by the most cost-effective method possible, which may include email or a telephone call, that: (Education Code 48260.5)
  - (1) The student is truant.
  - (2) The parent/guardian is obligated to compel the student to attend school. If the parent/guardian fails to meet this obligation, he/she may be guilty of an infraction of the law and subject to prosecution pursuant to Education Code 48290-48296.
  - (3) Alternative educational programs are available in the district.
  - (4) The parent/guardian has the right to meet with appropriate school personnel to discuss solutions to the student's truancy.
  - (5) The student may be subject to arrest or held in temporary custody by a probation officer, a peace officer, a school administrator or designee, or attendance supervisor or designee pursuant to Education Code 48264 if found away from home and absent from school without a valid excuse.
  - (6) The student may be subject to suspension, restriction, or delay of his/her driving privilege pursuant to Vehicle Code 13202.7.
  - (7) It is recommended that the parent/guardian accompany the student to school and attend classes with the student for one day.

*(cf. 5145.6 - Parental Notifications)*

- c. The student may be required to attend makeup classes on one day of a weekend pursuant to Education Code 37223. (Education Code 48264.5)
- d. The student and, as appropriate, his/her parent/guardian may be requested to attend a meeting with a school counselor or other school designee to discuss the root causes of the attendance issue and develop a joint plan to improve the student's attendance. (Education Code 48264.5)

**CHRONIC ABSENCE AND TRUANCY (continued)**

Note: The following **optional** item is for use by districts in which there is no county SARB and the county's district attorney or probation officer has elected to participate in a truancy mediation program pursuant to Education Code 48260.6.

- e. The Superintendent or designee may notify the district attorney and/or probation officer of the student's name and the name and address of his/her parents/guardians. (Education Code 48260.6)
2. Second truancy
  - a. Any student who has once been reported as a truant shall again be reported to the Superintendent or designee as a truant if he/she is absent from school without a valid excuse one or more days or is tardy on one or more days during the school year. (Education Code 48261)
  - b. The student may be required to attend makeup classes on one day of a weekend pursuant to Education Code 37223. (Education Code 48264.5)
  - c. The student may be assigned to an after-school or weekend study program within the county. If the student fails to successfully complete this study program, he/she shall be subject to item #3 below. (Education Code 48264.5)

Note: Education Code 48262 provides that a student cannot be classified as a habitual truant (item #3 below) until the district has made a conscientious effort to hold at least one conference with the student and his/her parent/guardian after the attendance supervisor has been notified of either the first or second truancy. Education Code 48262 defines "conscientious effort," for purposes of this section, as attempting to communicate with the parent/guardian at least once using the most cost-effective method possible, which may include email or a telephone call. Thus, the following paragraph requires such communication in the event of the second truancy.

- d. An appropriate district staff member shall make a conscientious effort to hold at least one conference with the student and his/her parent/guardian by communicating with the parent/guardian at least once using the most cost-effective method possible, which may include email or a telephone call. (Education Code 48262)
- e. The student may be given a written warning by a peace officer. A record of that warning may be kept at the school for not less than two years or until the student graduates or transfers from the school. If the student transfers, the record may be forwarded to the new school. (Education Code 48264.5)

## CHRONIC ABSENCE AND TRUANCY (continued)

Note: The following **optional** item is for use by districts in which there is no county SARB and the county's district attorney or probation officer has elected to participate in a truancy mediation program. Pursuant to Education Code 48260.6, if the district notifies the district attorney and/or probation officer that a student continues to be classified as a truant after proper notification to the parents/guardians as described in item #1b above, the district attorney or probation officer may request a meeting with the student and his/her parents/guardians to discuss the possible legal consequences of the student's truancy.

- f. The Superintendent or designee may notify the district attorney and/or probation officer when the student continues to be classified as a truant after the parents/guardians have been notified in accordance with item #1b above. (Education Code 48260.6)

3. Third truancy (habitual truancy)

Note: Education Code 48263 and 48264.5 authorize the district to refer habitual truants to a SARB, a county truancy mediation program, or a comparable program for services. The district should revise the following items to reflect the option(s) available in the district.

According to the CDE's School Attendance Improvement Handbook, prior to referring a truant student to a SARB or county truancy mediation program, some districts initiate an intermediate step, such as a school-site attendance review team or student success team. Districts that have established such an intermediate step may revise the following item accordingly.

- a. A student who is habitually truant, irregular in school attendance, or habitually insubordinate or disorderly during attendance at school may be referred to, and required to attend, a school attendance review board (SARB) program, a truancy mediation program established by the district attorney or the probation officer, or a comparable program deemed acceptable by the Superintendent or designee. (Education Code 48263, 48264.5)

*(cf. 5113.12 - District School Attendance Review Board)*

- b. Upon making a referral to the SARB or the probation department, the Superintendent or designee shall provide the student and parent/guardian, in writing, the name and address of the SARB or probation department and the reason for the referral. This notice shall indicate that the student and parent/guardian shall be required, along with the district staff person making the referral, to meet with the SARB or a probation officer to consider a proper disposition of the referral. (Education Code 48263)
- c. If the student does not successfully complete the truancy mediation program or other similar program, he/she shall be subject to item #4 below. (Education Code 48264.5)

## CHRONIC ABSENCE AND TRUANCY (continued)

Note: Pursuant to Education Code 48263, the SARB or probation officer may direct a student and/or the student's parents/guardians to make use of available community services and may require satisfactory evidence of participation. If the SARB or probation officer determines that available community resources cannot resolve the problem, or if the student and/or parents/guardians have failed to respond to the directives of the SARB or probation officer, the SARB may so notify the district attorney and/or probation officer, or the probation officer may notify the district attorney provided the district attorney or probation officer participates in a truancy mediation program. If the county has not established a SARB, the district may make this finding and notification.

The following paragraph is for use by districts in which the county has not established a SARB and the county's district attorney or probation officer has elected to participate in a truancy mediation program.

- d. If the Superintendent or designee determines that available community services cannot resolve the problem of the truant or insubordinate student or if the student and/or his/her parents/guardians have failed to respond to the directives of the district or to services provided, the Superintendent or designee may so notify the district attorney and/or the probation officer. (Education Code 48263)

### 4. Fourth truancy

- a. Upon his/her fourth truancy within the same school year, the student may be referred to the jurisdiction of the juvenile court. (Education Code 48264.5; Welfare and Institutions Code 601)

Note: Pursuant to Education Code 48264.5 and Welfare and Institutions Code 601, a student coming within the jurisdiction of the juvenile court may be adjudged a ward of the court and required to perform community service, pay a fine, attend a court-approved truancy prevention program, and/or lose driving privileges.

In L.A. v. Superior Court of San Diego County, a court of appeal held that juvenile court judges have the authority to imprison a truant as a last resort if the student commits an egregious violation of a court order, less restrictive alternatives have proved ineffective, and the student is confined separately from youths held for criminal violations.

- b. If a student has been adjudged by the county juvenile court to be a habitual truant, the Superintendent or designee shall notify the juvenile court and the student's probation or parole officer whenever the student is truant or tardy on one or more days without a valid excuse in the same or succeeding school year, or is habitually insubordinate or disorderly at school. The juvenile court and probation or parole officer shall be notified within 10 days of the violation. (Education Code 48267)

## CHRONIC ABSENCE AND TRUANCY (continued)

Note: Item #5 below is for use by districts that offer any of grades K-8. Penal Code 270.1 states that a parent/guardian of a "chronic truant" who is at least six years old and is in any of grades K-8 is guilty of a misdemeanor punishable by a fine and/or imprisonment if he/she has failed to reasonably supervise and encourage the student's school attendance and has been offered language-accessible support services to address the student's truancy. Pursuant to Penal Code 270.1, a parent/guardian found guilty of a misdemeanor may participate in a program established by a superior court, if available, which includes periodic meetings with district representatives and service referrals.

5. Chronic truancy (unexcused absence for 10 percent of school days)
  - a. The Superintendent or designee shall ensure that the student's parents/guardians are offered language-accessible support services to address the student's truancy.
  - b. If a chronically truant student is at least age six years and is in any of grades K-8, the Superintendent or designee shall notify the student's parents/guardians that failure to reasonably supervise and encourage the student's school attendance may result in the parent/guardian being found guilty of a misdemeanor pursuant to Penal Code 270.1.

### Records

Note: The following **optional** paragraph may be revised to reflect district practice. The CDE's School Attendance Review Board Handbook cautions that it is important to keep accurate and complete records of any violations of compulsory school attendance laws because such records may ultimately be introduced as evidence in a trial for truancy.

The Superintendent or designee shall maintain accurate attendance records for students identified as habitual or chronic truants. The Superintendent or designee also shall document all contacts with a student and his/her parent/guardian regarding the student's attendance, including a summary of all conversations and a record of all intervention efforts.

*(cf. 5125 - Student Records)*

Note: Education Code 48273 **mandates** that the district adopt rules and regulations for the purpose of gathering data and making a report to the County Superintendent of Schools regarding SARB referrals. The CDE's web site provides a model annual summary report form.

The Superintendent or designee shall gather and transmit to the County Superintendent of Schools the number and types of referrals made to the SARB and of requests for petitions made to the juvenile court. (Education Code 48273)