

LAWRENCE COUNTY SCHOOL SYSTEM
ATTENDANCE GUIDELINES
JULY 17, 2025

The Lawrence County School System (LCSS) recently updated its Student Attendance Policy 6.200, which can be viewed at [Attendance Policy LCSS 2025-2026](#)

We are reaching out to inform you of these changes and to request your support in addressing a nationwide epidemic: Chronic Absenteeism. In Tennessee, a K–12 student is classified as chronically absent when they miss 10% or more of the days they are enrolled. For the 2024-2025 academic year, Lawrence County Schools had over 1100 students meeting the criteria for chronically absent. During the 2025–2026 school year, LCSS will be more closely monitoring student absences. Although the chronic absenteeism rate is calculated at the end of the school year, interventions and supports will be implemented continuously throughout.

In recent years, chronic absenteeism has risen throughout the nation, state, and in Lawrence County. LCSS understands illnesses occur and students will occasionally miss a few days annually. A student amassing more than 17 absences per year will be most impacted by this policy.

Chronic Absenteeism is measured by the number of days a student is absent divided by the number of days enrolled.

EXAMPLE: A student enrolled in 175 days and misses nine days during the academic year would have an absenteeism rate of 5.1%. $9/175=5.1\%$.

Absences shall be classified as absent. Absences are not excused or unexcused. Special arrangements should be made with the principal or his/her designee regarding an ongoing diagnosed medical issue requiring multiple absences for the student during a specified time or for the duration of the academic year. The principal may waive an absence for the following:

- Death in the family;
- Religious observances;
- Chronic illness verified by a licensed medical provider practicing in Tennessee. Pregnancy related issues, physician visits, and birth are considered chronic illness.
- Summons, subpoena, or court order;
- Circumstances which in the judgment of the principal create emergencies over which the student has no control; or
- School endorsed activities.
- Military events including deployment, return, special recognitions, and the like.

The following consequences/Interventions will occur when multiple absences are accrued:

- At three absences, school administration will begin intervention.
- At five absences, students will be placed on an attendance contract (Parent/guardian must attend a meeting at the school).
- At eight absences, students will be petitioned to court. Students attending out of their zone will be subject to enroll in the school they are zoned for.
- At twelve absences, students may lose privileges to attend school events.
- At fourteen absences, students shall lose privileges to attend school events and will be petitioned to court a second time.

Students and parents submitting doctor notes in 2025-2026 will not receive an excused absence. The new policy reports students as absent or present unless a major medical issue is approved in advance and on file with the school principal and school nurse. Parents with students who have been diagnosed with a major medical issue should address the need for a Chronic Illness form at the child's school with the principal or his/her designee.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ'S)

Q.What if my child has a chronic illness and misses school for ongoing medical treatments?

A. The principal can provide a medical form to be completed by the treating physician. If the form is approved by the principal or designee, absences and consequences per LCSS policy will be waived, however, the student may be reported as chronically absent per state guidelines.

Q. What are the state guidelines for defining chronic illness?

A.In Tennessee, a chronic illness is generally defined as a health condition that lasts for more than a year and requires ongoing medical attention or significantly limits daily activities. It's a long-term condition that may not have a cure and can impact various aspects of a person's life, including their physical, social, and cognitive abilities. LCSS will consider other medical related illnesses and may determine a plan to address a temporary medical related issue.

Q. What if I am scheduled for vacation or other related trips during the school year?

A. These absences will count toward chronic absenteeism. The student is responsible for all missed work and tests. The student may be petitioned to court, lose school related privileges and be retained if absences exceed LCSS limits.

Q. What about military commitments with family members?

A. State Board policy and Tennessee Code permits students to participate in military commitments involving immediate family members. Military related absences will be coded according to Tennessee attendance law. Parents and guardians should consult with the principal to arrange a plan to address military related absences.

Q. How many days can a student be absent before being deemed chronically absent?

A. LCSS believes students should be present everyday when their school is in session, however, when a student misses ten percent (10%) of the number of days the student is enrolled for an academic year, the student is considered chronically absent per state guidelines. Please review the intervention steps and consequences noted in LCSS policy 6.200 for students who are chronically absent for more details.

Q. How will LCSS recognize the accomplishment of Perfect Attendance or Almost Perfect Attendance for students who are successfully meeting the attendance requirements.

A. In addition to preparing students for successful career paths after graduation, the following recognitions will be in place:

Each school or grade level may recognize students who are exceeding attendance expectations as they deem necessary.

High School graduation ceremonies will recognize students who have perfect attendance for one, two, three, or four years. In addition, students may be recognized for attendance accomplishments for the entirety of their academic career.

Q. What is the procedure when my child has the flu/strep throat/sinus infection, etc. and has been instructed by the doctor to stay home for a certain amount of days?

A. Parents should monitor the recovery of their child. If the student is healthy enough to return to school before the prescribed return date, they are encouraged to return. Students are resilient and recover faster from illnesses. When a student meets the criteria set forth by Coordinated School Health, the student should return to school.

Q. Could you explain how the new attendance policy will affect my child if they need to miss several days due to illness?

A. As noted previously, students will be absent from school due to illness, especially our youngest learners. LCSS understands illnesses occur and students will occasionally miss a few days annually. When a student experiences an ongoing medical issue preventing regular daily attendance, parental action may be needed to determine the cause. If and when the cause for repeated absences is determined, the parent/guardian should speak with the school to determine a plan to address the issue.