

**CLINCH COUNTY SCHOOLS  
STUDENT ATTENDANCE & SCHOOL CLIMATE COMMITTEE PROTOCOL  
Alapaha Judicial Circuit  
Clinch County, Georgia  
Adopted: April 14, 2026**

Georgia’s compulsory education law, O.C.G.A. § 20-2-690.1, requires all children ages six to sixteen to attend school. Pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 20-2-690.1 and the Georgia Department of Education Rule 160-5-1-.10, children subject to compulsory attendance who have more than five days of unexcused absences during the school calendar year are considered truant.

Pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 20-2-690.2, the Chief Judge of the Alapaha Judicial Circuit has established the Clinch County Student Attendance and School Climate Committee [“Committee”] to adopt a written Student Attendance Protocol for Clinch County Schools, which includes representatives of the following entities:

**Committee Members**

- Superior Court of the Alapaha Judicial Circuit
- Juvenile Court of the Alapaha Judicial Circuit
- Probate Judge and Chief Magistrate of Clinch County
- District Attorney of the Alapaha Circuit
- Department of Juvenile Justice
- Clinch County Schools Superintendent, Certified School Employee, School Board Member, and School Social Worker
- Clinch County Sheriff’s Office
- City of Homerville Police Department
- Clinch County Department of Family and Children Services
- Clinch County Board of Health
- Clinch County Mental Health
- Clinch County Family Connection

**Commitment**

The Clinch County Student Attendance and School Climate Committee members and their respective agencies affirm commitment to the implementation of this Protocol pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 20-2-690.2.

Each participating agency agrees to the following:

1. Designate an official representative to serve on the Committee.
2. Participate in at least two Committee meetings annually.
3. Share relevant, non-identifying attendance and school climate data.
4. Collaborate in implementing intervention strategies.
5. Uphold the responsibilities outlined in the adopted Protocol.

The Committee serves in a planning, coordination, and advisory capacity and does not adjudicate individual cases, direct prosecutions, or exercise judicial authority.

All information shared among members of the Committee shall be handled in accordance with applicable state and federal confidentiality laws.

### **Procedures**

The Clinch County School System shall implement procedures for identifying, reporting, investigating, and addressing violations of compulsory attendance laws in accordance with the Board of Education Policy JB and the Clinch County School Student Handbook.

### **School Intervention Process**

Attendance Interventions:

#### Tier 1

- Automated messages to parents via phone at every absence
- School contact with parent/guardian at 1, 3, 5, and 8 days absent/tardy
- Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) - school climate
- Personalized Parent Communications - Positive phone calls/emails/messages home
- Recognition of Good & Improved attendance
- Regular monitoring of student attendance via school reports
- Attendance Awareness Month

#### Tier II

- School contact with parent/guardian at 10 and 15 days absent/tardy
- Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) - to identify student needs as soon as possible so interventions can be accessed
- Attendance Support Team - to review individual attendance needs/interventions with students and parents
- Community Agency Referrals as needed- counseling, medical, financial
- Social Work Referral - contact with families/students, small groups

### Tier III

- Social Work Case Management Services - home visits to address underlying issues affecting attendance
- Educational Neglect Referral to DFCS as needed
- Truancy referral to DJJ as needed
- Continued Community Agency Referrals as needed

### **Parent Notification for Absences:**

By September 1 of each school year or within thirty (30) days of a student's enrollment in the school system, the parent, guardian, or other person having control or charge of such student must sign a statement indicating receipt of the written summary of possible consequences and penalties for failing to comply with compulsory attendance. After two reasonable attempts to secure such signature(s), the school system will send a copy of the written summary to the parent/guardian via first class or certified mail, to be considered in compliance with this requirement.

In addition, students aged 10 or older by September 1 must sign a statement indicating receipt of such a written statement of possible consequences for non-compliance to the local system's policy.

*Students will be EXCUSED from school under the following circumstances, as a minimum:*

- Personal illness or when attendance endangers the student's health or the health of others
- Serious illness or death in a student's immediate family
- Court order or order by government agency, including physical exam for armed forces
- Observation of religious holidays
- Conditions rendering attendance impossible or hazardous to student health or safety
- Registering to vote or voting in public election, not to exceed one day
- Student to visit with parent/legal guardian in military who has been called to duty, on leave from overseas deployment, or on military leave (maximum of 5 days per school year)
- Serving as a Page in the Georgia General Assembly
- Foster Care student who attends foster care related court proceedings

- Student who participates in the Student Teen Election Participant (STEP) program
- Participation in a 4-H sponsored activity or program

Students must submit written documentation of excuses within three (3) days of returning to school or the absence will be recorded as unexcused.

School days missed as a result of out of school suspension shall not be counted as unexcused days for the purpose of determining student truancy.

### **5 Unexcused Absences Notification:**

The school will notify parent(s), guardian(s), or other person(s) having control or charge of the student when such student has accumulated five unexcused absences in the school calendar year. After two reasonable attempts to notify the parent/guardian of such absences without response, the school will notify the parent/guardian via first class or certified mail. Notification shall include consequences and penalties per O.C.G.A. § 20-2-690.1, and inform parents/guardians that each subsequent unexcused absence constitutes a separate offense.

### **Progressive Parental Involvement Process:**

#### **Unexcused Absences:**

- 1 unexcused absence - parent/guardian contact via automated phone call
- 3 unexcused absences - parent/guardian contact by teacher
- 5 unexcused absences - parent/guardian contact by school via mail, and/or home visit
- 8 unexcused absences - parent/guardian contact by School Social Worker via phone, home visit, and/or mail
- 10 unexcused absences - possible referral to DJJ and/or DFCS

Students who are truant or not attending school may be denied a driver's license (or have driver's license suspended) in accordance with Code Section 40-5-22.

#### **Excused Absences:**

- 5 excused absences - parent/guardian contact by teacher
- 8 excused absences - parent/guardian contact by school via mail and/or phone
- 10 excused absences - parent/guardian contact by School Social Worker

- 15+excused absences - possible referral to DJJ and/or DFCS

**Tardies:**

- 5 unexcused tardies/check outs - parent/guardian contact by teacher
- 8 unexcused tardies/check outs - parent/guardian contact by school via mail and/or phone
- 10 unexcused tardies/check-outs - parent/guardian contact by School Social Worker via phone, home visit, and/or mail
- 15+ unexcused tardies/check-outs - possible referral to DJJ and/or DFCS

**Notification prior to Judicial Proceedings:**

Prior to any action to commence judicial proceedings to impose a penalty on a parent, guardian, or other person who has control or charge of a student who is in non-compliance with compulsory attendance, the school will send notice to such parent, guardian, or other person by certified mail, return receipt requested.

Prior to court referral, the school shall verify:

- Parent/guardian contact and/or conference was attempted
- Notification via mail/home visits were completed
- Attendance plans/interventions documented
- Offer of supports documented

If attendance concerns persist after documented interventions, the school may refer the matter, as appropriate, to the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ), the Department of Family and Children Services (DFCS), or other appropriate agencies for further investigation or services.

**Data Review and School Climate Accountability**

Pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 20–2-690.2, the Committee may review attendance and school climate data at least twice annually to evaluate the effectiveness of this protocol, ensure compliance, and recommend improvements. The purpose of this data review is to monitor attendance trends, evaluate interventions, identify systemic barriers, promote accountability, strengthen school climate outcomes, reduce suspensions, expulsions, and dropouts, and increase student achievement and engagement. This review is conducted to determine whether school-based interventions are effectively reducing the need for court referrals and improving student attendance outcomes.

Each protocol partner commits to sharing relevant attendance data and assessment measures with the Committee, which will be used to identify effective interventions and areas for improvement. Data (non-identifying) to be provided may consist of school attendance and behavioral data, truancy referral data, Student Health Survey data, parent/guardian survey data, and GADOE ratings, as well as other data that may assist in this review process.

### Signatures

We, the undersigned, do endorse and adopt the Clinch County Schools Student Attendance Protocol and agree to work in cooperation with partner agencies by working within the parameters set forth in this protocol:

To ensure coordination and cooperation among officials, agencies, and programs involved in compulsory attendance issues;

To increase the percentage of students present to take tests which are required to be administered under the laws of this state;

To reduce the number of students who are chronically absent as such term is defined in Code Section 20-2-690.3; and

To improve school climate in each school.

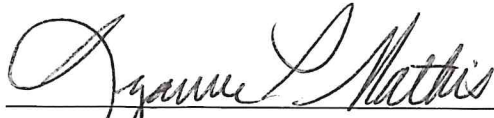
Following adoption of this written protocol and filing with the Georgia Department of Education, the Committee will meet semi-annually for the purpose of evaluating compliance and effectiveness, and to modify the protocol as necessary

This protocol may be amended as necessary upon approval of the Committee and a Superior Court Judge from the Alapaha Judicial Circuit. By signing below, the undersigned acknowledge review and adoption of the Clinch County Student Attendance and School Climate Committee Protocol.

Clayton A. Tomlinson Date: 4/14/20

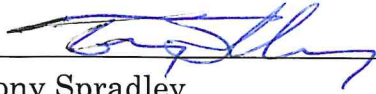
Clayton A. Tomlinson

Chief Judge of the Superior Court, Alapaha Judicial Circuit



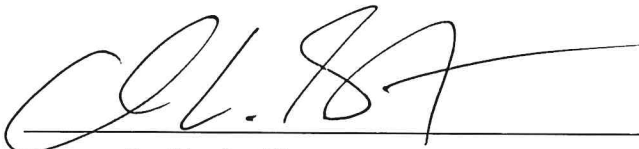
Date: 5/8/24

Suzanne P. Mathis  
Juvenile Court Judge, Alapaha Judicial Circuit



Date: 5-1-26

Tony Spradley  
Probate Judge, Probate Judge and Chief Magistrate of Clinch County, Georgia



Date: 5/20/24

Chase L. Studstill  
District Attorney, Alapaha Judicial Circuit



Date: 4/14/26

J. Allen Lawson  
Chief Assistant District Attorney, Alapaha Judicial Circuit



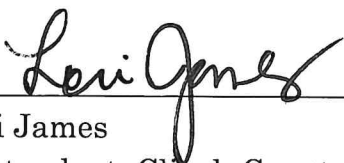
Date: 4-14-26

Jason Cain  
Assistant District Attorney, Alapaha Judicial Circuit



Date: 5/6/26

Melissa Contreras  
Juvenile Probation Specialist, Department of Juvenile Justice



Date: 4/17/26

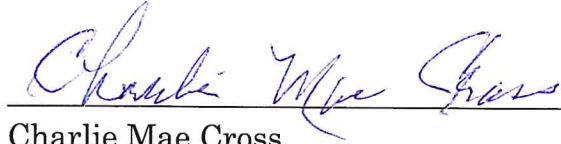
Dr. Lori James  
Superintendent, Clinch County School System



Date: 4-14-26

Denise Brown

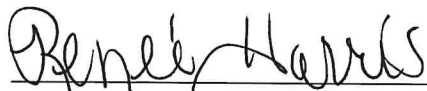
Assistant Superintendent, Clinch County School System



Date: 4-14-26

Charlie Mae Cross

Vice-Chair, Clinch County Board of Education



Date: 04-14-26

Renee Harris

School Social Worker, Clinch County School System



Date: 04-14-26

Raymond Peterson

Sheriff, Clinch County Sheriff's Office



Date: 4-14-2026

Keith Jackson

Chief of Police, City of Homerville Police Department



Date: 5-20-26

Terry Johnson

Supervisor, Clinch County Department of Family and Children Services



Date: 5-20-26

Melony Mitchell

Supervisor, Clinch County Department of Family and Children Services

Jennifer McDonald Date: 4-14-26  
Jennifer McDonald  
Nurse Manager, Clinch County Health Department

Alison Smith Date: 4-14-26  
Alison Smith  
Board of Directors Member (Unison), Community Service Board

Bonnie Reamy Date: 4/14/26  
Bonnie Reamy  
Coordinator, Clinch County Family Connection