

VPK Attendance Policy Guidance

Young children's growth and development is maximized through consistent participation in a high-quality environment. Establishing consistent attendance routines in pre-K will increase students' chances of success in all future school experiences, K-12. With this in mind, the department has adopted this pre-K attendance guidance to help inform local pre-K attendance policies. The department will utilize this guidance when reviewing a district's request to dismiss a student due to attendance.

Excused Absences:

Attendance is a key factor in student achievement, but certain situations can require a student to miss school. The following are examples of acceptable reasons for excused absences:

1. The child has a personal illness or injury;
2. The child has other ongoing health related ailments which temporarily prevent attendance;
3. The child contracts a communicable disease (virus or flu);
4. Religious observances;
5. Death in the family;
6. Limited medical/dental/therapy appointments (these should be made outside school hours unless necessary).

The department also recognizes that there are additional circumstances or emergencies that may arise. In these situations, the site-level administrator should consult their district level pre-K attendance policy and determine if the justification given by the parent/guardian provides a valid reason for the student's absence.

Procedures:

Each site or district should have a contact person. This is the person with whom parents can address attendance concerns. Contact information should be distributed with the district's pre-K attendance policy.

If a child has four (4) or more unexcused absences within one (1) month—the site-level administrator should contact the family and determine the child's participation status. The site-level administrator should document attempts to contact the family and the outcome of those attempts and/or communications.

If a child has five (5) or more unexcused absences in a three (3)-month period, the site-level administrator should contact the family to develop an attendance plan.

- a. The attendance plan should be designed to help the family establish regular attendance or, if necessary, to plan for alternative services. The attendance plan should be developed by the family and appropriate school personnel, including, but not limited to: the child's primary pre-k teacher; the site-level administrator; the IEP team (if applicable); and additional staff serving the school and family,

which may include a counselor, social worker, family support personnel, teacher assistant, or other school staff supporting the child and family. The attendance plan should:

- i. Identify the reasons for the unexcused absences;
- ii. Include a specific plan and date for establishing regular attendance or alternative services that meet the child's educational goals; and
- iii. Include documentation of services and student outcomes to determine effectiveness of the attendance plan.

Every effort should be made to ensure the child has access to a quality school program. However, these spots are made available through a state grant and are limited by funding. **Students who have more than five (5) unexcused absences per month, or ten (10) unexcused absences in a year, may be terminated from the program for failure to follow the district pre-k attendance policy.** District-level personnel will be required to submit the mandatory dismissal documentation to the Department of Education's VPK director for approval. **Districts are prohibited from dismissing a student without first implementing an attendance plan,** unless there are special circumstances to be considered, such as the family moving and being unreachable after multiple attempts by the district. In these cases, the state VPK director may grant approval due to special circumstances.

Once dismissal is approved, a waiting list applicant who meets eligibility determinations for the VPK program may fill the vacant position. Future eligibility for the terminated child to re-enter the program will depend upon vacancies. The student will also be required to adhere to a 30-day waiting period and a parent conference to establish an attendance agreement. The parent/guardian will be required to fulfill the terms of the attendance agreement, or their student may be dismissed from the program.