JEA - Compulsory Attendance

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Under state law, full-time school attendance is required of all children from their 6th to their 17th birthday except:

A. A person who graduates from high school before their 17th birthday; unless the child has received a high school diploma or its equivalent.

B. A person who has:

1. Reached the age of 15 years or completed the 9th grade;

2. Permission to leave school from that person's parent;

3. Been approved by the principal for a suitable program of work and study or training;

4. Permission to leave school from the Board or its designee; and

5. 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. When the request to be excused from school has been denied pursuant to this paragraph, the student's parent may appeal to the Commissioner; or

C. A person who has matriculated and is attending an accredited, post-secondary, degree-granting institution as a full-time student. An exception to the attendance in public school under this paragraph must be approved by the Commissioner.

D. A person who is enrolled in an online learning program or course.

Attendance of Children Five Years of Age or Older and Under Six Years of Age

A child five years of age or older and under six years of age who is enrolled in and who has not withdrawn from a public day school is required to attend that school during the time it is in session.

Alternatives to Attendance at Public Day School

A. Equivalent instruction alternatives are as follows:

1. A person shall be excused from attending a public day school if the person obtains equivalent instruction in:

a. A private school approved for attendance purposes pursuant to 20-A MRSA § 2901;

b. A private school recognized by the department as providing equivalent instruction;

c. A home instruction program that complies with the requirements of 20-A MRSA § 5001-A(3)(A)(4); or

d. Any other manner arranged for by the Board and approved by the Commissioner.

B. A person may be excused from attendance at a public day school pursuant to 20-A MRSA § 5104-A (other public or private alternative programs) or § 8605 (student attendance in adult education courses).

Credit for Attendance at a Private School

A student shall be credited with attendance at a private school only if a certificate showing the name, residence and attendance of the person at the school, signed by the person or persons in charge of the school, has been filed with the school officials of the administrative unit in which the student resides.

Discontinuation of Home Instruction

If the home instruction program is discontinued, students of compulsory school age must be enrolled in a public school or an equivalent instruction alternative as provided for by law. The receiving school shall determine the placement of the student. At the secondary level, the principal of the receiving school shall determine the value of the prior educational experience toward meeting the standards of Maine's system of Learning Results.

Excusable Absence

A person's absence is excused when the absence is for the following reasons:

A. Personal health, including physical, mental and behavioral health;

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;

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

F. Education disruption resulting from homelessness, unplanned psychiatric hospitalization, unplanned hospitalization for a medical emergency, foster care placement, youth development placement or some other out-of-district placement that is not otherwise authorized by either any individual education plan or a superintendents' student transfer agreement. "Education disruption" does not apply to a student who is out of school for 10 or

more consecutive school days as a result of a planned absence for a reason such as a family event or a medical absence for planned hospitalization or recovery.

Parental Responsibility

Parents are responsible for the school attendance of students who are under 17 years of age. The school unit shall work with families in an effort to ensure compliance.

Adult Students

Secondary school students 20 years of age or more will only be admitted to the school unit with prior Board approval.

Legal Reference: 20-A MRSA § 5001-A; 5003; 5104-A; 5201; 8605
Me Dept of Educ Rule Ch. 125 and 127

Cross Reference: IHBG - Home School
JFC - Student Withdrawal from School/Dropout Prevention Committee.
JHB - Truancy

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