



Attendance & Tardiness Policy: Becca Law

THE COMPULSORY ATTENDANCE LAW OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON

Demands a great deal of accountability from schools and parents on student attendance. A section of this legal code is known as the “Becca Bill,” named after the tragic case of a runaway teen. The goal of this bill is to improve school attendance and reduce unexcused absences and tardies.

EXCUSED ABSENCES AND TARDIES

Under district policy, an excused absence or tardy is one in which the parent, by phone call or note, presents a reason for non-attendance. Notification must be within two school days of the child’s return to school. The acceptable reasons for an excused absence or tardy include:

- * Illness
- * Medical, dental or other appointment that cannot be scheduled before or after school
- * Recognized religious observance
- * Family emergency or event such as a funeral or birth
- * A prearranged absence or tardy which the principal approved in advance.

These criteria guide schools in determining what is an excusable absence or tardy. *Noting that a parent excuses a child’s absence or tardy does not make it “excused” under district policy and state law.

Not included are absences or tardies for reasons that might be detrimental to student learning.

ACTION STEPS FOR UNEXCUSED ABSENCES

Some basic provisions aimed at curbing unexcused absences include:

- * After one unexcused absence the school is required to inform parents of the potential consequences of additional unexcused absences, including a conference with the principal, court action etc.
- * After the second unexcused absence within any month, a parent conference must be scheduled. The intent is to find possible solutions to attendance problems. The school must try to help a student improve attendance, such as adjustments in programs, remedial instruction etc.
- * Not later than the fifth unexcused absence in a month, an agreement with the student and parent must be created that establishes school attendance requirements.
- * Not later than the seventh unexcused absence in a single month, the district is required to petition the courts to intervene. Parents who allow their children to be absent without excuse can be found liable for a \$25 fine for each absence.
- * Similarly, if there are ten unexcused absences in a school year, the district is required to



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petition the juvenile court.

To comply with state law, the LWE office tracks whether parent contact has been made regarding each child's absences. It is the parent's responsibility to contact the school to report an absence or tardy on the morning it occurs, by leaving a message on our attendance line (425)431-7615 (select option 1) or provide a note within two days of your child's return to school.

SCHOOL POLICY AND STATE TRUANCY LAW ALSO TARGETS TARDINESS

Tardiness hurts learning. Frequent tardiness of even a few minutes clearly interferes with an individual student's performance. By interrupting the class, it also disrupts other students as well. Students who are tardy without parental excuse will be required to make up class time at their recesses. To be excused, a tardy must meet the same general criteria as an excused absence. Tardiness clearly due to circumstances beyond a parent or student's control (such as a late bus) will be automatically excused.

ACTION STEPS FOR FREQUENT TARDINESS

If there is a frequent pattern of unexcused tardies, LWE will contact parents as follows:

- * **After two unexcused tardies in a single month**, a parent conference may be scheduled or conducted by phone. The intent is to find possible solutions to tardiness problems, and express consequences of continued tardiness.
- * **After four unexcused tardies in a single month, or seven unexcused tardies in a school year**, an in-person parent conference will be required.
- * After a parent conference has been attempted, and if a pattern of frequent unexcused tardies continues, three or more in a month, a truancy petition to the courts will be filed (see previous section, "Action Steps for Unexcused Absences"). As with unexcused absences, this may result in legal action against the parents.

Reducing tardiness helps teachers get the morning's learning activities underway for all students without interruptions or having to spend time helping late arrivals "catch up".

HOW PARENTS CAN HELP

- * Phone calls to the attendance line (425)431-7615 (select #1) prior to 9:30 AM on the morning of an absence or tardy is greatly appreciated. In the event that our office staff does not hear from a parent concerning an absent student, LWE volunteers will attempt to make contact with parents at their daytime telephone number.
- * Verification of student absences or tardies with a note helps us check on truancy and communicable disease trends. It is the responsibility of individual parents to ensure that your child's absence or tardy is excused within two days of each occurrence.



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- * Please keep your child at home if he or she has had a fever in the last 24 hours. We appreciate your child's attendance when healthy.
- * If your child has a doctor, dental, or other appointment that cannot be scheduled outside the school day, please send a note with the child the morning of the appointment. Students receiving an early release must be signed out through the LWE office.

Help your child arrive at the recommended arrival time of **9:10 AM**. Students arriving at school after 9:20 AM must check in at the LWE office before going to class.