

REGULATION MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Related Entries: IKA, IKA-RA, IKB-RA, IKC-RA, IOE-RA, JFA, JFA-RA, JGA-RB, KLA, KLA-RA
Responsible Office: Chief Academic Officer
Chief of School Support and Improvement
Chief of Staff

Student Attendance

I. PURPOSE

To establish responsibility for recording and excusing absences and to outline procedures for monitoring and improving attendance and for follow-up with students and parents/guardians in accordance with requirements set forth in the *Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR)*

II. PROCEDURES

A. All Schools

1. Recording Absences

- a) Each classroom teacher is responsible for recording the attendance of students in class. Teachers record attendance directly in the online attendance system. The system maintains a record of the date, time, and person entering the data.
- b) In the event the electronic system cannot be used, a paper roster will be used. These documents will be retained in the school for the current school year. At the end of the current school year, the documents retained in hard copy form will be sent to Central Records where they will be retained for three additional years for auditing purposes.
- c) The daily attendance records of each student are electronically maintained by the Office of the Chief Technology Officer. A hard

copy of a school year's cumulative Monthly Report of Student Attendance will be retained by Central Records for three years.

2. Determining What Constitutes an Absence
 - a) For reporting purposes, Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) defines an absence in accordance with the definition of "Days Absent" in the Maryland Student Records System Manual.
 - b) The Maryland Student Records System Manual is hereby incorporated by reference.

3. Determining Whether an Absence Is Lawful or Unlawful
 - a) A written explanation of each absence is required from the parent/guardian/eligible student within three days of the student's return to school. "Eligible student" is defined in MCPS Regulation JEA-RB, *Enrollment of Students*.
 - b) Requests for late arrivals or early dismissals must be authorized by the parent/guardian.
 - c) An eligible student may assume the responsibility for absence notes and requests for late arrivals and early dismissals. The principal/designee is responsible for informing the parent/guardian of an eligible student in writing of the following:
 - (1) Eligible students may submit their own written explanations of absences.
 - (2) Any administrative follow-up on unlawful absences is conducted with the eligible student. When that student is residing as a dependent child with their parent/guardian, additional notification of unexcused absences may be sent to the parent/guardian.
 - d) Students enrolled in public schools are considered lawfully absent from school, including absence for any portion of the day, only under the following conditions:¹

¹ Lawful absences are to be considered as excused absences.

- (1) Work approved or sponsored by the school, the local school system, or the Maryland State Department of Education, accepted by the local superintendent of schools or the school principal/designee as reason for excusing the students. A number of activities or work situations that the principal/designee should accept as lawful when approval for the absence has been requested five school days in advance in writing from the parent/guardian/eligible student are included below:
 - (a) Visits to college campuses and participation in college orientation programs (see local student handbook for limitations)
 - (b) Scheduled interviews with prospective employers
 - (c) Short-term full-time work assignments for students not enrolled in a cooperative education program
- (2) Death in the immediate family
- (3) Illness of the student

The principal may require the student's parent/guardian or the eligible student to provide documentation from a student's authorized health care provider in cases in which a student has chronic or extended absences for an illness or for a pregnancy- or parenting-related condition as set forth below.

- (4) Pregnancy- or parenting-related conditions
 - (a) Schools will excuse all student absences due to pregnancy or parenting-related conditions, including for labor, delivery, recovery, and prenatal and postnatal medical appointments, including –
 - (i) at least 10 days absences for the parenting student after the birth of the student's child;
 - (ii) parenting-related absences due to an illness or medical appointment of the student's child, including up to four days of absences

per school year for which the school may not require documentation from the child's authorized health care provider; and

- (iii) any absence due to a legal appointment involving the pregnant or parenting student that is related to family law proceedings, including adoption, custody, and visitation.
 - (b) Schools may only require documentation from a student's authorized health care provider after a student has been hospitalized for pregnancy or childbirth if they require such documentation from all students who have been hospitalized for other conditions.
 - (5) Court summons
 - (6) Hazardous weather conditions which shall be interpreted to mean weather conditions which would endanger the health or safety of the student when in transit to and from school
 - (7) Observance of a religious holiday
 - (8) State emergency
 - (9) Suspension
 - (10) Other emergency or set of circumstances which, in the judgment of the superintendent of schools or designee, constitutes a good and sufficient cause for absence from school
 - (11) Conditions or circumstances that prevent MCPS from providing transportation to students authorized to receive transportation services. This does not include students denied MCPS authorized transportation for disciplinary reasons.
- e) Any absence for reasons other than those specified above may be considered either lawful or unlawful by the principal/designee. Discretion is permitted in designating absences as lawful for reasons other than those above. Normally, requests for family travel are not

lawful absences.

A student's absence may be deemed lawful at the discretion of the principal/designee based on the following considerations:

- (1) Recommendations from the student's teacher(s) concerning the possible effect of the anticipated absence on the student's academic progress and the options available for make-up work before making a decision to approve the absence
 - (2) Number of lawful and unlawful absences student has accumulated to date
 - (3) Purpose or special significance of the absences
 - (4) Duration of the absence
- f) For consideration of discretionary absences, notice and request must be provided prior to the absence.
- g) When a student is not physically in the classroom but remains under the direct supervision of MCPS, students are considered present for state and local reporting purposes; however, students are marked absent by the teacher to record that they are not in the classroom. The attendance secretary will assign an applicable reason code to ensure proper reporting on state and local reports. Examples of such absences include, but are not limited to the following:
- (1) Service as a volunteer student aide in MCPS outdoor education programs
 - (2) MCPS interscholastic athletics participation
 - (3) Student government
 - (4) Field trips
 - (5) Health room visit
 - (6) Interim Instructional Services
 - (7) In-school suspension

- h) Students who are removed from school by their parent/guardian for more than 15 consecutive school days for extended travel or other unexcused reason are to be withdrawn, and the parent/guardian must be informed that the student will be withdrawn and that MCPS assumes that they will fulfill their responsibility to continue the student's education at the destination.
- i) If a school chooses to issue awards for perfect attendance, it may not withhold such awards from students whose only absences have been excused for reasons of religion.

4. Monitoring Attendance

- a) The total number of student absences (including unexcused and excused absences) is reported on the report card.
- b) The principal/designee, in cooperation with the school staff, establishes the school's procedures for follow-up on absences, annually submits the procedures to the appropriate associate superintendent(s) for approval by July 1, and distributes approved procedures to parents/guardians and students at the beginning of each school year.
- c) The Office of Student and Family Support and Engagement, in collaboration with other MCPS offices and outside agencies, will develop and implement a continuum of interventions designed to support regular school attendance.
- d) Each school will establish a formal process to promote student attendance. This process will monitor data, provide targeted interventions, and include incentives.

B. Elementary Schools (Including Kindergarten)

- 1. At the beginning of the school year, elementary school principals/designees will request that parents/guardians notify the school when their child is to be absent for any reason on any given day.
- 2. Whenever possible, parents/guardians of elementary school-age children will be contacted by 12 noon of each first day of absence, if the parents/guardians have not previously notified the school of the absence.
- 3. Elementary school students with excessive absences and/or tardies, both

lawful and unlawful, may be referred for appropriate intervention. At the discretion of the principal/designee, students who demonstrate a pattern of absences may be referred to appropriate staff and/or outside agencies for intensive interventions designed to increase regular attendance.

C. Middle Schools

Middle school students with excessive absences and/or tardies, both lawful and unlawful, may be referred for appropriate intervention. At the discretion of the principal/designee, students who demonstrate a pattern of absences may be referred to appropriate staff and/or outside agencies for intensive interventions designed to increase regular attendance. Students who accumulate five or more unexcused absences may receive an attendance letter from the school.

D. High Schools

1. Unexcused tardies will be recorded and three unexcused tardies will equal one unexcused unlawful absence.
2. Students with three unlawful absences in a class will be warned of the possibility of failing the course and referred to their school counselor and the principal. The school counselor will consult with the student and the parents/guardians, verify reasons for the absences, and determine the appropriate interventions.
3. Students with five unlawful absences in a class will automatically be notified to submit an appeal of the recording of their absences if they or their parents/guardians believe any absence was recorded incorrectly, or develop an attendance intervention plan with their school counselors/principal.

An appeal of attendance recording may be initiated by the student, parent/guardian/eligible student, or school counselor/administrative team, using MCPS Form 560-26A, *Appeal of Attendance Recording, High School Students Only*.

4. School counselors/administrative teams may use an Attendance Intervention Plan (AIP) as a form of intervention to improve student attendance.
 - a) An AIP is developed for each of the student's courses that has been identified for intervention, using MCPS Form 560-26B, *Attendance Intervention Plan, High School Students Only*. The form sets forth

steps and strategies for students and/or staff to use to improve the student's attendance and/or academic performance.

- b) The principal will review and sign off on the AIP.
 - c) While an AIP is implemented, the principal leads a review of the student's attendance throughout the semester to determine the impact of the AIP.
 - d) If the student has five or more absences, and the school team determines that the student has not shown improvement in attendance in response to interventions set forth in the AIP, the student will receive a failing grade in that course.
 - e) For students who receive a failing grade based on attendance but would otherwise have received a passing grade, the principal will initiate a process for the student to follow to have the opportunity to restore the passing grade.
5. A failing grade may be appealed consistent with Board Policy KLA, *Responding to Inquiries and Complaints from the Public*.
 6. Formal steps set forth in MCPS Regulation KLA-RA, *Responding to Inquiries and Complaints from the Public*, for resolving complaints should only be used after informal approaches at the local school have been unsuccessful in resolving the complaint.

Related Sources: Annotated Code of Maryland, Education Article, §7-301.1; *Code of Maryland Regulations* §13A.03.02.08B(4) and §13A.08.01.01–07; MCPS *Guidelines for Respecting Religious Diversity; A Student's Guide to Rights and Responsibilities; Student Code of Conduct in Montgomery County Public Schools*

Regulation History: Formerly Regulation No. 515-1, September 12, 1980 (directory information updated), revised December 1986; revised October 28, 1993; revised August 19, 1997; revised November 3, 2005; revised May 12, 2010; revised October 7, 2013; revised February 4, 2014; revised September 11, 2014; revised August 6, 2015; revised February 9, 2018; revised October 8, 2019.