



Virtual Attendance, Engagement, & Truancy Guidance

Supporting Flexible, Accountable Virtual Learning



This guide provides existing Indiana public virtual schools and programs with information and tools to support student attendance, prevent truancy, and ensure all students have access to quality instructional time.

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Attendance Foundations

Definitions, Data Exchange descriptors, engagement indicators, and instructional time for existing virtual schools and programs.



DEFINITION OF ATTENDANCE



Per IC 20-19-9-1, virtual attendance is reported for students who are receiving 50% or more of their instruction virtually.

- Virtual instruction is provided either in real time or at other times, but the teacher and students are in different physical spaces.
- For days split between in-person and virtual instruction *under the same school ID*, report virtual attendance with 0.5 and in-person attendance with 0.5. If the student is attending in-person and virtual half days *under different school IDs*, report an attendance of 1 for each school ID.



ENGAGEMENT EXPECTATIONS

A student shall be considered in attendance when they demonstrate substantive engagement with instructional content within the defined instructional period.



IMPORTANT:

Login activity alone should NOT constitute attendance.



DATA EXCHANGE & ATTENDANCE



Students must have a Virtual Education Program Association Record sent to Data Exchange if the student receives 50% or more of their education virtually.



Report the appropriate Service Descriptor identifying how a student is receiving their virtual education with the service begin/end dates, and provide the begin and end date of the service.

For more information, visit the [IDOE Knowledge Hub](#).

Virtual Service Descriptor	Definition
3rd Party Educator	Student Educated 100% by 3rd Party Educator
LEA Educator	Student Educated 100% by LEA Educator
LEA and 3rd Party Educator	Student Educated utilizing both LEA and 3rd Party Educators



INSTRUCTIONAL TIME REQUIREMENTS

Per IC 20-30-2-2, an instructional day for grades 1-6 consists of at least 5 hours and for grades 7-12 consists of at least 6 hours.



Instructional time may include synchronous instruction, asynchronous coursework, or other learning activities.

GRADES 1-6



5
HOURS

GRADES 7-12



6
HOURS



SCHOOL CORPORATION RESPONSIBILITIES

School Corporations should:



- ✓ Follow school board approved attendance and engagement criteria.
- ✓ Establish monitoring processes.
- ✓ Document intervention procedures.
- ✓ Ensure consistent LMS usage.
- ✓ Maintain records of student engagement.



TEACHER RESPONSIBILITIES

Teachers should document:

- ✓ Student engagement and participation.
- ✓ Outreach attempts.
- ✓ Two-way communication with students and guardians.
- ✓ Evidence of academic progress.



SOME STUDENTS MAY NEED ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

Schools must provide additional monitoring for:

- ✓ Students with disabilities
- ✓ Academically at-risk students

Supports may include:



Increased teacher check-ins



Structured schedules



Small group or 1:1 instruction



Ongoing progress monitoring



KEY CONSIDERATION: Flexibility does not replace structure. Some students require more direct support in virtual settings.



ATTENDANCE FRAMEWORK

Attendance =
Engagement + Progress + Interaction



Engagement

Active participation in LMS or instruction



Progress

Advancement in coursework or assignments



Interaction

Communication with a teacher when needed or expected



ENGAGEMENT INDICATORS

Students may be counted present through any of the following:



Meaningful LMS activity (beyond login)



Assignment completion or submission



Participation in synchronous instruction



Viewing recorded lessons with follow-up task completion



Communication with teacher (email, message, conference)



Completion of quizzes, discussions, or checks for understanding

Common Attendance Questions

Common questions from existing virtual schools and programs.

What if a student doesn't attend state testing?



Attendance at state testing (ILEARN, WIDA, IAM, SAT, IREAD) must occur in-person at a designated site ([IC 20-32-5.1-7](#)). If a student does not attend, they should be marked absent for each day testing is offered.

Schools should plan accordingly for the entire test window. Test early in the window to ensure scheduled make-up time is available. Communicate these dates to parents early in the school year so appointments are scheduled at other times. Actively work with families to ensure students attend and participate.

Can instructional time be flexible to fit our school model?



Yes, instructional time can be flexible based on your school's policy, including allowing students to accumulate instructional time across the week. However, students should still have documented daily engagement to support accurate attendance records and ensure student safety.

Per [IC 20-30-2-3](#), students are still expected to meet the state's compulsory attendance requirement of 180 instructional days. If a student completes their coursework, additional engagement activities could include engaging in tutoring, service projects, field days, or other learning activities.

If the student is a senior, they need only complete the coursework required for graduation.

Can virtual students travel out of state?



Yes, students can travel while enrolled in a virtual program. Per [IC 20-26-19-7](#), students must be residents of Indiana, and residency verification is required. Schools must verify residency annually and maintain documentation as part of student records.

What if I cannot get hold of a student or guardian?



It is recommended that, in addition to main family contacts, schools maintain at least two additional emergency contacts and use certified mail for important notices when parents or guardians cannot be reached.

SECTION 2

Mitigating Chronic Absenteeism

Accountable virtual learning for existing virtual schools and programs.



WHY IT MATTERS

Chronic absenteeism and habitual truancy are among the strongest predictors of school performance, including high school graduation.

Schools and corporations should collect data to identify which students, or groups of students, are chronically absent, and work to understand why these particular students are absent.

See the [Indiana Department of Education's Chronic Absenteeism](#) webpage for more information.



FOUR COMMON ROOT CAUSES OF ABSENTEEISM

According to [Attendance Works](#), students are typically absent from school due to challenges within these four categories:



BARRIERS TO ATTENDANCE

Challenges that make it difficult for students to attend, such as health, access to internet, or parental support.



AVERSION TO SCHOOL

Students may avoid school due to anxiety, behavioral issues, or difficult social situations.



DISENGAGEMENT FROM SCHOOL

Students may not feel connected to their learning, teachers, or school community.



MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT ABSENCES

Families may not understand how absences affect academic success and future opportunities.



WARNING SIGNS OF CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM



Declining Participation



Missed Live Sessions



Incomplete Coursework



Limited Communication



SAMPLE ATTENDANCE PLAN ELEMENTS

When chronic absenteeism situations arise, develop an attendance plan.

- ✓ Identify barriers to attendance
- ✓ Set clear goals and expectations
- ✓ Provide interventions and supports
- ✓ Regularly review progress and adjust plan



IMPORTANT

Truancy and legal intervention represents the **FINAL step** in attendance efforts. Early intervention and support can keep students on track and engaged in learning.

Truancy Prevention Policy

Truancy prevention for existing virtual schools and programs.



Per IC 20-33-2.5-1, an absent student in a public or charter school is defined as a K-12 student who is absent from school for **5 days within a ten week period** without being excused.

Per IC 20-33-2.5-4, schools shall adopt a **truancy prevention policy** regarding absent students.



REQUIRED WRITTEN NOTICE TO THE PARENT

Per IC 20-33-2.5-4, schools shall immediately provide written notification to the parent of an absent student that includes the following:

- ✓ Student is considered absent.
- ✓ Parent is responsible for monitoring the student's school attendance.
- ✓ Parent is responsible for ensuring the student attends school.
- ✓ School will be initiating truancy prevention measures.
- ✓ Parent is required to attend an attendance conference. * See attendance conference requirements.
- ✓ If the student meets the requirements of a habitual truant, the following may occur:

POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES MAY INCLUDE:



- The superintendent or attendance officer is required to report the student to an intake officer of the juvenile court or the Department of Child Services. (IC 20-33-2-25)
- The juvenile court may determine that the student is committing a delinquent act. (IC 31-37-2-3)
- The parent of the student may be subject to prosecution. (IC 35-46-1-4)



ATTENDANCE CONFERENCE REQUIREMENTS

* Per IC 20-33-2.5-4 (2), schools shall hold a conference with at least the following individuals to establish a plan to prevent future absences:



SCHOOL REPRESENTATIVE



TEACHER OF THE STUDENT



PARENT/GUARDIAN



PARENT-SELECTED REPRESENTATIVE

May attend if the parent:

- Requests the representative attend; and
- Provides notice and identification of the representative at least 48 hours before the conference.

CONFERENCE TIMELINE(IC 20-33-2.5-5)

The attendance conference must occur within

10 INSTRUCTIONAL DAYS

after the student's fifth absence.

Schools must make all reasonable efforts to hold the conference at a date and time that works with the schedule of the parent.

Truancy Prevention Policy *CONTINUED*

IC 20-33-2.5



REQUIRED ATTENDANCE PLAN COMPONENTS

Pursuant IC 20-33-2.5-4(3), school shall establish a plan that may include the following:



Any wraparound services to ensure the student attends school.



A description of the behavior that is prohibited or required for the student.



The period for which the plan will be effective, not to exceed 45 days.



Disciplinary action if the student does not comply with the plan.



If applicable, a referral to counseling, mentoring, or other services for the student and possibly the parent



If possible, the signature of the parent agreeing to comply with the plan.



ADDITIONAL SUPPORTS

Pursuant IC 20-33-2.5-4(4), schools shall offer additional counseling or services to an absent student if the student's absences are related to:



The student's pregnancy.



The student's homelessness.



The student being in foster care (as defined in IC 31-9-2-46.7).



The student having a severe or life threatening illness or related treatment.



SPECIAL EDUCATION CONSIDERATIONS

Schools must continue to ensure a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) for students with disabilities, even when addressing truancy.



CONSIDER THE IMPACT

When developing the attendance plan, consider whether absences are related to:



The student's disability



Health needs



Behavioral or emotional needs



Lack of access to services or supports



CONTINUED OBLIGATIONS

The school must:

- Implement the IEP as written, including required accommodations, modifications, and related services.
- Revise the IEP as needed.
- Collaboration with the case conference committee, family, and service providers.

SECTION 4

Truancy Withdrawal

Withdrawal requirements, exit codes, and enrollment considerations for existing virtual schools and programs.



TRUANCY WITHDRAWAL

Per [IC 20-19-9-5](#), a student must be withdrawn from the public virtual program or school after:

10
CONSECUTIVE
UNEXCUSED
ABSENCES

OR

18
CUMULATIVE
UNEXCUSED
ABSENCES

CHARTER SCHOOL REQUIREMENTS:



A habitual truant ([IC 20-18-2-6.5](#)) student must be withdrawn after 10 unexcused absences ([IC 20-24-5-4.5](#)).



WITHDRAWAL DOCUMENTATION



Per [20-24-7-13](#), charter school students withdrawn for failure to participate are not eligible to reenroll in the same virtual charter school during the same school year.

During withdrawal due to truancy:

- ✓ Guardian identifies where they will enroll the student.
- ✓ Withdrawing school must use appropriate exit code.

More information about Exit Withdraw Type Descriptors can be found in the [Knowledge Hub](#).



SPECIAL EDUCATION AND TRUANCY WITHDRAWAL

Before withdrawing a student for truancy, schools should consider:

- ✓ Has the student's IEP been implemented as written?
- ✓ Were all required accommodations, modifications, and related services provided?
- ✓ Has the IEP team considered whether additional supports or services are needed to improve attendance?
- ✓ Are attendance concerns related to the student's disability?
- ✓ Has the school documented interventions and communication with the family?
- ✓ Has the school consulted the special education staff before withdrawal?



ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

Virtual attendance concerns should be addressed through the IEP process when disability-related needs may be affecting a student's ability to participate.

Consider, as appropriate, a Functional Behavioral Assessment and Behavior Intervention Plan to better understand and support the student's engagement.