

# ATTENDANCE MATTERS!

We missed you in school!

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Please share this document with students, staff, families and community members who are seeking additional information about attendance, chronic absenteeism or truancy.

### Q. WHAT IS THE DEFINITION OF CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM?

Chronic absenteeism is missing 10% of school time **for excused or unexcused** reasons throughout the school year. This works out to about two days per month for an average school calendar. In order to be counted in the chronic absenteeism calculation, students must have been enrolled at least 10 days in the school/district.

### Q. WHY IS CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM SUCH A SERIOUS ISSUE?

Chronic absenteeism is a leading cause of poor grades and it can make it difficult for students to learn to read by 3rd grade, achieve in middle school and graduate from high school. Chronic absenteeism is a strong predictor of dropping out of high school and also can impact a student's health and well-being, since school is a source of nutritious food and other services that support student success. Being absent makes it harder for students to build friendships and become active in their school community. Chronic absenteeism also can lead to issues later in life, including poverty, poor health and involvement in the criminal justice system.

### Q. WHAT IS THE CURRENT CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM RATE IN KENTUCKY?

In the 2023-2024 school year, the Kentucky chronic absenteeism rate was 28% as reported on the Kentucky State Report Card.

### Q. WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN EXCUSED ABSENCES VS. UNEXCUSED ABSENCES?

Excused absences are when a student is absent for what is identified as an acceptable reason in the attendance policy set by a local school district's board of education and in accordance with [state regulations](#). Examples of excused absences include illness, field trips, mental health days and college visits. Local schools may require notes to verify/approve excused absences. Excused absences are included in the calculation for chronic absenteeism.

Unexcused absences are when a student is absent without a reason identified as acceptable within the attendance policy set by a local school district's board of education. If school officials determine that the guardian's excuse is not valid or verified, the absence shall be unexcused.

Suspension of a student is considered an unexcused absence. Unexcused absences are used to calculate truancy rates and are also included in the calculation for chronic absenteeism.



## Q. WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM AND TRUANCY?

Chronic absenteeism includes both unexcused and excused absences, while truancy is based only on unexcused absences. Chronic absenteeism is based on the total minutes missed and includes tardies (when students arrive at school late or leave school early).

Truancy (as defined in [KRS 159.150](#)) counts only UNEXCUSED absences/tardies:

(1) Any student who has attained the age of six (6) years, but has not reached his or her eighteenth birthday, who has been absent from school without valid excuse for three (3) or more days, or tardy without valid excuse on three (3) or more days, is a truant.

(2) Any student enrolled in a public school who has attained the age of eighteen (18) years, but has not reached his or her twenty-first birthday, who has been absent from school without valid excuse for three (3) or more days, or tardy without valid excuse on three (3) or more days, is a truant.

## Q. HOW IS ATTENDANCE CALCULATED FOR STUDENTS IN VIRTUAL PROGRAMS OR PERFORMANCE-BASED PROGRAMS?

Students with a 100% [performance-based](#) schedule are not counted in a district's chronic absenteeism rate and their attendance is not tracked in the same way.

Full-time virtual students can be tracked via performance-based course or course-level participation. The course-level attendance does get recorded, and those students will be included in chronic absenteeism rates at both the district and school level.

Each school (and sometimes down to the course-level) sets the requirements for attendance check-ins. An attendance check must be done each period of the day, but that can be generated based on a school/district requirement. Attendance checks may include a student logging into a Google Meet, completing the daily assignment on a virtual platform or multiple days of attendance may be generated based on a project.

## Q. ARE EDUCATIONAL ENHANCEMENT OPPORTUNITY (EHO) DAYS COUNTED IN THE CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM FORMULA?

Up to 10 school days per student may be used to pursue an educational enhancement opportunity (EHO) determined by the principal to be of significant educational value. When students are not in school due to approved EHO days, they are not counted as absent. EHO days may include, but are not limited to, participation in an educational foreign exchange program or an intensive instructional, experiential or performance program in English, science, mathematics, social studies, foreign language or the arts.

## Q. ARE STUDENTS ENROLLED IN HOME/HOSPITAL INCLUDED IN CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM DATA?

[Home/Hospital instruction](#) is provided in a home or other designated site for a student who cannot attend school. Students enrolled in Home/Hospital receive instruction through two one-hour visits per five school days. Any time a student misses scheduled home hospital instruction, it can result in an absence that will count toward chronic absenteeism. One visit per five school days counts as 2.5 days of missed instruction.

## Q. WHERE CAN I FIND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM?

Please visit the [KDE Chronic Absenteeism webpage](#) for additional information, resources and contact information.

