

**FOCUS  
ON  
ATTENDANCE**

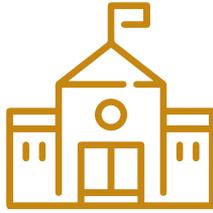


**The Focus on Attendance:**

# **Parent Handbook**

*Allegheny County Department of Human Services*





## **Who are we?**

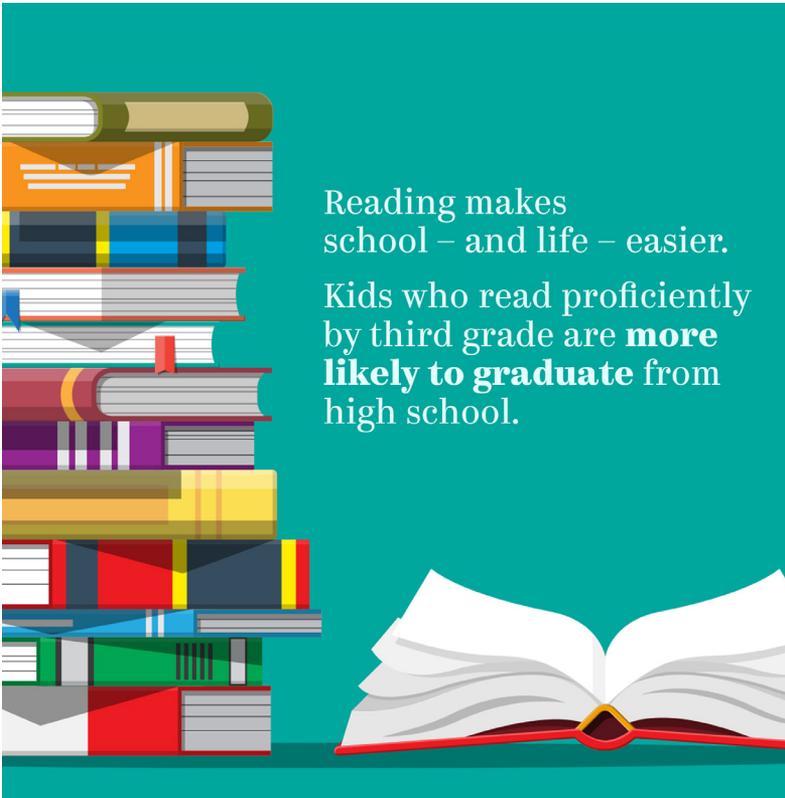
- Focus on Attendance is a Community Based Attendance Improvement Program for all schools in Allegheny County.
- Approved by the Fifth Judicial District as an Adjudication Alternative Program for the Magisterial District Courts.

## **What do we do?**

- Facilitates positive communication between systems, provides technical assistance and offers coordination of services.
- Provide direct supports to children and families by providing a variety of resources and services.

# How can I use this handbook?

- ✓ This handbook provides tips for parents, whose children are experiencing poor school attendance
- ✓ Provides basic information about school attendance
- ✓ Provides tips for attending Magisterial District Court hearings
- ✓ Provides tips for your student
- ✓ Provides the information needed to help your student succeed in school



# Let's start here

**COMPULSORY SCHOOL AGE IS NOW 6 TO 18 YEARS OLD**

## What Is Truancy?

Truancy is having three (3) or more unexcused absences in the current school year and these absences do not need to be in a row.

## What Is Habitual Truancy?

Habitual truancy means having six (6) or more unexcused absences in the current school year. These absences do not need to be in a row.

## What Happens If Your Child Is Habitually Truant?

Once your child becomes habitually truant, the school must take certain actions depending on whether your child is under fifteen (15) or is fifteen (15) or older. These actions include referrals to attendance improvement programs, the county Children, Youth and Family Services (CYF) agency, or file a citation with the Magisterial District Judge.

### Always Remember

It is the responsibility of the STUDENT to make up all schoolwork missed during his/her absence. Contact your child's counselor or social worker with any questions.

# What is a Legal Absence from School?

- Weather emergency, inaccessible roads
- Religious holidays recognized by the Board of Education
- Bereavement - temporarily excused for family members death
- Illness/Health care (doctor's note needed)
- Principal approved reasons for absence from school (i.e., field trips, educational vacations, counseling, mentoring, support groups, principal exception
- Involuntary exclusion (i.e., suspension from school, court summons)

**If an Absence Note IS Not received within 3 days of your child's return to school THE ABSENCE WILL BE CONSIDERED ILLEGAL and Will Not be changed to excused.**

**If a note is received within 3 days of your child's return to school the absence will be considered legal and will be changed to an excused absence.**

**Parents can write up to 10 excuses within a school year before a doctor's note is mandatory.**



## The Focus on Attendance Partnership

### ABSENCE EXCUSE NOTE

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Student's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

School Building: \_\_\_\_\_

# of days missed: \_\_\_\_\_

Dates of missed day(s):

Reason for missed day(s):

***NOTE: 3 or more days absent in a row requires a doctor's note***

Parent/Guardian Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number you can be reached at: \_\_\_\_\_

# POSITIVE SCHOOL ATTENDANCE is Important to Student Success!

## IF YOUR CHILD MISSES SCHOOL

- ✓ CALL THE SCHOOL TO LET THEM KNOW YOUR CHILD WILL BE ABSENT OR LATE.
- ✓ WRITE AN EXCUSE AND HAVE YOUR CHILD PUT IT IN THEIR BACKPACK.
- ✓ CALL AND MAKE SURE YOUR CHILD TURNED IN THE NOTE TO THEIR HOMEROOM TEACHER OR THE SCHOOL OFFICE THE NEXT DAY.

**TAKING THESE STEPS WILL MAKE SURE THAT YOUR CHILD'S ABSENCE WILL BE MARKED AS EXCUSED AND AVOID A TRUANCY CITATION BEING ISSUED.**



### Don't Forget...

If your child misses or is late to school due to a medical appointment, please turn a note in from the medical provider this may be an excused absence. You can ask the doctor to fax to the school.

Children/teens **OFTEN “FORGET”** to turn in the excuse or doctor’s statement once they return to school. So, you will have to follow-up with the school.

## I need to stay home if...



I have a fever  
100°F or higher



I am vomiting  
within 24 hours



I have diarrhea  
within 24 hours



I have a rash  
with itching or fever



I have head lice  
actively itching



I have an eye infection  
redness, itching, pus



I have been in the hospital  
hospital stay or E.R. visit

## I can go back when I...



am fever free  
without medication  
for 24 hours.



free from vomiting  
for at least 24 hours



free from diarrhea  
for at least 24 hours



free from rash,  
itching, or fever;  
to the doctor if needed



treated with  
appropriate lice  
treatment at home



free from drainage  
or to the doctor if  
needed



released by my  
medical provider to  
return to school

If your child has strep throat or another bacterial infection, he/she should stay home until the antibiotic has been given for at least 24 hours and your health care provider has given permission for your child to return to school. We encourage you to seek medical attention when your child is sick and to follow your health provider's recommendations about returning to school and other activities.

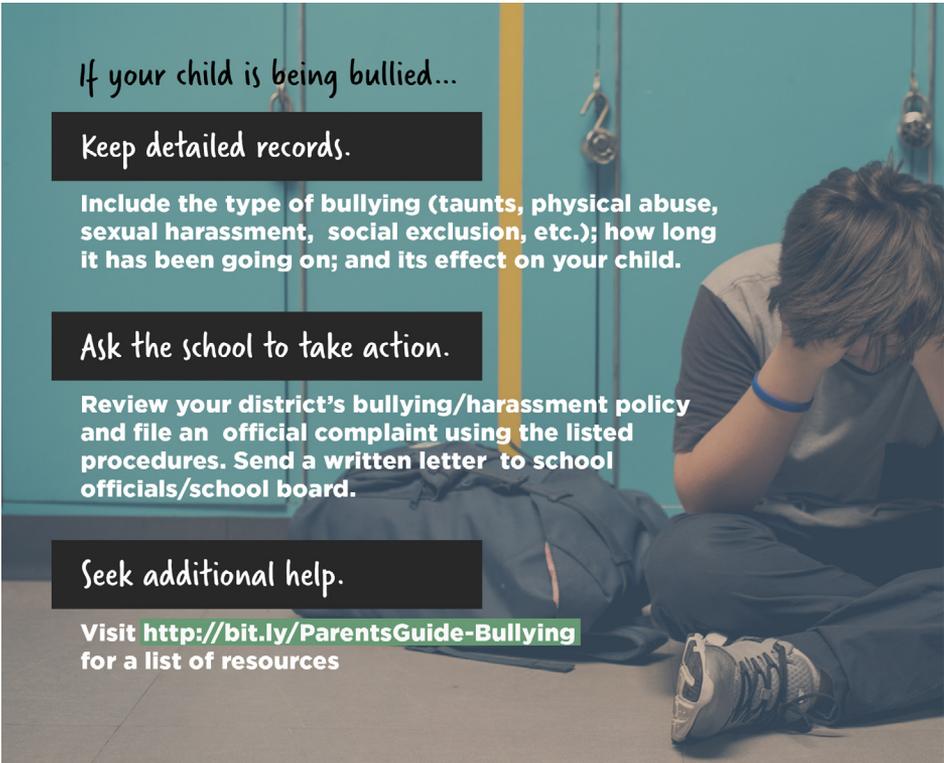
# Parent Tips

## Tips to improve school attendance

- Tell your child why school attendance is important
- Set an age appropriate bedtime for your child and stick to it.
- Teach your children how to set and use their own alarm to get up in the morning.
- Pick out clothing the day before, and keep bookbags and lunch near the door and ready to go.
- Take baths or showers the night before instead of in the morning.
- Have your child do a quiet activity before bedtime (ex., reading or listening to a story) instead of stimulating activities like video games or TV.
- Avoid TV on school mornings.
- Tell your child “good job” when they are ready for school on time – let them know how proud you are.

Good school attendance is important to your student’s educational success!





If your child is being bullied...

Keep detailed records.

Include the type of bullying (taunts, physical abuse, sexual harassment, social exclusion, etc.); how long it has been going on; and its effect on your child.

Ask the school to take action.

Review your district's bullying/harassment policy and file an official complaint using the listed procedures. Send a written letter to school officials/school board.

Seek additional help.

Visit <http://bit.ly/ParentsGuide-Bullying> for a list of resources



**STUDENTS ARE MORE  
LIKELY TO ATTEND SCHOOL  
IF THEY FEEL SAFE,  
SUPPORTED & ENGAGED**

# School Enrollment...

## “Four in the Door”: The four items needed to enroll a child in public school

1. Proof of age (copy of birth certificate, prior school records with child’s age listed)
2. Proof of residency (lease, deed, utility bills, driver’s license/identification)
3. Proof of immunizations from doctor or former school medical records
4. Signed Act 26 statement (Provided by the school and can be completed by person enrolling the child)

Enrollment for Students who are Homeless or in Foster Care:  
All school districts in Allegheny County have a dedicated, school staff member for addressing the enrollment and educational needs of students experiencing homelessness or foster care.

Learn more at:  
Homeless- <https://homeless.center-school.org/>  
Foster Care- [www.pafostercare.org](http://www.pafostercare.org)



## Important:

- ✓ If your child is waiting for the school to set up transportation, the school is to mark those absences as a **BUS EXCUSE**
- ✓ Students **CANNOT** be cited for excused absences
- ✓ If the school is not a good fit for your child student, then, there are other school choices (charter, private, etc.) available

# Immunization Requirement(s):



## SCHOOL VACCINATION INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

The Department of Health is changing school immunization regulations beginning in August 2017. The regulations are intended to ensure that children attending school in the commonwealth are adequately protected against potential outbreaks of vaccine preventable diseases.



### A CHILD MUST HAVE REQUIRED VACCINES OR RISK EXCLUSION FROM SCHOOL.

A child must have the required medically-appropriate vaccines or a plan to complete those vaccines or risk exclusion from school. A child may still obtain medical, religious or philosophical exemption from meeting the immunization requirements. Talk to your child's pediatrician about the vaccines your child needs to attend school.



### NEW VACCINATION REQUIREMENTS:

- combination form for diphtheria and tetanus;
- pertussis vaccination;
- combination form for measles, mumps and rubella; and
- meningococcal conjugate vaccine for entry into 12th grade, or in an ungraded school, in the school year the child turns 18.

**For more information on the vaccines your child needs to attend school, visit [dontwaitvaccinate.pa.gov](http://dontwaitvaccinate.pa.gov) or talk to your child's pediatrician.**

[dontwaitvaccinate.pa.gov](http://dontwaitvaccinate.pa.gov)



# Attendance Record

|  | Date | Reason for Absence | Check-In: Confirm school has absence note/excuse |
|--|------|--------------------|--|
| <b>Day 1</b>   |      |                    |  |
| <b>Day 2</b>   |      |                    |  |
| <b>Day 3</b>   |      |                    |  |
| <b>Day 4</b>   |      |                    |  |
| <b>Day 5</b>   |      |                    |  |
| <b>Day 6</b>   |      |                    |  |
| <b>Day 7</b>   |      |                    |  |
| <b>Day 8</b>   |      |                    |  |
| <b>Day 9</b>   |      |                    |  |
| <b>Day 10</b>  |      |                    |  |
| <b>Note: Doctor's excuse is mandatory after 10 absences!</b> |      |                    |  |

**If an Absence Note is NOT received within 3 days of your child's return to school THE ABSENCE WILL BE CONSIDERED ILLEGAL.**

## Important School Information

Student's Name:

School Name:

Principal's Name:

Guidance counselor:

Attendance Officer:

School Number:

School's Fax Number:

# Resources

## **The Department of Education**

<https://www.education.pa.gov>

<https://www.education.pa.gov/Policy-Funding/BECS/Purdons/Pages/Truancy.aspx>

## **The Problem - Attendance Works**

[www.attendanceworks.org](http://www.attendanceworks.org)

## **Educational Success and Truancy Prevention – Office of Children & Families in the Courts**

[www.ocfcpacourts.us](http://www.ocfcpacourts.us)

## **Search Institute**

Helping Young People Be and Become Their Best Selves

[www.search-institute.org](http://www.search-institute.org)

## **Education Law Center**

<https://www.elc-pa.org>

## **Partner4Work**

A workforce development organization that connects funding, expertise and opportunities for employers, job seekers, agencies, and policy makers to develop a thriving workforce in the Pittsburgh area. They offer a youth summer employment program “Learn and Earn Summer Youth Employment.” <https://www.partner4work.org>

## **Dress for Success Pittsburgh**

The non-profit provides business and work clothing to women. In addition, staff run support groups for women seeking employment and those who just started a job. The unemployed can get advice, support, and information on employment opportunities in Allegheny County. (412) 201-4204

## **PA 211 Southwest**

Dial 2-1-1 or visit <http://pa211sw.org/>

## **Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank**

412-460-3663

## **Allegheny County Family Centers**

Community hubs where parents with young children can attend programs, access resources, and connect with other parents. Centers are staffed by caring individuals who often live in the neighborhoods they serve. Allegheny County Family Support is a network of 28 neighborhood-based centers. See our Contact a Center page for more information about center locations at

[alleghenycountyfamilysupport.org/contact-us/contact-a-center/](http://alleghenycountyfamilysupport.org/contact-us/contact-a-center/)

## **National Domestic Violence Hotline**

Anytime, day or night, contact the National Domestic Violence Hotline to speak with an advocate and get connected to local services: 1-800-799-SAFE (7233)

## **Warmline for emotional support from peers**

1-866-661-WARM (9276)

## **Salvation Army of Allegheny County**

Provides several social services to the needy and low income. Multiple locations are in the county and they offer everything from clothing to free Christmas assistance. Some emergency financial assistance for bills, rent, and other basic needs are offered too: 412-362-0891

## **PAHousingSearch.com**

A free resource to help you find a home that fits your needs and budget. Property providers can list available apartments or homes at any time, which means our listings are current.

## **Urban League, Housing Assistance Program**

Prevents eviction, addresses homelessness, provides mediation services between tenants and their landlords and other creditors, assist families to find affordable, quality housing, and helps first time home buyers through the mortgage and purchasing process to enable them to own their own homes. <http://www.ulpgh.org/departments/have-a-home/> 412-227-4201

## **Department of Human Services**

Meeting the human service needs of county residents is what we do at DHS. Whether in an emergency or due to a long-term concern, DHS has programs and services to help. We welcome your feedback. Contact the Director's Action Line with questions, concerns or complaints about any service we provide: 412-350-5701

## **Office of Developmental Supports**

Provides information about services for persons with a diagnosis of intellectual disability who live in Allegheny County: 412-436-2750

## **OBH Bureau of Drug and Alcohol Services**

Provides services designed to prevent and treat substance abuse and addiction: 1-800-553-7499

## **Bureau of Adult Mental Health Services**

Provides information about the mental health services available to Allegheny County residents: 412-350-4456

# We Care About Your Child's Education!

To learn more visit us at <https://www.alleghenycounty.us/Human-Services/Resources/Education/Resources-for-Families.aspx> and click on **Truancy/School Attendance** for more information!

Check us out on  

**#FOCUSONATTENDANCE**

Any questions, please contact us at:  
[Focus\\_Attendance@AlleghenyCounty.US](mailto:Focus_Attendance@AlleghenyCounty.US)



**The Focus on Attendance Partnership:  
A Partnership between DHS, AIU and JPO**

