

Research is clear that showing up for school has a huge impact on a student's academic and social success, starting from kindergarten and continuing through high school. Absences can be a sign that a student is losing interest in school, struggling with school, or even facing social challenges.

- Missing 10% (or about 18 days of a school year) can drastically affect a student's academic success.
- By the 6th grade, absenteeism is one of three signs that can indicate if a student is at risk for dropping out of high school.
- In the 9th grade, regular and high attendance predicts graduation rates better than 8th grade test scores.

Student attendance is a major point of focus for the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE). Starting in the 2023-2024 school year, MSDE lowered the chronic absenteeism rate from 20% to 10%, meaning that at 10%, a student should receive support and interventions to improve their absenteeism.

Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) believes that attendance is key to student success. Maryland's attendance rate represents the average daily attendance rate of students in grades 1-12, including special education students. The state's proficient standard for attendance rate is 94%, and the advanced standard is 96%."

In support of achieving Exemplary Attendance for all students, we are sharing with you a comprehensive approach to attendance supports and interventions.

- If a student has missed 5% of their monthly attendance days (as few as 1-2 days a month), parents/guardians will receive a Care and Concern Phone Call and letter from their school. This step will allow staff members to coordinate with families to determine how the student can be supported for better attendance.
- If a student has missed 10% of their monthly attendance days (this is defined as chronic absenteeism by MSDE), parents/guardians will receive a 10% Chronic Absenteeism Attendance Letter. Parents/guardians and students may be scheduled for an attendance conference. Other interventions and supports may also be used in an effort to assist the student.
- If a student has missed 15% of their monthly attendance days, in addition to the interventions and supports at 5% and 10%, these students may require an attendance support plan. Students may also be referred to the Central Attendance Team.
- If a student has missed 20% of their monthly attendance days, parents/guardians will receive a 20% Emergency Chronic Absenteeism Letter or Habitual Truancy Letter. Students may be referred to Project Attend and/or the State's Attorney's Office for habitual truancy.

With the collaborative effort of HCPSS parents/guardians, staff, and students, we are confident that all students can have successful attendance. This will improve student success in school and future life.

Important Attendance Reminders

AHS Attendance - Phone: (410) 313-7073

Absences

When a student is absent, the parent/guardian must report the absence to the school by emailing ahsabsence@hcpss.org or by calling the attendance line (410) 313-7073.

A note or email from the parent or guardian explaining the absence of a student should be received within five days of the student's return to school or the absence will be marked unlawful or unexcused. ([Policy 9010 #6](#)) The message should include the student's first and last name, grade, date of absence, and reason for the absence.

Lawful Absence – An excused absence for any portion of the day under the following conditions:

1. Death in the immediate family,
2. Illness of the student, Pregnancy, and parenting needs,
3. Court summons
4. Hazardous weather conditions,
5. Work approved or sponsored by the school
6. Observance of a religious holiday
7. State emergency
8. Suspension
9. Lack of authorized transportation
10. Other emergency or set of circumstances which, in the judgment of the Superintendent or designee, constitutes a good and sufficient cause for absence from school.

Discretionary Days

HCPSS students are granted 3 days a year to use at their discretion for scheduled interviews with prospective employers, visits to post-secondary institutions, family trips, civic engagement, and other special events.

Such absences may not occur during exam or state-mandated testing periods unless authorized by the principal/designee.

A written request for such absences to be lawful/excused should be submitted at least one week in advance to the principal/designee. Please download the PDF fillable [Discretionary Absence Form](#) and email it to ahsabsence@hcpss.org. The form is also available in [Chinese](#) and [Spanish](#).

If you are requesting a day for a religious holiday not identified by the Howard County Public School System school calendar, please download the PDF fillable [Religious Obligation Form](#) and email it to ahsabsence@hcpss.org.

Pre-arranged absence and Religious absence - email ahsabsence@hcpss.org

Late Arrival Procedures

Students who arrive late to school will enter through the main entrance. Students arriving between 7:50am and 8:10am will need to scan in at one of the two attendance kiosks in the front lobby. Students may use their ID cards or the QR code from the Synergy App. Students arriving after 8:10am must proceed to the attendance window and see Ms. Rey, the attendance secretary, to check-in. Students will be provided with a time-stamped pass to share with their teacher. Students who are unexcused tardy to school will receive consequences after the third time.

If it is an excused tardy, parents should email a note to ahsabsence@hcpss.org or send in a written note. Please include:

- Student first and last name and late arrival in the subject line
- Send from the e-mail address on your family file
- Indicate the reason for the late arrival.
- Parent name and phone number

Early Dismissal Procedures

Please email your note to ahsabsence@hcpss.org the day prior to the early dismissal or have your student bring their note to the attendance window on the morning of the early dismissal. They will receive a pass to show their teacher and will be allowed to leave class. The student will then report to the attendance window and sign out to meet parents outside in front of the building. If an email or written note was not sent, the parent needs to come in to show ID and sign the student out

The note should include:

- The student's first and last name (not a nickname)
- Reason for early dismissal
- Time of early dismissal
- Parent signature and phone number
- If the student will be returning.

Please ask your student to check in at the attendance window if they return. Parents are welcome to sign their student out at the attendance window if it is a last minute appointment. No early dismissals will be processed after 2pm to avoid issues with afternoon dismissal.

Please review the [HCPSS Attendance Policy 9010](#), which will address questions or concerns related to attendance.

Questions? Contact our Attendance Secretary: Stacy Rey at Stacy_Rey@hcpss.org or ahsabsence@hcpss.org