

Senate File 2435

Chronic Absenteeism FAQ's



What if students leave for a vacation during the school year?

Please inform your child's school at least five (5) days before the trip. The District also recognizes that some vacations were planned before the recent law change. However, vacations are not exempt under SF 2435, and the new law gives schools no flexibility. All vacation days will count toward the total absences reported to the county attorney.

Exempt/Non Exempt vs Excused/Unexcused

Under the old attendance system, absences were deemed "excused" or "unexcused". Iowa's new chronic absenteeism law now views absences as "exempt" or "non-exempt". Exempt absences do not count toward student's chronic absenteeism totals. Under the new law there are six codes that are exempt:

- Have completed the requirements for graduation
- Are excused for sufficient reason by any court of record or judge
- Are attending religious services or receiving religious instruction
- Are unable to attend school due to legitimate medical reasons - see District FAQs for further information in this area
- Has an Individualized Education Program (IEP) that affects the student's attendance
- Has a plan under Section 504 that affects the student's attendance

Additionally In School Suspension, School Office Visits and School Related Participants (Field Trips, Extracurricular Activities, etc.) would not count toward chronic absenteeism totals.

Do medical appointments count against attendance reporting?

Doctors, dentists, orthodontists, optometrists, physical therapists, and any other doctor appointments are not exempt from being counted in attendance reporting, even if a medical note is provided to the school. These absences will count toward a student's chronic absenteeism totals.

Do illnesses count toward attendance reporting?

The District understands that students will become ill from time to time and the intent of the new law is not to have students attend school if they are sick. However, illness will not be considered as an exemption toward chronic absenteeism totals. Students are not considered to be chronically absent until they have 9 full days of absences in a given semester.

How are those absences calculated for appointments (doctor, dental, orthodontic, physical therapy etc.) where a student may miss up to a few hours of school but not a whole or even 1/2 day?

Whenever possible, the District encourages parents to schedule appointments outside of the school day. The District realizes that this is not always possible. If a student needs to miss school in order to attend an appointment, please notify the school office of the student's absence. Students also need to check out with the office upon their departure and check back in when they return. These absences will count toward a student's chronic absenteeism totals. If a student needs to miss school, please try to limit the number of hours or class periods that the student is missing so that it minimizes the impact to their instructional time. Chronic absenteeism is calculated in days, so it would take 4 appointments where a student misses 2 periods in order for those absences to lead up to a full day counted toward their chronic absenteeism totals.

Are kids exempt from school when they miss school for sporting events in which they participate, and do I need to notify the school that it is okay for them to be gone for the event?

For students who miss school because they are participating in school activities, the parent does not have to call in. These absences are exempt. School activities are defined as any educational opportunity set up by school personnel (field trip), sanctioned athletic, band, choir, or club identified and organized by a governing body associated with the state of Iowa. This does not include any AAU activity, regardless of whether they are made up of 50% or more NCSD athletes.

How do the exempt and nonexempt absences work? Are they all counted against us in the count for the county attorney to be contacted?

Any absences counted and coded as exempt do not count toward reporting to the county attorney. All other absences count towards reporting chronic absenteeism.

How does the attendance policy apply to those not of compulsory school age (16 years old and up)?

Students over the age of 16 are beyond compulsory attendance age and are excluded from the chronic absenteeism requirement under SF2435, however, these students may still be dropped from courses if they have excessive absenteeism. This could prevent them from earning credits towards graduation.

What if a parent refuses to attend the required meeting when a student has missed 15% of a grading period (Absenteeism Prevention Plan)?

SF 2435 states that if any student or parent refuses to participate in the mandatory meeting to create the absenteeism prevention plan, the matter will be turned over to the county attorney immediately.

How does this pertain to children with an IEP or 504 plans?

If a student does not have a legitimate reason or health plan agreed upon by the IEP or 504 team, then all exemptions and absences apply to them just like any other student attending school.