

FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions)

Key Terms/Definitions

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Q. What is a “truant?”

A. Section 26-2a of the School Code defines "truant " as a child subject to compulsory school attendance and who is absent without valid cause from such attendance for a school day *or portion thereof*.

Q. What is a “chronic or habitual truant?”

A. Section 26-2a of the School Code defines "**chronic or habitual truant**" as a student who is “absent *without valid cause* from such attendance for **5% or more of the previous 180 regular attendance days** (9 days within the previous school days)
Note: “Previous 180 regular attendance days” means that students do not begin each school year or term with a “fresh start.” This includes students moving to new schools as they progress in grade levels (i.e. elementary to middle or middle to high school) or transfer.

Q. What is considered “**valid cause** from such attendance?”

A. Section 26-2a of the School Code lists the following as “**valid cause**:"

1. Illness
2. Observance of religious holiday
3. Death in the immediate family
4. Family emergency
5. Other circumstances outside of the student’s control as identified by the board of education in each district
6. Other circumstances which cause reasonable concern to the parent for the safety or health of the student

Q. What are considered legitimate observances of religious holidays?

A. As the population in DuPage County becomes increasingly diverse, schools are seeing a greater variety of religious beliefs and observances. It is important to protect the religious freedoms of our students. It is important for school personnel to become educated relative to the religious diversity in their schools beyond the questions of absences and

develop calendars and communications that reflect such dates. (Source: P.A. 84-1308; 84-1420; 84-1424; 84-1438)

Q. When is a “chronic or habitual truant” referred to the Court system?

A. Section 26-15 of the School Code states that when a Regional Superintendent has reason to believe that a pupil is a “**truant minor**” as defined in Section 26-2a, the regional superintendent may report such pupil under the provisions of the Juvenile Court Act.

Q. What is a “**truant minor**?”

A. Section 26-2a of the School Code defines “**truant minor**” as a chronic truant **to whom supportive services** have been provided and have failed to result in the cessation of chronic truancy, or have been offered and refused.

Q. Are types of “**supportive services**” specified?

A. Section 26-2a of the School Code states that **school districts shall** adopt policies, consistent with rules adopted by the State Board of Education, which identify the appropriate supportive services and available resources and are provided for truants and chronic truants. Such supportive services include “prevention, diagnostic, intervention and remedial services, alternative programs and other school and community resources.

Q. When should the process of referral to the Regional Office of Education begin for a chronic or habitual truant?

A. As soon as the school/district exhaust’s supportive services and resources are provided for the student and the family, the referral process and tracking of interventions should be documented with the form on the ROE website.

Q. What do schools need accomplish prior to final referral to the ROE?

A. Prior to Referral to the Regional Office of Education from the Illinois Compulsory School Attendance Law (Art. 26 ILSC)The Illinois Compulsory School Attendance Law (Article 26 of the Illinois School Code) holds parents responsible for the enrollment and regular school attendance of children between the ages of seven and seventeen. Section 26-13 of the Code requires school districts to adopt absenteeism and truancy policies identifying appropriate supportive services and available resources for truants and chronic truants. These policies must be in accordance with Rules and Regulations as established by the State Board of Education which require at least these three elements:

1. A definition of a valid cause for absence in accordance with Section 26-2a of the School Code;
2. A description of diagnostic procedures to be used for identifying the cause(s) of unexcused student absenteeism, which shall, at a minimum, include interviews with the student, his or her parent(s) or guardian(s), and any school official(s) or other parties who may have information about the reasons for the student's attendance problem; and
3. The identification of supportive services to be made available to truant or chronically truant students. These services shall include, but need not be limited to, parent conferences, student counseling, family counseling, and information about existing community services which are available to truant and chronically truant students and relevant to their needs.

Section 26-12 of the School Code stipulates that ***no punitive action, including school suspensions, expulsions and court action, is to be taken against chronic truants for such truancy unless available supportive services have been provided, or at least offered, to the student.***

Q. When does the ROE begin to directly participate with primary interventions?

A. When supportive services from the school have been exhausted and community resources that have been identified also fail to remediate chronic truancy. If such services are refused by the family, a District level intervention/problem solving meeting should be held. Related school personnel/administration, student and parent/guardian, and an ROE Truancy Staff Member.

Key Terms/Definitions

For purposes of understanding truancy and absenteeism, the following definitions are provided directly from Illinois School Code (105 ILCS 5/26-2a) (from Ch. 122, par. 26-2a):

Truant

A "truant" is defined as a child subject to compulsory school attendance and who is absent without valid cause from such attendance for a school day or portion thereof.

Chronic or habitual truant

"Chronic or habitual truant" shall be defined as a child subject to compulsory school attendance and who is absent without valid cause from such attendance for **5%** or more of the previous 180 regular attendance days.

Truant minor

"Truant minor" is defined as a chronic truant to whom supportive services, including prevention, diagnostic, intervention and remedial services, alternative programs and other school and community resources have been provided and have failed to result in the cessation of chronic truancy, or have been offered and refused.

Dropout

A "dropout" is defined as any child enrolled in grades 1 through 12 whose name has been removed from the district enrollment roster for any reason other than his death, extended illness, graduation or completion of a program of studies and who has not transferred to another public or private school.

Valid Cause

"Valid cause" for absence shall be illness, observance of a religious holiday, death in the immediate family, family emergency, and shall include such other situations beyond the control of the student as determined by the board of education in each district, or such other circumstances which cause reasonable concern to the parent for the safety or health of the student.

Religion

"Religion" for the purposes of this Article, includes all aspects of religious observance and practice, as well as belief. (Source: P.A. 84-1308; 84-1420; 84-1424; 84-1438.)