

# Cherokee County Schools

## Attendance – Truancy - Chronic Absenteeism

Students enrolled in Cherokee County Schools are expected to attend school each day of the 180 day school year. Any student who is absent from school is required to present an excuse in compliance with the criteria established in this policy for the absence to be considered lawful. (Board Policy-JA/JE/JH/JH-R)

### Attendance During COVID-19

For in-person instruction, student attendance will be documented as normal. When students are receiving out of class instruction, their attendance is based upon work completed. Normal attendance/truancy rules apply.

### Lawful Absences

Students will be considered lawfully absent under the following circumstances:

- \*The student is ill and his/her attendance in school would endanger his/her health or the health of others. (Doctor diagnosis or Department of Health)
- \*The student experiences a death in the immediate family (lawful absences limited to three (3) days per occurrence). Immediate family is defined to include father, mother, sibling, grandparents, in-laws, of the same degree or a resident of the household.
- \*The student has a chronic illness certified, upon diagnosis, and at the beginning of every new school year by a physician.
- \*The student has periods of hospitalization or extended medical care by a physician, which are not long enough to warrant homebound instruction, as approved by the principal.
- \*The student has absences due to health related conditions (ie. Medical, dental, etc.) Appointments must be verified by a physician or clinic personnel.
- \*The student is absent due to a recognized religious holiday of his/her faith. Notification prior to the absence is required.
- \*Other absences not covered above must be approved in advance by the principal.

### Unlawful (Unexcused) Absences

Students will be considered unlawfully absent under the following circumstances:

- \*The student is absent without acceptable cause **with or without** the knowledge of his/her parents/legal guardian.
- \*The student is suspended out of school for violations of the school discipline policy.
- \*Any absences not considered lawful in the preceding section are judged to be unlawful or unexcused for purposes of implementation of this policy.

## Lawful Excuses

- 1) An excuse written and signed by the parent/legal guardian is required for all absences. The excuse must include the reason for the absence and the date(s) of the absence(s). **Parent/legal guardian notes will be accepted without physician confirmation for up to five (5) absences in a school year. Parent notes six (6) and beyond will be recorded as unexcused.**
- 2) A physician's verification of absences due to illness is required for any absences above five (5) unlawful days in a school year.
- 3) A physician or clinic staff verification of absences due to medical, dental, or clinic appointments is required in all instances.
- 4) **All excuses** must be presented within 3 to 5 days of the absence from school and the student's return to school. The principal may make an exception to the 3 to 5 day limit for cause.
- 5) The principal is appointed as the board's designee to review all absences after a student has been absent for five (5) days per semester or ten (10) days per year.

## Truancy

The state of South Carolina uses a three-tiered approach for defining the varying levels of truant behavior. A child is deemed to be a truant, a habitual truant, or a chronic truant depending on the surrounding circumstances, as described below:

**Truant:** A child, at least 6 but not yet 17 years old, who:

-Accumulates three (3) consecutive unlawful absences or a total of five (5) unlawful absences.

**Habitual Truant:** A child, at least 12 but not yet 17 years old who:

-Fails to comply with the intervention plan developed by the school, the child, the parents/guardians, and **accumulates two or more additional unlawful absences.**

**Chronic Truant:** A child, at least 12 but not yet 17 years old, who:

-Has been through the school intervention process, has reached the level of a habitual truant (and has been referred to family court and placed under an order to attend school) and continues to accumulate unlawful absences.

**Students attending CCSD 3K and 4K programs may be dropped from the program for excessive absences from school. Principals have the authority to allow exceptions based on medical notes, etc.**

**\*Students, ages 6-11, who are continually truant will be referred to DSS.**

**\*Students, ages 12-16, who are habitually and/or chronically truant will be referred to DSS/DJJ.**

## Chronic Absenteeism

Under the guidance of the Federal Office of Civil Rights, the South Carolina Department of Education is now requiring all SC school districts to report chronically absent students. Research shows that students with a history of “chronic absenteeism” face a serious risk of falling behind in school, thus making it more difficult for them to succeed in the classroom. **As part of these new requirements, South Carolina elementary students will now be considered “absent” if they miss 50% of their instructional day for any reason, regardless if the absence is excused or unexcused.**

\*Any student in grades K-12 who misses 50% or more of the instructional day for ANY reason for 10% or more of the enrollment period.

\*All types of absences contribute to Chronic Absenteeism.

- Excused
- Unexcused
- Suspensions

\*A student is absent if he/she is not physically on school grounds and is not participating in instruction or instruction related activities at an approved off-grounds location for the school day.

## Chronic Illness

Chronic illness is for students who may miss an excessive amount of school for medical issues. Students must submit a chronic illness form completed and signed by the physician who diagnoses or is treating the condition. **Chronic illness documentation only covers future absences and does not excuse previous absences.** Periodic updates, at least every semester, of the chronic illness forms are required. **Parents must still write notes referring absences due to the chronic illness diagnosis.**

## Tardies

All students, 4K through 12<sup>th</sup> grade, are expected to be on time to school each day. Tardies at the middle school and high school level will result in discipline at the respective schools. Excessive tardies to school will be handled in a similar way to excessive absences, and students may be referred to the truancy officer at the district office. Also, attendance is taken and credit is received period by period (middle and high school), therefore excessive tardies will cause a student to lose credit in periods missed.

## Early Dismissals

Students are expected to complete the school day each day. Excessive early dismissals from school will be handled in a similar way to excessive absences, and students may be referred to the truancy officer at the district office. Also, attendance is taken and credit is received period by period (middle and high school), therefore excessive early dismissals will cause a student to lose credit in periods missed.

## AIP (Attendance Intervention Plan)

When a student is unlawfully absent for three (3) consecutive days or a total of five (5) unlawful days, the building administration will take steps to intervene in order to prevent truant behavior and improve future attendance. **Days absent due to suspension are not considered a part of the total for a truancy referral.** When a student is unlawfully absent for four (4) consecutive days or six (6) total days, the school will contact the parent/guardian. If a student/family fail to respond and participate in the student’s intervention plan, then the student and family will be referred to CSSD Coordinator of Attendance, Truancy, and Discipline for violation of the compulsory school attendance law. The student will be referred to the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) and/or the Department of Social Services (DSS) when the student accrues 10 unlawful absences.

## Educational Neglect

- Parents who neglect to enroll their child or refuse to make their child attend school, upon conviction, may be fined up to **fifty (\$50) dollars** or imprisoned for up to **thirty (30) days** for **each absence**. S.C. Code Ann. § 59-65-20 (2004).
- It may be considered educational neglect if a child is accumulating unlawful absences and the school's efforts to help the child attend regularly fail because of the parent's refusal to cooperate. S.C. Code Ann. § 63-7- 20(4)(c) (2010).

## Course Credit/Failure Due To Attendance

Student attendance may be a factor in final grades. Excessive absences can lead to missed tests, assignments not completed, and failure to adequately master concepts taught. In any of these cases, a student should receive a grade reflecting work completed to date and will be allowed time to complete makeup work. A student will receive an "F" if he/she does not satisfactorily finish course requirements or misses school beyond the allowable number by law.

\*Attendance is taken and credit is received period by period. Excessive tardies and dismissals may cause a student to lose credit in periods missed.

\*Students in high school and/or middle school who are taking classes to earn Carnegie Units may be denied credit if they accumulate eleven (11) or more unlawful absences in a yearlong course or six (6) or more unlawful absence in a half year/block course.

\* Students in high school and/or middle school who are taking classes to earn Carnegie Units may be denied credit if they accumulate, lawfully or unlawfully, sixteen (16) or more unlawful absences in a yearlong course or eight (8) or more unlawful absence in a half year/block course.

\*Students who accrue ten (10) consecutive unlawful absences will be dropped from the school's roster.

### **Exceptions to absences and course credit:**

\* Lawful absences in excess of up to ten (10) days for a block/half year class or twenty one (21) for a yearlong class may be granted by the principal if the student has shown acceptable mastery of the course content as demonstrated by a grade of a C or above. The principal may approve lawful absences up to ten (10) days for a block/half year class or twenty one (21) days for a yearlong class ONLY for the following reasons:

1) **Documented Chronic Illness** (Chronic illness must be diagnosed by a physician-excuses for absences must still be written). Updated every year and again each semester.

2) **Medical or Hospital Care** of insufficient duration to require medical homebound instruction.

## Credits For Promotion/Graduation

For a student to be promoted to the next grade level, he/she must (at minimum) earn the following course credits:

- 10<sup>th</sup> Grade – 5 course credits
- 11<sup>th</sup> Grade – 10 course credits
- 12<sup>th</sup> Grade – 17 course credits
- Graduate – 24 course credits

## Homebound

If a student is chronically absent because of a medical issue, families may apply for homebound services through the guidance department at the student's school. Medical documentation justifying the need for homebound services must be provided when applying. All homebound applications must be approved by district level administration. **Applications for homebound services can be denied.**

## Online/Virtual School

Current CCSD students and/or students living in the CCSD attendance zone are required to enroll in school each year between the ages of 6 and 16. If you choose to enroll your child in an online/virtual school:

- a) It must be recognized as an accredited program in the state of South Carolina.
- b) Documentation of enrollment in the online/virtual school must be up to date and provided to the student's "home school."

Not all online/virtual schools accept students under high school age, and most will not accept applications from students that are truant, expelled, or in poor behavioral standing in their current school.

## Homeschooling

CCSD parents who wish to home school their student(s) must withdraw the student from CCSD schools and are encouraged to enroll in the South Carolina Home School Association. A student can only be homeschooled if a parent/legal guardian has a high school diploma. When re-enrolling a student after a student has been home school, please provide documentation of the student's academic progress while being home schooled.

## Adult Education

Students that have turned 17 may apply to finish school in the CCSD Adult Education Program.

\*Students with a minimum of 17 credits may complete classes and earn their Gaffney High or Blacksburg High diploma.

\*Students with less than 17 credits may complete courses to earn a GED.

Students may be denied participation in the Adult Ed Program for excessive absences or disruptive behavior.

## Attendance Zones

Students are required to attend school in the attendance zone where they permanently reside. Families may apply to attend school in a different attendance zone for the following year through "School Choice". Principals accept applications annually during the School Choice window in **February**. Applications to transfer schools through school choice are reviewed by school level administration. Attendance, grades, and behavior will be considered when reviewing the application. Not all applications for transfer are accepted.

## McKinney-Vento Act

Families considered homeless can speak with the school guidance department or district regarding enrollment at that school under the McKinney-Vento Act for Homeless Education.

## Withdrawing Students

Families enrolling their child(ren) in a different school, must first withdraw their child from their current CCSD school. Only a parent/legal guardian may withdraw a student. Student records will be sent to the child's new school upon request from the new school.

## Enrolling Students

Families enrolling their student(s) in CCSD must complete proper paperwork at the student's school and provide the following (if not already on file in the district):

- a) Birth Certificate
- b) Immunization Records
- c) 2 Proofs of Residency
- d) Name, address, and phone number of previous school attended

<b>Acceptable Proofs of Residency</b>	<b>Not Acceptable Proofs of Residency</b>
*Lease/Rental agreement *Mortgage statement *Documentation of Property Ownership *Power bill *Water bill *Gas bill *Landline phone/wifi bill *Cable/Satellite TV bill *Government assistance check/mail *Bank Statements *Home/Rental Insurance Documentation *Medical Insurance Documentation *Paycheck stub *Property Tax Notice *Letter from a shelter/motel *Letter from employer if employer is providing housing	*Passport *Driver's license *Cell Phone bill *Junk mail *Credit card bill *Library card *Tax return docs *Personal checks

## Transferring Schools Within The District

Students may transfer to another school in CCSD if:

- 1) The student's family has moved and established permanent residency in a different attendance zone.
- 2) The student's family has applied for School Choice during the month of February and been accepted.
- 3) The principal also has the authority to approve/deny a student transfer at any point during the year if a family does not live in that school's attendance zone.

## School Choice

Each student will be assigned to a school that serves his/her legal place of residence as determined by the board for the current school year. Students may request a transfer to a school of choice within the district. Students must provide their own transportation if they attend a school outside of their assigned attendance area. Requests for school choice for the following year should be made in writing annually during the month of February. Requests should be made to the principal of the receiving school and will not be changed during a school year. Parents will be notified in writing stating their acceptance status by March 31st.

The following provisions apply for school choice acceptance: Attendance, Discipline referrals, Student-to-teacher ratio at the requested school. Proof of residency - 2 forms required.

A child with a disability may be assigned to attend school in another building if that facility houses the appropriate special education program for that child. (*Transportation to these programs is provided by the district.*) Otherwise, the district, through the state transportation program, will only provide transportation for students living in the district who reside more than one and one-half miles from the school in their assigned attendance zone.

The school district has the right, if administration deems necessary, to change, re-open, or extend the school choice application window.

***4K*** – Students registering for 4K must register at the school they are zoned for. Not all 4K students accepted are guaranteed a spot at the school he/she is zoned for. Placement will be determined by space and availability.

***Elementary School (5K - 5<sup>th</sup> Grade)*** – Families who wish for their student(s) to attend an elementary school outside of their zone must apply for school choice in February. Students who have already been accepted for school choice in previous years are required to reapply each year. School administration reserves the right to refer a student back to their zoned school at the end of the school year if attendance and/or discipline are a concern.

***Middle School*** – Families who wish for their student(s) to attend a middle school outside of their zone must apply for school choice in February. Students who have already been accepted for school choice in previous years are required to reapply each year to the same middle school. ***Students who attend an elementary school out of zone for any reason (Exception: Student receiving Special Ed Services and are assigned to a particular school), must apply for school choice if their residence is outside of the zone the middle school they wish to attend.*** School administration reserves the right to refer a student back to their zoned school at the end of the school year if attendance and/or discipline are a concern.

***High School*** – Families who wish for their student(s) to attend a high school outside of their zone must apply for school choice in February. Students who have already been accepted for school choice in previous years are required to reapply each year to the same high school. ***Students who attend a middle school out of zone for any reason (Exception: Student receiving Special Ed Services and are assigned to a particular school), must apply for school choice if their residence is outside of the zone the high school they wish to attend.*** School administration reserves the right to refer a student back to their zoned school at the end of the school year if attendance and/or discipline are a concern.

