



Washtenaw School
Justice Partnership

WASHTENAW COUNTY SCHOOL, COURT, & COMMUNITY ABSENTEEISM PROTOCOL

Note: This Protocol was created as part of Washtenaw County's School Justice Partnership Action Plan in collaboration with schools, the courts, community agencies, youth councils, law enforcement, community mental health, and governmental agencies. The intent is to recognize the importance of attendance, and the complex challenges of absenteeism and present clear definitions and steps that value collaboration, youth voice, and family support. Revisions were made after the pandemic closure to reflect updated practices.

School attendance is important.¹

- Attendance in early grades is critical to sustaining school readiness skills.
- Students with chronic absenteeism (missing 10% of the total school year for any reason) have lower grades and are more likely to drop out than students with better attendance.
- Truancy is not only detrimental to success in education but is a stepping-stone to delinquent and criminal activity. Chronic absenteeism is one of the most powerful predictors of delinquent behavior.

Attendance Law:

Michigan's Compulsory Attendance Law states that students must attend school from age six to 18 years of age.

Mich. Comp. Laws Ann. § 380.1561 – Compulsory School Attendance Sec. 1561. (1) Except as otherwise provided in this section, for a child who turned age 11 before December 1, 2009, or who entered grade 6 before 2009, the child's parent, guardian, or another person in this state has control and charge of the child shall send that child to a public school during the entire school year from the age of 6 to the child's sixteenth birthday. Except as otherwise provided in this section, for a child who turns age 11 on or after December 1, 2009, or a child who was age 11 before that date and enters grade 6 in 2009 or later, the child's parent, guardian, or another person in this state having control and charge of the child shall send the child to a public school during the entire school year from the age of 6 to the child's eighteenth birthday. The child's attendance shall be continuous and consecutive for the school year fixed by the school district in which the child is enrolled. In a school district that maintains school during the entire calendar year and in which the school year is divided into quarters, a child is not required to attend the public school more than 3 quarters in 1 calendar year, but a child shall not be absent for 2 or more consecutive quarters.

Juvenile Truancy Laws - MCL 712A.2(a)(4):

(4) The juvenile willfully and repeatedly absents himself or herself from school or other learning program intended to meet the juvenile's educational needs or repeatedly violates rules and regulations of the school or other learning program, and the court finds on the record that the juvenile, the juvenile's parent, guardian, or custodian, and school officials or learning program personnel have met on the juvenile's educational problems and educational counseling and alternative agency help has been sought. As used in this sub-subdivision only, "learning program" means an organized educational program that is appropriate, given the age, intelligence, ability, and psychological limitations of a juvenile, in the subject areas of reading, spelling, mathematics, science, history, civics, writing, and English grammar.

¹ Attendance Works - <http://www.attendanceworks.org/>

Definitions²

- **“Chronically absent”** means absent for 10% or more of the enrolled school days in a school year, whether absenteeism is due to unexcused, excused, or disciplinary absences. (For instance, missing 3 days of school the first month of the year; 7 or 8 days in the first half of the year; or 18 days in the entire school year.) Note: All absences for the school year should be counted, even if they occurred at a different school.
- **“Disciplinary absence”** means absences that result from school or district disciplinary action and are neither unexcused nor excused absences.
- **“Excused absence”** means the following:
 - A student’s first 5 absences from school are considered excused when documentation of the reason for the absence has been submitted and approved to a designated staff person.
 - A student’s 6th and subsequent absence(s) from school are considered excused only for the following reasons when documentation has been submitted and approved:
 - Student’s illness/medical reason
 - Medical appointments (including but not limited to medical, counseling, dental or optometry)
 - Student’s observance of a religious holiday
 - Death in the student’s family
 - Other emergencies beyond the control of the student or the student’s family
 - Mandated court appearance (written documentation from court required)
 - Placement by Juvenile Court in detention, shelter care, foster care or residential placement
 - Extraordinary educational opportunities as determined and pre-approved by district administrators.
 - Absences related to parent/guardian’s military service
 - Homelessness
- **“Late arrival”** or **“tardy”** means arriving for class or school activity after the established start time, unless excused. The accumulation of 10 late arrivals/tardies OR 10 class absences equals 1 unexcused absence.
- **“Truant”** means a child who has ten (10) or more unexcused absences per school year. A child should be counted as truant only once in a given school year. Once deemed truant, a child shall be monitored during the following school year and interventions are to be started after two excused, unexcused, or disciplinary absences.

Prevention

District/School will

- Monitor attendance and conduct outreach to students who have an absenteeism issue.
- Accurately document absences.³
- Build a culture of attendance.⁴
 - Recognize good and improved attendance.
 - Reinforce good and improved attendance.
 - Provide families with a tool to document absences.
- Build a positive school climate.

² From the Proposed Amendments to Truancy/Chronic Absenteeism Laws

³ See Midland County School Protocol

- Best practices indicate that students should be greeted by name daily.
- Best practices indicate that students should be engaged in creating classroom and school norms and values.
- Proactively engage parents/guardians/caretakers in the discussions regarding attendance.⁴
 - Reinforce to parents/guardians/caretakers the importance of attendance through letters home, conversations at school meetings, articles in school newsletters, etc.
 - Notify students, parents/guardians/caretakers of the school’s attendance policies and procedures for reporting absences.
 - Provide tools for tracking attendance to parents.
 - Inform parents/guardians/caretakers when the child is not in school. Letters sent home with students might not be adequate to ensure parents are notified. Phone calls, texts, emails and/or home visits may be necessary.
- Identify root causes for absenteeism, including ecological factors but not limited to the following:⁴
 - Lack of academic proficiency
 - Social-emotional and/or physical health
 - Transportation
 - Bullying
 - Short term relief from economic hardship such as homelessness, death, divorce, unemployment, and childcare.
 - School culture and climate, family-student-school environment fit, family or student perception of school, cultural-related concerns.
- Offer support to students and families⁵
 - Provide personalized early outreach
 - Develop programmatic responses to barriers
 - Connect families to community and/or school resources
- Identify and closely monitor students with a history of absenteeism³
 - Intervention for students with a history should be started earlier than recommended in this protocol

Community Agencies and Washtenaw Intermediate School District will

- Partner with schools to identify students and families with risk factors related to chronic absenteeism.
- Provide support to schools and services to families to reduce risk factors, particularly related to economic hardship and inequality, as school-based efforts are necessary but not sufficient.⁵
- Assist schools to promote a pro-attendance culture.⁶

Level I

Monitoring

A student should be monitored for absenteeism patterns leading to a level one intervention if the student has:

- 3 consecutive days of unexcused absences, or

⁴ From Michigan School-Justice Partnership 2013 workshops and Check and Connect manual

⁵ Advancing an Ecological Approach to Chronic Absenteeism: Evidence from Detroit, April 2021

⁶ National Center for Mental Health Promotion and Youth Violence Prevention - Truancy Prevention Efforts in School-Community Partnerships

- 3 non-consecutive days of unexcused absences within a 45-day period, or
- 4 unexcused late arrivals/tardies in a semester, or
- Combination of 5 excused, unexcused, and/or disciplinary absences in a school year

Intervention

Level I intervention shall be implemented when a student has **missed 5 days of excused, unexcused, or disciplinary absences**. *Priority should be given to students with 5 unexcused absences where there has been no communication between the family and school.*

School will⁷

- Explore root causes for absences.
- Engage students and families in conversations about the importance of attendance, as well as problem-solving and goal-setting conversations to prevent future absences.
- Call, text and/or email parents/guardians/caretakers to express concerns about the student's attendance issue.
- Initiate conversations with parents/guardians/caretakers about homebound services in cases of medical or mental health issues.
- Celebrate improvements in attendance.

Schools may

- Send letter and attendance informational sheet to parents/guardians/caretakers, indicating an attendance problem.⁷ Hand delivering the letter is most effective in reaching families.
- Provide appropriate academic remedial services if needed.⁸
- Connect students to mental health screening program if appropriate.⁸
- Connect students to school resources, after-school opportunities and/or peer support.
- Explore the need for a special education evaluation.
- Arrange for work to be sent home if a student is out for extended periods of time, such as chronic illness, homelessness, mental health issues or suspension.
- Contact the Washtenaw Intermediate School District (WISD) School Attendance Officer if early year absences are a continuation of chronic absenteeism exhibited the prior year (See page 5 – Level III Intervention).

Level II

Monitoring

A student should be monitored for absenteeism patterns leading to a level two intervention if the student has missed school 2 times in the next 30 days or 3 more times in the next 3 months, additional interventions shall be implemented.⁹

Intervention

Level II intervention shall occur when a student has missed 10 days of school (excused, unexcused, or disciplinary).

School will⁷

- Explore root causes for absences, including economic hardship and ecological factors.

⁷ From Midland County School Protocol

⁸ From April Home Team Summit Meeting

⁹ From the Proposed Amendments to Truancy/Chronic Absenteeism Laws

- Engage students in conversations about the importance of attendance, as well as problem-solving and goal-setting conversations to prevent future absences.
- Send a letter and informational sheet to parents/guardians/caretakers, indicating there is an attendance problem. Hand delivering the letter is most effective in reaching families.
- Schedule a meeting with parents/guardians/caretakers and students. A **building level** facilitated meeting, home visit, and/or restorative circle may be considered. In the meeting, the following should be explored: the reason for the absences, available resources and support, the consequences of chronic absences, and an agreement that all parties sign to improve attendance.
- Celebrate improvements in attendance.

School may

- Conduct home visits/ home assessments¹⁰
 - Conducted by designated school officials, social workers, attendance officers, contracted professionals, or partner community agencies to assess causes, provide support and facilitate additional resources.
 - If no one is home, the attempt should be noted.
 - After an attempt is made, schools may request a wellness check through the local law enforcement agency.
 - Connect families with local agencies that can provide short-term economic relief working with resources like MDHHS, Barrier Busters, CPS Prevention Services, or [Michigan Community Care](#) for complex medical case management.
- Recommend appropriate academic remedial services as needed.
- Connect students to mental health screening through Washtenaw County Community Mental Health CARES Program (734-544-3050) if appropriate.
- Arrange for work to be sent home if a student is out for extended periods of time, such as chronic illness, homelessness, mental health issues, or suspension.
- Connect students to school resources, after-school opportunities, and/or peer support. See the [WACY website](#) for program options.
- Call the Department of Human Services (DHHS) Centralized Intake (CI) in cases of suspected neglect and/or abuse.
 - Note: Routine complaints on school truants and runaways are not appropriate for Centralized Intake, but absenteeism related to neglect and abuse should be reported to CI. Washtenaw County DHHS will review all referrals made to CI that are screened out to find any which contain allegations of educational neglect and will assess those referrals for possible prevention services through DHHS.¹¹

**Students should not be dropped until documentable interventions and consultation has occurred; however, Michigan Pupil Accounting Guidelines must be followed.*

Level III Intervention – Persistent Chronic Absence

Once a student is considered chronically absent (as defined as absent for 10% or more of the enrolled school days in a school year, whether absenteeism is due to unexcused, excused, or disciplinary absences) AND absenteeism continues to persist after Level I and Level II interventions, the student is considered to be persistently chronically absent, their social, emotional and academic success are greatly compromised.

Level III intervention shall be implemented once a student’s absences reach 15-18 days within a school year for any reason.

¹⁰ Miami Springs Truancy Intervention Program

¹¹ http://www.michigan.gov/documents/dhs/Pub-112_179456_7.pdf

School will¹²

- Contact WISD Education Project for case review, including any available short-term economic relief. WISD staff will coordinate a wraparound plan with the family and community supports while notifying the parents/guardians/caretakers of the seriousness of absenteeism and requirements to ensure the child's school attendance.
- Exploring alternative education program options may be necessary at this stage. [Go Back to Move Forward](#) is one resource for non-traditional education program options, which can be located on the WISD website.

School may

Utilize any of the interventions in Levels I and II and/or contact the Washtenaw County Trial Court directly for diversion services at 734-222-6900 or contact the Juvenile Court's Education Prevention Team Supervisor, Jessica Ashmore at ashmorej@washtenaw.org.

A child is not required to attend a public school in any of the following cases

- (a) The child is attending regularly and is being taught in a state-approved nonpublic school, which teaches subjects comparable to those taught in the public schools to children of corresponding age and grade, as determined by the course of study for the public schools of the district within which the nonpublic school is located.
- (b) The child is less than 9 years of age and does not reside within 2-1/2 miles of the nearest traveled road of a public school. If transportation is furnished for pupils in the school district of the child's residence, this subdivision does not apply.
- (c) The child is age 12 or 13 and attends confirmation classes conducted for 5 months or less.
- (d) The child is regularly enrolled in a public school while in attendance at religious instruction classes for not more than 2 class hours per week, off public-school property during public school hours, upon written request of the parent, guardian, or person in loco parentis under rules promulgated by the state board.
- (e) The child has graduated from high school or has fulfilled all requirements for high school graduation.
- (f) The child is being educated at the child's home by his or her parent or legal guardian in an organized educational program in the subject areas of reading, spelling, mathematics, science, history, civics, literature, writing, and English grammar.

Resources

Resources for the Prevention Stage

Attendance Works - <http://www.attendanceworks.org/> - This is a website where chronic absence data, assessment tools, and research on topics related to attendance are accessible.

Government Agency Resources for the Intervention Stages

Washtenaw Intermediate School District Attendance Manager – The WISD provides an Attendance Manager to assist local districts that currently do not employ this position. The Attendance Manager works collaboratively to support students and their families to improve irregular student attendance.

¹² From Midland County School Protocol

- For more information, please call [\(734\) 994-8100](tel:7349948100).

Washtenaw County Office of Economic Development – OCED delivers critical services in the areas of affordable housing, human services, economic development, and community infrastructure. Search [here](#) for available services for basic social safety net needs, including HAWC (Housing Access for Washtenaw County) and Barrier Busters (financial requests).

Washtenaw County Juvenile Court’s Education and Prevention — Provides case management, support, and supervision for youth not attending school and their families.

- Eligibility: Youth ages 6 – 16, Washtenaw County resident
- For more information, please contact 734-222-6900 or contact the Juvenile Court’s Education Prevention Team Supervisor, Jessica Ashmore at ashmorej@washtenaw.org

Washtenaw County Community Mental Health (CMH) – Provides a range of mental health services and can be available to conduct home visits.

- Eligibility: Washtenaw County residents from 0 to 18 years old, including services for adults.
- <https://www.washtenaw.org/839/Community-Mental-Health>
- Phone: (734) 544-3050

Centralized Intake Unit – This is established by the Department of Human Services to document abuse and neglect complaints with a toll-free number (855-444-3911) that allows anyone to report abuse or neglect at any time.

- Eligibility: Everyone who suspects abuse or neglect
- <http://www.michigan.gov/dhs/0,4562,7-124-7119---,00.html>
- <https://www.michigan.gov/mdhhs/adult-child-serv/abuse-neglect>

Legal Services of South Central Michigan - provides free legal advice and representation to low-income individuals, families, and older adults.

- <https://lsscm.org/>
- Phone: (734) 665-6181

Community Agency Resources for the Intervention Stages

Dispute Resolution Center - School Attendance Remediation Program – Provides mediation services for families and school staff to discuss and efficiently identify barriers and solutions.

- Eligibility: Washtenaw County schools and students
- <http://thedisputeresolutioncenter.org/>
- Phone: (734) 794-2125

Ozone House – Provides emergency shelter, safe space, transitional housing programming, housing intakes for young adults, LGBTQIA+ youth support groups, and counseling for youth.

- <https://ozonehouse.org/>
- Phone: (734) 662-2222

Corner Health - Offers health and mental health care and supportive services for young people ages 12- 25 years to support their transitions into adulthood.

- <https://cornerhealth.org/>
- Phone: (734) 484-3600

Neutral Zone - Youth-Driven teen center dedicated to promoting personal growth. They offer workshops, support groups, career pathway opportunities, and a safe space for LGBTQIA+ youth.

- <https://www.neutral-zone.org/>
- Phone: (734) 214-9995

Washtenaw Interfaith Coalition for Immigrant Rights - Volunteer-driven organization that works with undocumented immigrants in Washtenaw County.

- <http://wicir.org/>
- Phone: (734) 355-2707

Jewish Family Services - Provides services for all of Washtenaw County. They are committed to providing affordable, accessible, holistically oriented services to foster self-sufficiency and strengthen family life. Services include but are not limited to food delivery, counseling, employment assistance, immigration help, and transportation.

- <https://jfsannarbor.org/>
- Phone: (734) 769-0209

Friends in Deed - They can assist with furniture acquisition, food support, transportation, and direct assistance.

- <https://friendsindeedmi.org/>
- Phone: (734) 484-4357

Student Advocacy Center of Michigan – Provides education advocacy and support to address barriers to school attendance, including school discipline, and an evidence-based education mentoring program called Check and Connect.

- Eligibility:
 - Education advocacy and support are available for low-income students in Washtenaw County with a priority given to out-of-school youth or those experiencing school discipline issues, homelessness, foster care, or mental illness.
 - Education mentoring referrals come from partner school districts.
- <http://www.studentadvocacycenter.org>
- Phone: 734-482-0489

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Washtenaw County - Matches Washtenaw County children, ages 7-14, with positive role models who offer them guidance and support in growing socially, emotionally, and academically.

- For more information about enrolling a child, please BBBS of Washtenaw County at inquiry@bbbswashtenaw.org or 734-975-0933.

Girls Group - Girls Group provides year-round programming and mentoring to middle and high school girls to achieve emotional and economic security by graduating from high school and becoming first-generation college graduates.

- <https://www.girlsgroup.org/>
- For more information contact sue@girlsgroup.org

Our House - Supports young adult-aged foster youth through mentoring, housing, and support services as they transition to adulthood and independent living.

- <https://www.ourhousemi.org/>
- 734-547-5519

Our community has dozens of agencies that can assist youth and families. We listed the ones we most often use. For more comprehensive lists, check out the following resources:

- *United Way of Washtenaw County – 2-1-1* – This is a hotline service that provides callers with information about and referrals to human services, for everyday needs and in times of crisis. <http://www.uwashtenaw.org/get-help-2-1-1>
- *Washtenaw Alliance for Children and Youth (WACY)* – This is a collaboration of more than 30 youth-serving agencies in the Washtenaw area that can provide school districts with ideas for resources. <http://wacy-washtenaw.org/>

Transportation Resources

Ann Arbor Area Transit Authority - <http://www.theride.org>

Western Washtenaw Area Value Express - <http://www.ridethewavebus.org>



Pay Attention to Attendance: Keep Your Child On Track in Elementary, Middle and High School

Showing up for school has a huge impact on a student's academic success starting in kindergarten and continuing through high school, & family plays a key role!

DID YOU KNOW?

- Even **missing 5 days of school** can make it hard for students to keep up and succeed in school.
- Absences can be a **sign** that a student is
 - 1) Losing interest in school OR
 - 2) Struggling with school work OR
 - 3) Dealing with bullies OR
 - 4) Facing potentially serious difficulty
- Attendance helps your child **graduate from college** and **keep a job**.

WHAT YOU CAN DO?

- Make school attendance a **priority!**
 - Talk about the importance of showing up to school everyday.
 - Help your child maintain daily routines.
- **Stay on top of** your child's
 - Academic progress.
 - Social communities.
- Communicate with the **school**
 - Know the school's attendance policy.

COUNT YOUR CHILD'S SCHOOL ABSENCES & DAYS LATE WITH THIS CHART

| | | |
|----------|-----------|---------|
| AUGUST | SEPTEMBER | OCTOBER |
| NOVEMBER | DECEMBER | JANUARY |
| FEBRUARY | MARCH | APRIL |
| MAY | JUNE | |



Advancing Student Success By Reducing Chronic Absence

www.attendanceworks.org