



Advocates for Justice and Education, Inc.

The federally designated Parent Training and Information Center for Washington DC

School Attendance – Important and the Law!

School attendance is important for student success, but it is also the law, and in DC there are very real legal consequences for students and their families when students don't attend school without a valid excuse!

School Attendance is mandatory in DC for students who will 5 on or before September 30 of the current school until they are 18 or graduate from high school? Under DC law, students between 5 and 13 years old who have 10 or more unexcused absences within a school year **MUST** be referred to the Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA) for possible action. The law also **REQUIRES** that students between 14 and 17 years old who have 15 or more unexcused absences be referred to court for possible legal action against them and their parents. In addition to CFSA or Court involvement, students may lose their seat at competitive schools, or in out of boundary school placements.

Did you know that absences are only excused if they are on the school's list of acceptable excuses? **A parent or guardian's permission is not enough to make an absence excused!** Generally, student's illness or medical/dental appointments, death in the family, religious holidays and mandatory court appearances are considered excused, but the parent must provide the documentation to the school **within 5 days**, or the absence will be considered unexcused, regardless of why the student missed school.

Babysitting, family trips, and student employment (unless previously arranged) are not valid reasons to miss school in DC and will result in an unexcused absence. To be considered 'present,' students must be at school for 80% of the school day; this means being late/leaving early or skipping classes may also end up counting as an absence.

However, there is help for families who are struggling to get kids to school on time or to keep their students in school all day. After five unexcused absences, students are by law guaranteed a Student Support Team (SST) meeting to help students work on attendance issues. SST meetings should include the school attendance counselor, a teacher, an administrator, and sometimes a school nurse or social worker. Parents are also supposed to attend the first meeting. The SST team meeting is about removing barriers to school attendance, not punishment, so it is a great place to problem solve.

Making sure students go to school everyday they can is one of the most important things parents can do for their students, and there are resources to help!

For more information about how you can support your students see -

<http://osse.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/osse/publication/attachments/Truancy%20Guide-ONLINE-021014.pdf> and <http://attendance.dc.gov/page/truancy-taskforce>.

Students can participate as a truancy taskforce representative -

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSc3YDwCSJo6PgKjGcWS6n4xA_SpPCQq3erM6bi-IQfXJff4kA/viewform?c=0&w=1

For DCPS specific info - <http://dcps.dc.gov/attendance>

You can also, always call us at AJE for more information!