



## **Atkinson County School System Student Attendance and School Climate Protocol**

### **Purpose**

The Atkinson County School System affirms that regular school attendance is essential to academic achievement, student well-being, and long-term success. The District recognizes that barriers to attendance may exist, including health concerns, family hardship, transportation challenges, academic difficulties, or other adverse circumstances. The District's approach to attendance enforcement is not intended to be punitive in nature. Rather, the District is committed to partnering with families to identify and remove barriers that interfere with consistent school attendance. Through early intervention, communication, and connection to appropriate school and community resources, the District seeks to promote student engagement and academic success. Judicial proceedings shall be initiated only after statutory thresholds are met and documented intervention efforts have failed to resolve attendance concerns.

This Protocol is adopted in accordance with O.C.G.A. § 20-2-690.2 and reflects the District's commitment to both legal compliance and supportive intervention.

### **Student Attendance and School Climate Committee**

The Student Attendance and School Climate Committee is established in accordance with O.C.G.A. §20-2-690.2 to promote regular school attendance and a positive school climate through collaboration among schools, courts, law enforcement, and community agencies. The Committee serves in a planning and coordination role and works to identify barriers to attendance, promote early intervention, and support strategies that improve student engagement.

The Committee does not adjudicate individual cases or direct court actions but supports collaborative efforts among participating agencies to address attendance concerns and strengthen student success.

### **Confidentiality**

All information shared among members of the Student Attendance and School Climate Committee shall be handled in accordance with applicable federal and state confidentiality laws, including the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Information shared through



this protocol shall be used solely for the purpose of addressing student attendance concerns and supporting student success.

### **Georgia Compulsory Attendance Law 20-2-690**

Georgia law requires that all children between the ages of six (6) and sixteen (16) attend school unless they have a lawful reason to be absent. In addition, students under the age of six (6) who have been on roll for twenty (20) or more days fall under the provision of the Georgia Mandatory Attendance Law 20-2-150(c). State policy defines the school year as 180 attendance days or 900 hours of instruction.

### **Annual Notice of Compulsory Attendance Requirements**

No later than September 1 of each school year, each guardian, along with students ten (10) years of age or older, shall receive written notice outlining the possible consequences and penalties for failing to comply with Georgia's compulsory attendance law. Each guardian and each student who is ten (10) years of age or older shall sign and return an acknowledgment of receipt.

### **Early Identification and Intervention**

The District shall implement uniform, proactive attendance monitoring procedures designed to identify patterns of absenteeism early and intervene before court involvement becomes necessary.

Interventions may include:

- Parent or guardian conferences
- Student support team meetings
- Referral to student support services
- Review of transportation or scheduling concerns
- Connection to community resources
- Behavioral or academic intervention planning

The District acknowledges that excessive tardies and early dismissals may also negatively impact learning and may warrant intervention.



### **Statutory Notification Requirements**

In accordance with O.C.G.A. § 20-2-690.1 the following procedures will be followed:

- Each absence: Guardian is notified of each absence via Infinite Campus using guardian-provided contact number.
- Three days: School social worker notifies guardian in writing with state law attached. Notification is documented in iCampus.
- Five days: School social worker notifies guardian in writing with state law attached. Notification is documented in iCampus.
- 10 days: Home visit with school social worker and school resource officer with attendance summary, state law, and school policy. Obtain a signed attendance agreement. Notification is documented in iCampus.

### **Judicial Referral Process**

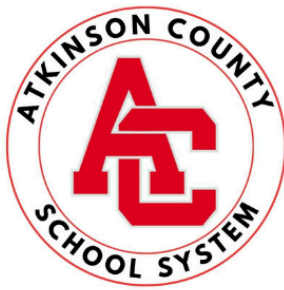
Once all procedures specified above according to the law and school system are satisfied, a court referral will be made by the school resource officer. Truancy charges may be combined with a report to the Department of Family and Children's Services by the school social worker if there is evidence of additional maltreatment in combination with educational neglect.

Once the court referral is made, guardians will be notified of a pre-warrant hearing, which they will be required to attend. If the guardian does not comply with the order of the judge and unexcused absences continue following this hearing, the guardian can be fined up to \$100.00 and serve 30 days in jail. This is the decision of the judge. If the guardian fails to attend the hearing, a bench warrant will be issued. After the judge issues a bench warrant, a bond hearing will be held on that warrant. The warrant will be moved to Superior/Juvenile Court.

### **Interagency Coordination**

Each school and the appropriate law enforcement agency shall designate a contact person for truancy matters to ensure efficient communication and procedural compliance.

The District shall maintain updated contact information for coordination purposes.



### **Transfer of Records**

If a student with excessive unexcused absences transfers to another school or school system, the student's attendance record shall be forwarded to the receiving school.

### **Commitment to Student Success**

While the District is obligated to enforce Georgia's compulsory attendance law, the Atkinson County School System affirms that court referral is a last resort.

The primary goal of this Protocol is to:

- Identify barriers to attendance
- Support families
- Connect students with appropriate resources
- Promote consistent school engagement

### **Atkinson County School System's Attendance Policy**

It is the position of the Atkinson County School System Board of Education that every school day is important and that students should only be absent for extraordinary and legitimate reasons. Consistent attendance supports academic success and strengthens school climate.

Absences will be classified as excused or unexcused. School officials will determine whether an absence is excused or unexcused based on the following requirements specified below.

### **Types of Excused Absences**

#### **Excused Absence**

An excused (iCampus code: EX) absence that permits students to make up missed assignments. Requires written documentation from a guardian or medical professional rendering treatment to the student. A maximum of five (5) guardian notes will be accepted per school year.

#### **Acceptable Excused Absences**

Absences may be excused for the following reasons:



**A. Personal Illness**

When attendance would endanger the student's health or the health of others. Verification is required from a medical professional or a guardian. Guardian notes are limited to five (5) per school year.

**B. Death or Serious Illness**

Verified by a guardian via note, obituary, funeral program or other written documentation

**C. Recognized Religious Holidays**

When observed by the student's faith. Verification from a guardian and/or church official is required. Advance notice should be provided to school administration.

**D. Legal or Court Appearance**

When mandated by order of a government agency, including pre-induction physical examinations for service in the armed forces.

**E. Hazardous Conditions**

When conditions render attendance impossible or hazardous to student health or safety.

**F. Voting**

When a student is registering to vote or voting in a public election (limited to one school day).

**G. Administrative Approval**

Verified by the principal. A written request must be submitted prior to the absence for administrative approval to be granted.

**H. Military Deployment Leave**



A student whose legal guardian is serving in the armed forces of the United States or the National Guard and has been called to active duty or is on leave from overseas deployment to a combat or combat-support posting shall be granted excused absences, not to exceed five (5) school days per school year, to visit with the guardian prior to deployment or redeployment.

### **Medically Excused Absence**

A medically excused (iCampus code: MED) absence that permits students to make up missed assignments. Documentation must be from a medical professional rendering treatment to the student.

### **Code 3 Absence**

A Code 3 (iCampus code: C3) absence is a school-approved activity or visitation that permits students to be absent while remaining in good academic standing. C3 absences are considered excused, and students will be permitted to make up missed assignments. The following conditions apply:

- The student must be passing all classes at the time of the request.
- Attendance eligibility requirements outlined in the district's C3 field trip guidelines must be met.
- Students must travel to and from school-sponsored events with the supervising teacher, coach, or approved school personnel.
- Seniors may be granted up to two (2) excused days per school year for approved college, technical school, or military visitations. A completed college/technical school/military visitation form must be submitted in accordance with guidelines provided by ACHS School Counselor.

### **Excuse Submission Process**

1. Guardian or medical professional responsible for rendering treatment to the student may submit an excuse that includes the following information: student's name, date, dates of absences, and the reason for being absent. Students are allowed up to five (5) notes from guardians per school year.
2. Present the written excuse to the registrar within three (3) days of the student's return to school.



3. If excuses are not presented within five (5) days of the absence, the absence will be ruled as unexcused by default.
4. Students should make plans to complete make-up work due to absence(s). Grades will reflect absence(s) if work is not made up within the appropriate number of days. Students are expected to make arrangements regarding make-up work with each class teacher the day they return to class.
5. Students are allowed three (3) days to make up work for excused absences. After three (3) days, the grade for missing assignments may be entered as a zero (0).

### **Driver's License Eligibility**

Students and parents/guardians are advised that Georgia law may require individuals under the age of 18 to provide documentation relating to school enrollment and attendance in connection with eligibility for driving privileges.

### **Memorandum of Understanding**

#### **Atkinson County School System Student Attendance and School Climate Protocol**

We, the undersigned, hereby endorse the Atkinson County School System Student Attendance Protocol and agree to work cooperatively within the parameters set forth in this Protocol.

The purpose of this Memorandum of Understanding is:

To ensure coordination and collaboration among officials, agencies, and programs involved in matters related to compulsory school attendance;

To reduce the number of unexcused absences among students enrolled in the Atkinson County School System; and

To increase the percentage of students present to participate in instructional programming and state-mandated assessments as required by Georgia law.



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All participating agencies agree to fulfill their respective responsibilities as outlined in the Atkinson County School System Student Attendance Protocol and to maintain communication necessary to promote compliance with O.C.G.A. § 20-2-690.1 and related statutes.

No amendment to this Protocol shall be valid unless it is made in writing and executed by all participating parties.

Adopted this 28 day of April, 2026.

**Signatures**

**By signing below, each member affirms their agreement with and commitment to the Atkinson County School System Student Attendance and School Climate Protocol.**

Signature: Clayton A. Tomlinson Date: 5/6/26  
Hon. Clayton A. Tomlinson, Chief Judge

Signature: Suzanne R. Mathis Date: 4/28/26  
Hon. Suzanne R. Mathis, Juvenile Court Judge

Signature: Carol G. Durrance Date: 5/6/2026  
Hon. Carol G. Durrance, Probate Judge

Signature: Chase Studstill Date: 4/28/2026  
Chase Studstill, District Attorney

Signature: Jason Cain Date: 5-8-2026  
Jason Cain, Assistant District Attorney

Signature: J. Allen Lawson Date: 05/06/26  
J. Allen Lawson, Chief Assistant District Attorney

Signature: Melissa Contreras Date: 4/28/26  
Melissa Contreras, Juvenile Probation/Parole Specialist



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Signature: *Dr. Melissa Wilbanks* Date: 04-28-2026  
Melissa Wilbanks, Superintendent

Signature: *Shelley Doyle* Date: 4/28/2026  
Shelley Doyle, Certified School Employee

Signature: *Danny Smith* Date: 4-28-2026  
Danny Smith, Board of Education Member

Signature: *Breanna Wright* Date: 04-28-26  
Breanna Wright, System Social Worker

Signature: *Joshua Nettles* Date: 4-28-26  
Joshua Nettles, Sheriff's Office Designee

Signature: *Francisco Sanchez* Date: 5/7/26  
Francisco Sanchez, Municipal Police Chief

Signature: *Pearson* Date: 5/7/2026  
Pearson Police Department Representative (TBD)

Signature: *Jordan Wallace* Date: 5/11/2026  
Jordan Wallace, DFCS Representative

Signature: *Calandra Holmes* Date: 4/28/2026  
Calandra Holmes, Mental Health Organization Representative

Signature: *Jennifer R. Brown* Date: 4/28/26  
Jennifer Brown, Family Connection Representative

Signature: *Nanissa Castillo* Date: 4-28-26  
Board of Health Representative (TBD)