



Attendance and Absenteeism Guidance

Purpose

This guidance should be used as a resource for districts and schools when developing and applying attendance policies in remote and hybrid learning models. This resource also includes information about absenteeism during COVID-19. The intent of this guidance is to make collection of attendance information as simple as possible for districts and nonpublic schools and decrease data burden. Districts and schools are welcome to collect additional information that fits their needs.

Attendance Requirements

The official attendance taken and recorded in the district's local student information system (SIS) is reported to the Department for the purposes of determining average daily attendance (ADA) and average daily membership (ADM) and for other required state and federal reporting.

Senate File 2310 included the following provisions related to attendance:

- Students are required to participate in remote learning, including online learning, electronic learning, distance learning, or virtual learning, or they can be considered absent.
- Schools must gather attendance information for students under any model in their Return-to-Learn plans.

These provisions, along with Iowa Code Chapter 299, mean the following:

- Each instructional day requires that attendance be taken for all students, including those who have opted for 100% remote learning and those on a hybrid schedule who are remote learning on that day.
- Students who are in quarantine or isolation because of COVID-19 but are participating in remote learning should be counted as present for official attendance, even though they may not be learning in their planned environment.
- Attendance should be taken at least once a day and can be taken more frequently as the district chooses.
- It is important to remind families to contact the school if a student is not feeling well and is unable to participate in remote learning for a given day. In this case, the student should be counted as absent for that day.

Absenteeism and Permission to Temporarily Move to Primarily Remote Learning

Official attendance is one type of data that can be used by the district to determine absenteeism rates for the purpose of requesting permission to temporarily move to primarily remote learning. However, the district may choose to *additionally* include all COVID-19 related absenteeism from in-person instruction, such as students who are in quarantine or isolation and are required to learn remotely when they normally would have attended in-person, in their request if it is important in their context. The request form in the Consolidated Accountability and Support Application (CASA) allows the district to enter the current or anticipated absentee rate as well as an explanation of how the rate was calculated. The explanation should note which student groups are being included as absent for the purpose of the request.

Ideas for Tracking Remote Attendance

There are multiple methods that districts may use for tracking attendance depending on the learning model(s) being used. Several methods are explained below, but districts may use other models as well. Once a method and criteria have been chosen to assess whether a student is in attendance or not, schools will need to determine how to quantify the attendance so that each student's official attendance can be entered into the SIS for each day. This information should also be used to follow up with students and families who are not engaged during remote learning so that supports for students can be put in place.

1. **Parent or student attendance tracking.** Depending on the functionality of the local SIS, it may be possible for a student or parent to mark the student present during remote learning days. Another variation of this would be for the district to set-up a survey or form for the student or parent to verify attendance on these days.
2. **Minimum Login Time Requirements.** Districts may be able to use their learning management system (LMS) or other technology to track how long a student is logged in to lessons during remote learning days. This method does not take into account the amount of work completed by the student but does provide a comparable measure to the "seat time" measure that is used during in-person learning. Although districts could require that students must log into lessons at specific times during the day or specific days throughout the week, this is not recommended because it does not allow for family flexibility during remote learning.
3. **Specific Task Completion.** Another method for recording and calculating attendance is to require that students complete a series of regularly scheduled tasks during remote learning. If the student completes all of the required tasks, he or she is considered in attendance. If the student does not complete all of the tasks, then he or she is not in attendance or is only partially in attendance.
4. **Minimum Lesson/Unit Completion.** In this method, student attendance is directly tied to what the student accomplishes and/or the work they produce over a given period of time. The assignments completed become the evidence that a student has been in attendance. If no work is produced, then a student is not considered to be in attendance.

Please note that the Iowa Department of Public Health has a separate, long-standing reporting process for absenteeism that helps track illness activity such as influenza and norovirus. For more information on reporting for public health purposes, please refer to IDPH's [Instructions for 10% Illness Reporting for Iowa PreK-12 Schools](#).