

IMPORTANT

Portage Area School District

Standardized Attendance Procedures

Daily attendance is critical to the success of our students, school and district. We ask that parents and caregivers make every attempt to have their child at school on a daily basis. We understand that on occasion students fall ill and must be kept home for both their care and the good of our student body and staff. However, we ask that parents/caregivers use sound judgment when having students miss school for reasons other than illness. Often these types of absences place students at a disadvantage. They may miss important instruction or experiences that are critical to their success in the classroom. In addition, such absences place a significant burden on the absent student, their classmates and teachers as instruction needs to be revisited, therefore slowing the pace and/or limiting content that is covered.

Pennsylvania school attendance laws allow for school districts to define what constitutes a legal absence from school. The Portage Area School District recognizes the following types of absences as “excused” if a signed and dated excuse is provided by the parent/caregiver **WITHIN 3 school days** of the student’s return to school. There will be no exceptions.

Valid reasons for absences include:

1. *Illness*
2. *Recovery from and accident*
3. *Required court appearance*
4. *Other urgent reasons approved by administration*
5. *Approved religious holidays*
6. *Pre-approved educational travel (form required)*
7. *Death of a family member*

All other absences will be considered “unlawful”. **Excuses received after 3 days of returning to school will also be recorded as “unlawful” with no exceptions.**

1 UNLAWFUL ABSENCE

Phone call informing parent of “unlawful” absence.

2 UNLAWFUL ABSENCES

Letter informing parent of 2nd “unlawful” absence.

3 UNLAWFUL ABSENCES

Letter stating the student is now defined as “truant” and possible legal issues parents/caregivers may face if attendance concerns persist.

4 UNLAWFUL ABSENCES

Certified letter requesting a meeting to develop a Student Attendance Improvement Plan (SAIP).

5 UNLAWFUL ABSENCES

Certified letter stating next “unlawful” absence will result in a charges being filed with the district magistrate and/or juvenile probation.

6 UNLAWFUL ABSENCES

Under 15 years old: Charges filed against the parent with local district magistrate and/or juvenile probation for violation of Pennsylvania school attendance laws. Defining the student as, “habitually truant”.

O V E R

5 TOTAL ABSENCES

Letter sent to parent/caregiver informing them that they have reached the halfway point of allowed parental excuses.

10 TOTAL ABSENCES

Letter sent notifying each additional absence to be medically excused. If the absence is not excused by a licensed medical provider, the absences will be considered “unlawful”.

20 TOTAL ABSENCES

Letter sent to parent/caregiver informing them their student has reached a critical number of absences and is risking retention in current grade.

25 TOTAL ABSENCES

Student will be retained in his/her current grade.

Definitions:

Educational Travel

Up to 5 days permitted to travel and experience various activities, locations and cultures to enhance a student’s educational experience

Excused Absence

A valid excuse, meeting the approved criteria, which has been provided to the school **WITHIN 3 days** of the student’s return to school.

Excuse

A document (written, faxed or emailed) provided by the parent, caregiver or medical professional detailing the reason the student was absent from school.

Fax Number: 814-736-4165

Email Address: ESAttendance@mustangmail.org

Truant

3 days of “unlawful” absence

Habitually Truant

6 or more “unlawful” absence

Home School Visitor

School professional assigned to work with student and parent/caregiver not meeting the standard of attendance set by the district.

Homebound Education

Student is under the care of a licensed medical professional who can document and verify that the student is unable to attend school for an extended period of time (3 or more weeks). At such time, education will be provided in the home at a rate of 5 hours per week.

Unlawful Absence

Student is under 17 years of age and no valid excuse has been provided or the excuse provided does not meet the criteria of an excused absence.

Any questions please feel free to call, 736-9636 X-1570.