

**STUDENTS**

**ABSENCES AND EXCUSES**

**Excused Absences**

A student's absence shall be excused for the following reasons:

1. Personal illness (education Code 48205)
2. Quarantine under the direction of a county or city health officer (Education Code 48205)
3. Medical, dental, optometrical, or chiropractic appointments (Education Code 48205)
4. Attendance at funeral services for a member of the immediate family, which shall be limited to one day if the service is conducted in California or three days if the service is conducted out of state. (Education Code 48205)

*Immediate family* shall be defined as mother, father, grandmother, grandfather, spouse, son/son-in-law, daughter/daughter-in-law, brother, sister, or any relative living in the student's immediate household. (Education Code 45194, 48205)

5. Jury duty in the manner provided by law (Education Code 48205)
6. The illness or medical appointment during school hours of a child to whom the student is the custodian parent (Education Code 48205)
7. Upon advance written request by the parent/guardian and the approval of the principal or designee, justifiable personal reasons including, but not limited to: (Education Code 48205)
  - a. Appearance in court
  - b. Attendance at a funeral service
  - c. Observation of a holiday or ceremony of his/her religion
  - d. Attendance at religious retreats not to exceed four hours per semester
  - e. Attendance at an employment conference
  - f. Attendance at an educational conference on the legislative or judicial process offered by a nonprofit organization

- g. A total of five (5) school days per year in the student's junior and senior year may be excused for college visits.
- 8. Service as a member of a precinct board for an election pursuant to Elections Code 12302 (Education Code 48205)
- 9. To spend time with his/her immediate family member who is an active duty member of the uniformed services, as defined in Education Code 49701, and has been called to duty for deployment to a combat zone or a combat support position or is on leave from or has immediately returned from such deployment (Education Code 48205)
- 10. Participation in religious instruction or exercises in accordance with district policy. (Education Code 46014)
  - A. In such instances, the student shall attend at least the minimum school day.
  - B. The student shall be excused for this purpose on no more than four school days per month.

**Method of Verification**

When students who have been absent return to school, they must present a satisfactory explanation verifying the reason for the absence. Absences shall be verified by the student's parent/guardian, other person having control of the minor, or the student if age 18 or older. (Education Code 46012; 5 CCR 306)

The following methods may be used to verify student absences:

- 1. Written note, fax, or email from parent/guardian or parent representative
- 2. Conversation, in person or by telephone, between the verifying employee and the student's parent/guardian or parent representative. The employee shall subsequently record the following:
  - a. Name of student
  - b. Name of parent/guardian or parent representative
  - c. Name of verifying employee
  - d. Date(s) of absence
  - e. Reason for absence
- 3. Visit to the students home by the verifying employee, or any other reasonable method which establishes the fact that the student was absent for the reasons stated. The employee shall document the verification and include the information specified in item #2 above.

4. Physician's verification.
  - a. When excusing students for confidential medical services or verifying such appointments, district staff shall not ask the purpose of such appointments but may contact a medical office to confirm the time of the appointment.
  - b. When a student has had 14 absences in the school year for illness verified by methods listed in #1-3 above, any further absences for illness shall be verified by a physician.

**Irregular Attendance**

Irregular attendance is one of the major constraints in maintaining a quality educational program for high school students. There is no more important variable than time spent on task in the classroom under the guidance of a professional educator. Attendance is taken every day in every classroom and students are required to be to class on time.

Improving student attendance and reducing the dropout rate is a District priority. Pursuant to EC 48200, every child from the age of 6 to 18 in the District is required to attend school regularly unless otherwise provided by law in order to make a successful transition to the next grade level and to graduate with a high school diploma. All enrolled students, regardless of age, will be held to the same District school attendance rules. The Saddleback Valley Unified School District Board of Education recognizes that a vigilant supervision of attendance to improve attendance rates and graduation rates and to reduce truancy and dropout rates is vital to the learning and achievement of all children. Alternative Education follows a different calendar from the Comprehensive High Schools, and the following policies will be tailored to fit the alternative situation.

**Definitions of Irregular Attendance**

**Unexcused Absence**

Absent with permission due to personal reasons. Examples of unexcused absences include vacation, oversleeping, car trouble, driver test, out-of-town visitors, weddings, missed bus, personal/business reasons, out of gas, and traffic citations.

**Truancy**

Absent without permission, not clearing legitimate absence within three (3) school days, and leaving campus during the school day without permission.

**Tardy Truant**

A student who is not in class within the first 30 minutes considered tardy truant.

**Tardy**

A student who is not in his/her assigned seat when the tardy bell rings is considered tardy

**Unexcused Absence/Truancy Procedures:**

The Saddleback Valley Unified School District utilizes the Student Attendance Review Board (SARB) process to address student attendance. The system below is utilized to notify parents/guardians of students who are excessively absent or truant.

Prior to referring a student and/or family to a SARB Hearing, a counselor will meet with the student and make parent contact as an intervention to address the student's attendance issue.

If a student reaches the number of unexcused absences/truancy/tardies listed below for reasons other than an excused absence(s)/tardy, the following action will be taken:

**A. FULL DAY UNEXCUSED ABSENCE/TRUANCY PROCEDURES**

3 truancies/unexcused absences/tardies (30 minutes or more)

- Student is identified as a truant per Education Code 48260.
- School site sends Truant Letter 1 to the student's parent/guardian
- Student is assigned Saturday School(s).
- Student will be referred to a counselor.

6 truancies/unexcused absences/tardies (30 minutes or more)

- Student is identified as a habitual truant.
- School site sends Truant Letter 2 to the student's parent/guardian.
- Student is assigned Saturday School(s).
- School site contacts parent via phone to discuss the absences and/or truancies.
- The student and parent are informed that they will be required to attend a Parent/DA Meeting and may be referred to SARB.

10 truancies/unexcused absences/tardies (30 minutes or more)

- The school site sends out Truant Letter 3 to the student's parent/guardian inviting the parent to a meeting at the school site and to spend the day with their student on campus
- The site administrator has the parent/student sign a school site attendance contract and informs them of the potential of the SARB Process and Administrative Regulation 5113 that indicates students who are absent more than 14 days of school must provide a doctor's note for every absence
- The site administrator informs the student that they will be required to attend a Parent/DA Meeting (if they have not already done so) and may be referred to SARB if the truancies/ unexcused absences continue.

Beyond 10 truancies/unexcused absences/tardies (30 minutes or more)

- Students who fail to correct the problem and continue to have truancies or unexcused absences will be referred to a SARB Hearing. SARB Hearings are held at the Orange County Sheriff's Department Substation and comprise of a representatives from Orange County Social Services Agency, Orange County Sheriff's Department, Orange County Probation Department and school site and district representatives.

- As a result of the SARB Hearing, the district may choose to file with the Orange County District Attorney or Probation against the student, the parent/guardian or both.

**B. PERIOD ABSENCES (7-12 Grade): Individual unexcused, truant or tardy truant period absences accumulated throughout the school day.**

**1 - 3 Period Truancies**

- Parent will be notified of truancies by the automated messaging system.
- Detention(s) or Saturday School will be assigned.

**4 - 6 Period Truancies**

- Parent will be notified of truancies by the automated messaging system.
- Letter will be sent to parent from the school site notifying them of truancies.
- Saturday School(s) will be assigned.
- Student will be referred to Counselor to address attendance issues and parent will be notified.

**7 - 10 Period Truancies**

- Parent will be notified of truancies by the automated messaging system.
- Saturday School(s) will be assigned.
- School site administrator contacts parent via phone to discuss the absences and/or truancies and places student on a multiple period contract.

**11 - 15 Period Truancies**

- Parent will be notified of truancies by the automated messaging system.
- Letter will be sent from the school site to parent notifying them of loss of privileges at 16 period truancies.
- Invite parent to attend school with student to escort student to class.

**16 - 20 Period Truancies**

- Parent will be notified of truancies by the automated messaging system.
- Letter will be sent to parent from Student Services inviting them to meet with the Orange County District Attorney- Truancy Unit as an intervention to correct the behavior.
- Student will be added to the loss of privileges list.

Any student who continues to have multiple period truancies beyond the 20 may be referred to a SARB Hearing for remediation.

**C. UNEXCUSED TARDY PROCEDURES (7-12 grade - per period, per semester/trimester)**

A student who is not in his/her assigned seat when the tardy bell rings is considered tardy. After 30 minutes, a student is considered tardy truant and must check in at the Attendance Office and receive a Re-admit Slip before going to class.

NOTE: Tardies are only excused due to an illness or medical appointment.

It is a reasonable expectation that in order for a learning to take place, students must arrive to class on time. Students who continually do not meet this expectation are considered to be in defiance of authority. To help insure that students arrive to all classes punctually, the following procedures have been established. These procedures are for unexcused tardies and directly involve the student, parent/guardian, teacher, and administration. Tardies are recorded every day in every class period.

Tardy 1-2:

- Teacher gives warning and notifies student of first and second tardy.

Tardy 3:

- Teacher notifies student of third tardy.
- Teacher assigns a detention and contacts parent.

Tardy 4-5:

- Teacher notifies student of fourth and fifth tardy.

Tardy 6:

- Teacher notifies the student of the sixth tardy.
- Teacher notifies the discipline office of the sixth tardy.
- Administrator assigns Saturday School and places student on a Tardy Contract which states the student may lose privileges if tardies continue.
- Parent/guardian is notified of the contract and terms.

Tardy 7-9:

- Teacher notifies student of seventh, eighth, ninth tardy.

Tardy 10:

- Teacher notifies discipline office of 10<sup>th</sup> tardy.
- Parent/guardian notified of loss of privileges.

Students who continue to have tardies may be referred to a meeting with the Orange County District Attorney as an intervention step. If there are further tardies, a student may be referred to a SARB Hearing for remediation.

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