

COMPULSORY ATTENDANCE

Compulsory education is essential to the preservation of the rights and liberties of the people and the continued prosperity of our nation. Maintaining regular student attendance is necessary to achieve the goal of an educated citizenry.

Compulsory Attendance Ages

Under state law, full-time attendance at school is required of every child between the ages of 6 and under 18, unless he/she has received a high school diploma or its equivalent.

Excusable Absences from School

A person's absence from school is excused when the absence is for one of the following reasons:

- A. Personal illness;
- B. An appointment with a health professional that must be made during the regular school day;
- C. Observance of a recognized religious holiday when the observance is required during the regular school day;
- D. A family emergency;
- E. A planned absence for personal or educational purpose which has been approved;
or
- F. Education disruption resulting from homelessness, unplanned psychiatric hospitalization, unplanned hospitalization for a medical emergency, foster care placement, youth development center placement or some other out-of-district placement that is not otherwise authorized by an IEP or other education plan or Superintendents' agreement.

Adult Responsibility for School Attendance

Parents or other adults having control of a person of compulsory attendance age are responsible for ensuring that a student attends school as required by law. The School Committee expects school administrators and staff to work with families in an effort to ensure compliance.

Exceptions to the Compulsory Attendance Requirement

A child may be excused from compulsory attendance at school if he/she meets the requirements in one of the following sections.

A. He/she has:

1. Reached the age of 16 years of age;
2. Obtained permission to leave school from his/her parent;
3. Been approved by the principal for a suitable program of work and study or training;
4. Has met with the Superintendent/designee to discuss the decision to withdraw from school;
5. Obtained permission to leave school from the School Committee or its designee; and
6. Agreed in writing that the person's parent and the School Committee or its designee to meet annually until that person's 18th birthday to review that person's educational needs.

If a request to be excused from school is denied pursuant to this section, the student's parent may appeal to the Commission of Education.

- B. He/she has matriculated and is attending an accredited, post-secondary, degree-granting institution as a full-time student. An exception to the compulsory attendance law under this paragraph must be approved by the Commissioner of Education.
- C. He/she is enrolled in an online learning program or course.
- D. A student who is 18 years of age or older who has not graduated from high school or obtained an equivalency diploma, and who wishes to withdraw from school shall meet with the Superintendent/designee to discuss the decision to withdraw from school.

Alternatives to Attendance in Public School

A person shall be excused from attending a public day school if he/she obtains equivalent instruction as allowed by law.

Equivalent instruction alternatives are as follows:

- A. A private school approved for attendance purposes pursuant to state law and regulations;
- B. A private school recognized by the Department of Education as providing equivalent instruction;
- C. A home instruction program that complies with state law and regulations;
- D. Any other manner arranged by the School Committee and approved by the Commissioner of Education; or
- E. Pursuant to 20-A MRSA Sections 5104-A or 8605 (approved alternative education program or adult education program).

A student shall be credited with attendance at a private school under Paragraphs A or B only if the legally required certificate from the private school is filed with the student's school unit.

Legal Reference: 20-A MRSA §§ 5001-A et seq.; 5051 et seq.; 2901; 5104-A; 8605
Chapters 125 and 127 (Maine Department of Education Rules)

Cross Reference: JFC – Dropout Prevention Committee
JHB – Truancy
IHBG – Home Schooling

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