

Arrival and Dismissal Policies
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Many schools struggle with issues of safety and supervision of children who arrive at school early or are not picked up promptly at dismissal time. Some schools offer after-school programs on site and parents can be charged for this service on days when the students arrive early or stay late. In other schools, however, staff members are inconvenienced by having to provide "unscheduled" supervision of students.

This problem should be addressed through the development and distribution of written policies that clearly state the hours and places that supervision is (and is not) provided by the school. For example, such policies can state the earliest time that children may be dropped off, the latest time they may be picked up, and where and how they will be supervised during those hours. Parents should be notified that the School does not assume a duty of supervision beyond those hours. The policies should be reflected in the handbook, distributed to parents at least once a year, and reinforced verbally at meetings.

Early drop-offs and late pick-ups should have progressive consequences beginning with phone calls to the parents and proceeding to written warnings, monetary fines, and ultimately suspension, expulsion, and denial of re-registration for repeated violations. While a child should never be left alone or in a potentially dangerous situation, parents need to be held accountable for violation of the stated rules in order to promote compliance in the future. Parents should also be held accountable for violations by others who act on their behalf in bringing the student to school or picking up the student (e.g., babysitters, family members, car pool drivers). The School's failure to enforce arrival and departure times leads parents to (reasonably) rely on the School to provide supervision beyond the scheduled hours. Therefore, parents do not change their behavior, and the School may be viewed legally as having assumed a duty of supervision beyond the scheduled hours by providing it on a regular basis.

While "sanctioning" parents in this manner may seem harsh, enforcing arrival and departure policies is necessary in order to protect children. If parents do not take seriously the schedule published by the school, children may be on the premises, unsupervised, without the knowledge of any staff member. Inconsistent enforcement of rules also creates tension among families and staff members who perceive that some parents "get away with" violations of the stated policies on a regular basis. In the long run, holding people accountable is safest for the children and is fair to all school families and staff.