



Welcome to Murfreesboro City Schools' Tier III Truancy Intervention Online Class.

You have been asked to complete this brief training due to your child's excessive unexcused absences from school.

Course completion is required prior to attending your child's Tier III meeting. We anticipate your review of the content on these slides taking no more than 10 minutes.



Intent and Desired Outcomes

Our intent of these slides is to increase your awareness while clarifying our purpose, process, and support.

The desired outcomes for this online class are:

1. Improve school attendance for your child by creating an action plan.
2. Increase parental awareness of the legal obligations and educational impacts.
3. Understand the purpose of a Truancy Diversion Board Meeting by avoiding juvenile court.





Understanding the Tennessee Compulsory School Attendance Law (TCA 49-6-3001)

“Every parent, guardian, or other person residing within the State of Tennessee, having control or charge of any child or children between the ages of six and seventeen years, both inclusive, shall cause such child or children to attend public or private day school, and in the event of failure to do so, shall be subject to the penalties provided by law.”

School districts are required to enforce Tennessee law by following a progressive truancy plan.

A student who has been absent 10 days without adequate excuse is considered truant and may be summoned to juvenile court.

Below are the types of excused absences that may be granted for the following reasons:

1. Personal injury or Illness of student,
2. Illness of immediate family member,
3. Death in the family,
4. Extreme weather conditions,
5. Religious observances,
6. School endorsed activities,
7. A legal court summons, subpoena, or court order; or
8. Circumstances which in the judgment of the principal create emergencies over which the student has no control.



Specific documentation will be required for the following excused absences:

Personal illness: documentation from a medical provider if student's parent or guardian has exceeded the number of excusal notes as outlined above.

Death of a family member: a copy of the obituary, service program, or other documentation.

Religious observances and holidays: a statement from the spiritual leader recognized by the given religious group stating that the day is set aside as sacred by a recognized religious denomination of which the student is a member, where such religion calls for special observances of the day.

Summons, subpoena, or court orders: Documented verification from the summons, subpoena, or court order obtained from the Court Clerk's Office.

Progressive Truancy Intervention Plan

In Murfreesboro City Schools, we approach attendance using three progressive tiers.

Our belief is that a strong partnership between us and your family will ensure your child is at school daily and ready to learn and benefit from all of the wonderful opportunities offered.

Tier I: Preventative Measures

Tier I includes the preventative measures MCS takes to ensure students and families understand our attendance policies.

This information is found on each school's website and parent handbook, Board Policy 6.200, and in communication that is sent home with students at the beginning of each year.

The school takes the following actions:

1. Attendance communication and reminders shared school wide.
2. A teacher reaches out to your family via phone and/or Dojo.
3. Automated phone message from the school when your child misses school and we did not know ahead of time.
4. School-wide attendance incentives

Tier II: Attendance Contract and Attendance Teacher Intervention

Tier II occurs when your child accumulates approximately 5 unexcused absences. You are contacted by the school staff to discuss your child's absences and an attendance contract is implemented.

The school takes the following actions:

1. A letter is sent home with your child regarding unexcused absences.
2. A School Attendance Review Team will schedule a meeting.
3. Attendance Contract
4. Automated phone message from the school when your child misses school and we did not know ahead of time.

Tier III: Referral to MCS Truancy Diversion Board

You are currently at Tier III based on your child's unexcused absence accumulation.

This occurs when a student continues to accumulate 8+ unexcused absences. This is the final step before a parent warrant is filed with the Rutherford County Juvenile Court. Our goal is to help you prevent this from occurring and offering potential solutions to barriers your family may be facing.

The Central Office takes the following steps:

1. Must complete this class before attending the Truancy Diversion Board meeting.
2. Referred to Truancy Diversion Board (explained further on the next slide).
 - a. If the student continues to have unsatisfactory attendance and has accumulated 10 or more unexcused absences, educational neglect and/or truancy charges may be filed with the juvenile court.
3. If a truancy petition is filed, the parent/guardian(s) and child will be required to appear before the juvenile judge to explain their child's unexcused absences.

What is the purpose of a MCS Truancy Diversion Board?

The purpose of this meeting is intended to be positive and proactive in nature. We will review and discuss your child's attendance. This includes any challenges and potential solutions. The intent is to create proactive action plan to ensure your child attends school daily. There will be outlined steps for your child, you and MCS. At the end of the meeting, we will review agreements and request your signature on the meeting notes.

Failure to attend this meeting may result in MCS filing a parent warrant.

Please note: If your child has a health condition that interferes with his/her ability to attend school daily, please let us know and we will explore a health plan based on a doctor's note, if the school has not already done so.

Attendees may include:

- Parents/guardians
- Principal
- School counselor
- Social worker
- Assistant Superintendent of Student Support Services
- Assistant City Attorney
- Community resource and service representatives



What is your role during a Tier III meeting?

Your role:

- Attend meeting.
 - If an unforeseen circumstance prevents you from attending the meeting immediately communicate.
- Engage MCS team in a dialogue about the reasons your child has the number of unexcused absences.
 - What challenges have you faced that prevent your child from attending school?
 - What have you tried that has worked and hasn't work?
- Consider resources offered by MCS team
- Follow up with agreements made during meeting.
- Remain civil. An adversely approach may lead to the team filing a parent warrant.



Understanding the impact of excessive absences

Unpacking reasons for excessive absences

Barriers

- Chronic and acute illness
- Family responsibilities or home situation
- Trauma
- Poor transportation
- Housing and food insecurity
- Inequitable access to needed services
- System involvement
- Lack of predictable schedules for learning
- Lack of access to tech
- Community violence

Aversion

- Struggling academically and/or behaviorally
- Unwelcoming school climate
- Social and peer challenges
- Anxiety
- Biased disciplinary and suspension practices
- Undiagnosed disability and/or disability accommodations
- Caregivers had negative educational experiences

Disengagement

- Lack of challenging, culturally responsive instruction
- Bored
- No meaningful relationships to adults in the school (especially given staff shortages)
- Lack of enrichment opportunities
- Lack of academic and behavioral support
- Failure to earn credits
- Need to work conflicts with being in high school

Misconceptions

- Absences are only a problem if they are unexcused
- Missing 2 days per month doesn't affect learning
- Lose track and underestimate TOTAL absences
- Assume students must stay home for any symptom of illness
- Attendance only matters in the older grades
- Suspensions don't count as absence

Did you know these attendance facts?

1. Regular attendance is crucial to workforce success. If an employee only shows up for work 90% of the time, he or she will most likely not be able to keep a job.
2. As early as preschool, chronic absenteeism, which means 18 or more absences during a school year, is a predictor of lower academic achievement. This includes excused and unexcused absences. A child is more likely to be fall one or more grade levels behind.
3. Students missing two or more days in August are five times more likely than their peers to be chronically absent.
4. Students who are chronically absent for any year between 8th and 12 grade are seven times more likely to drop out of school.
5. When students are absent, other students suffer because the teacher has to review instruction that the absent students have missed.
6. Students who are chronically absent are eight times more likely to end up in jail.

Every Day Matters

4 days = 28 hours

6 days = 42 hours

8 days = 56 hours

10 days = 70 hours

18 days = 120 hours

Missing a day of school here and there may not seem like much, but absences add up!

Think about the number of hours missed.

A student with 10+ days of missed school over their school career may miss an entire year of school or more. That's a lot of missed instruction.

Truant students are at a higher risk for:

1. Substance abuse
2. Delinquency
3. Gang activity
4. Serious criminal behavior (theft, burglary)
5. Suicidal thoughts and attempts
6. Early sexual activity
7. Dropping out of school



WHAT YOU CAN DO?

- Set a regular bedtime and morning routine.
- Lay out clothes and pack backpacks the night before.
- Keep your child healthy and make sure your child has the required shots.
- Develop backup plans for getting to school if something comes up. Call on a family member, a neighbor or another parent.
- Try to schedule medical appointments and extended trips when school isn't in session.
- If your child seems anxious about going to school, talk to teachers, school counselors and other parents for advice on how to make your child feel comfortable and excited about learning.

As a reminder, if your child must miss school, the following can be counted as excused:

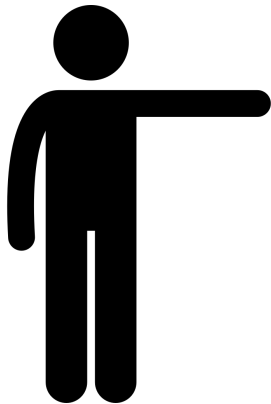
1. Personal injury or Illness of student,
2. Illness of immediate family member,
3. Death in the family,
4. Extreme weather conditions,
5. Religious observances,
6. School endorsed activities,
7. A legal court summons, subpoena, or court order; or
8. Circumstances which in the judgment of the principal create emergencies over which the student has no control.

10 “parent notes” are allowed without additional documentation to excuse single days for excusable reasons as listed above. For example, if your child is out Monday and Tuesday and you want to use a parent note, two notes will be used. A family vacation is not an excusable reason.

Verify Your Completion

Thank you for completing this online class. We hope you found it helpful.

Before attending the Truancy Diversion Board Meeting and in order to verify your completion with MCS, please complete and submit the form below. **Failure to complete this ahead of time may result in MCS filing with juvenile court.**



<https://forms.office.com/r/TzuFyLLVAA>

