

Compulsory School 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 all children between the ages of seven and 17.

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; or
- E. A planned absence for a personal or educational purpose which has been approved.

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 Board expects school administrators and staff to work with families in an effort to ensure compliance.

Exceptions to the Compulsory Attendance Requirement

A person may be excused from compulsory attendance at school under one of the following four conditions:

1. He/she has graduated from high school before his/her 17th birthday.
2. He/she has met all of the following:
 - a. Reached the age of 15 years or completed the 9th grade;
 - b. Received permission to leave school from his/her parent;
 - c. Been approved by the principal for a suitable program of work and study or training;
 - d. Received permission to leave school from the Board or its designee; and
 - e. Agreed in writing with that person's parent and the Board or its designee to meet annually until that person's 17th birthday to review that person's educational needs.

If a request to be excused from school is denied pursuant to this Paragraph 2, the student's parent may appeal to the Commissioner of Education.

3. He/she is at least 15 years of age and the attendance requirement has been waived by the Board under the truancy law.
4. 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.

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. Home instruction program that complies with state law and regulations; or
- D. Any other manner arranged by the Board and approved by the Commissioner of Education.
- E. A public or private alternative program or adult education program as allowed by state law.

A student shall be credited with attendance at a private school under Paragraph 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; Chapters 125 and 127 (Maine Department of Education Rules)

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

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