



## ***Truancy Handbook***

Developed: September 30, 2022

Updated August 1, 2023

**This handbook was developed to serve as guidance regarding truancy and homelessness for Arbor Park School District 145 students and families.**

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# Truancy

## Purpose

Arbor Park School District 145 follows the recommendations on attendance and its definition as set by the Illinois State Board of Education. Specific definitions for the following: truancy, “excused absence”, “unexcused absence,” as set forth by the school district on its attendance policy and code of conduct can be found on our district website and in each school’s handbook. The Truancy Handbook shall serve as guidance for each school.

## Definition of Truancy

### School Code

Arbor Park School District 145 adheres to the legislation regarding compulsory attendance as required by Illinois School Code. The definition of truancy is as follows in the pursuant section from Illinois School Code.

*(105 ILCS 5/26-2a) (from Ch. 122, par. 26-2a) Sec. 26-2a.*

*A "truant" is defined as a child who is subject to compulsory school attendance and who is absent without valid cause, as defined under this Section, from such attendance for more than 1% but less than 5% of the past 180 school days.*

*"Valid cause" for absence shall be illness, observance of a religious holiday, death in the immediate family, family emergency, and shall include such other situations beyond the control of the student as determined by the board of education in each district, or such other circumstances which cause reasonable concern to the parent for the mental, emotional, or physical health or safety of the student.*

*"Chronic or habitual truant" shall be defined as a child who is subject to compulsory school attendance and who is absent without valid cause from such attendance for 5% or more of the previous 180 regular attendance days.*

*"Truant minor" is defined as a chronic truant to whom supportive services, including prevention, diagnostic, intervention and remedial services, alternative programs and other school and community resources have been provided and have failed to result in the cessation of chronic truancy, or have been offered and refused.*

*"Religion" for the purposes of this Article, includes all aspects of religious observance and practice, as well as belief.*

*(Source: P.A. 100-810, eff. 1-1-19; 100-918, eff. 8-17-18; 101-81, eff. 7-12-19.)*

# Truancy:

## Excused and Unexcused Absences

### **Process**

Arbor Park School District 145 has a process for referrals for truancy. This process was developed by the superintendent, assistance superintendent, principals, community liaison, and district staff.

#### **Step 1**

When a child is absent and the Parent/Guardian has not communicated to the school, the school's secretary will call as an attempt to check on the student's well-being. The school secretary will enter a given reason for the absence into the school's database. If the student's Parent/Guardian is not available, an auto absence notification will be sent inquiring the reason for the absence and request for the Parent/Guardian to communicate the school.

#### **Step 2**

Upon the student receiving 5 absences, in addition to Step 1, the Parent/Guardian will receive a follow up call from the school administrator or representative. This will include a discussion providing available supports and the opportunity for the school to work with the family in increasing communication and attendance.

#### **Step 3**

Upon the student receiving 8 absences, in addition to Step 1 and Step 2, the Parent/Guardian will be sent a truancy notification letter that indicates their child is at-risk in becoming chronically absent. This letter will include a request to meet in person with the school principal or assistant principal. The school may determine at this time to involve the school's support staff.


#### **Step 4**

Upon the student receiving 11 absences, in addition to Steps 1-3, the community liaison and school support staff member will contact the family via a home visit, requesting an in-person meeting with the principal or assistant principal and community liaison. This meeting will assist in determining what, if any, community-based resources are available to assist the family. Parents will also receive a second truancy letter which will be sent by certified mail outlining the student's current attendance status and school concerns.


#### **Step 5**

Upon the student receiving 12 or more absences, Arbor Park School District 145 will connect with community partners to conduct a home visit and to determine the next steps within the truancy process.

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# Truancy Process Excused/Unexcused Absences



Step 1:

School secretary will contact parent or guardian by phone. No contact =Auto notification for parent to contact school.

Step 2:

5 absences = Step 1 and call by school administrator or school representative.

Step 3:

8 absences = Step 1, Step 2, a letter regarding at-risk for chronic absences and request for meeting.

Step 4:

11 absences = Steps 1, 2, and 3, a home visit, request to meet in person with principal/ designee, community liaison and letter.

Step 5:

12 absences and above = home visit with community partners.

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### Initial Truancy Notice

Date:

Dear Parent/Guardian of:

**This letter is to bring to your attention your child’s current attendance status and to make you aware of the current pattern of poor school attendance as indicated on the attached Student Attendance Report.**

Illinois Law states that the individual named as custodial parent or guardian of the named child, is held responsible for that child’s school attendance. The Law further states that students enrolled in school **MUST** attend school on a regular basis. Therefore, as a parent or guardian of this child, **YOU** are responsible for regular school attendance. Please note that this notice is an official document of truant behavior and is evidence of effort made by the school and district to correct this matter. **Failure to do so may hinder your child’s progress in school.**

Attendance is an essential component to a student’s educational success. Often, the number of days those students are absent accumulate without parents realizing how many days have been missed. If there are medical or personal circumstances that are currently impacting your child’s attendance, it is imperative that you contact the school administrator to further discuss. If you no longer reside within our district boundaries, please contact the school secretary for the next steps.

This letter serves as the Initial Truancy Notice as stated in the Illinois School Code Truancy Law. Please ensure your child’s attendance at school so that you are in compliance with the Illinois Truancy Law. Please contact your child’s school immediately to rectify this pattern of truant behavior. Active involvement and positive motivation in your student’s education is key to their success in life and to their perception of the importance of regular school attendance.

To date, your child has missed \_\_\_\_\_ days out of \_\_\_\_\_ days this school year. When we review the number of days missed, this can also be interpreted as \_\_\_\_\_ percentage of academic and instructional time missed with their teachers. This does negatively impact the educational delivery your child is receiving in meeting their educational goals.

The following are parental recommendations for truancy prevention:

- 1) Schedule a formal meeting with the school principal or assistant principal to discuss attendance records and issues.
- 2) Seek assistance from the school clinical team to address possible underlying causes for the truancy.
- 3) Establish home routines that support adequate rest and morning preparedness for school attendance.

Thank you for your time and attention to this official notice.

Sincerely,



### Second Truancy Notice

Date:

Dear Parent/Guardian of:

You were notified by the phone on **(date)** and again on, **(date)** which included a letter on **(date)** regarding your child's excessive absences. A formal meeting was requested on both occasions. You were informed and it was requested that you comply with Illinois state compulsory school attendance laws. You were further informed that you and/or your child would be held responsible for any violation of such laws. Unfortunately, your child's attendance has not improved and continues to be truant. As of this writing, your child has been marked as a chronic and habitual truant as indicated on the enclosed report.

Our records indicate that your child has missed \_\_\_\_\_ days out of \_\_\_\_\_ days this school year. This is \_\_\_\_\_ percentage of academic and instructional time missed with their teachers. Not only does this excessive truancy negatively impact the educational delivery your child is receiving in meeting their educational goals but also negatively impacts their relationships with others in the school community.

**You have been, and continue to be, notified that your child must report to school immediately and have continuous and consecutive attendance throughout the school year.** This is your final notice. There is more at stake than your noncompliance with state attendance laws and possible legal involvement: your child's education is suffering due to poor attendance.

Including this notice, you have received prior calls and a letter from this office, as part of our process to support your child in their attendance. If your child's attendance does not improve the school will have no other choice but to reach out to our local authorities for guidance.

This is a very serious matter.

Please reach out to the school's office to schedule an appointment with the principal.

Sincerely,

## STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE FORM

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Grade: \_\_\_\_\_ School: \_\_\_\_\_

Why is it difficult to come to school?

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sick/health problems                           | <input type="checkbox"/> I can't read very well                                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Stay up too late                               | <input type="checkbox"/> I can't see very well                                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> No clothes to wear                             | <input type="checkbox"/> Some subjects are challenging (math, reading, others)      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I'm depressed                                  | <input type="checkbox"/> My weight bothers me                                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Medication Issues                              | <input type="checkbox"/> Gang pressure  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I have problems at home                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Drug abuse   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Parents do not care if I come to school        | <input type="checkbox"/> Peer Pressure  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> My parent(s) are sick and need my help at home | <input type="checkbox"/> Someone is bullying me                                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I have to watch my sister/brother              | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation problems                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I am shy                                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Problems with school staff, teachers, administration, etc. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> School is boring                               | <input type="checkbox"/> I struggle with sleeping/waking up on time                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I have trouble writing                         | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____  |
- \_\_\_\_\_

Write any questions or concerns below that you might have.

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**TRUANCY PLAN B**

**STUDENT:** \_\_\_\_\_ **DATE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**GRADE LEVEL:** \_\_\_\_\_ **CURRENT ATTENDANCE :** \_\_\_\_\_

**WHO IS GOING TO INITIATE THE CONVERSATION, WHEN, AND WHERE?**

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**HYPOTHESIS OF BARRIERS CAUSING TRAUNCY:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**STUDENT LAGGING SKILLS:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**CHALLENGING BEHAVIORS THAT IMPACT ATTENDANCE:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**WHAT SOLUTIONS DOES THE STUDENT HAVE TO IMPROVE SCHOOL ATTENDANCE?**

**INCLUDE GOALS** \_\_\_\_\_

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