



COMPULSORY ATTENDANCE

For purposes of this policy, “parent” refers to a parent or legal guardian.

Under Maine State law, full-time school attendance is required of all children residing within Regional School Unit-24 (RSU) from their 7th to their 17th birthday except:

- A. A student who graduates from high school before his/her 17th birthday; or
- B. A student who has:
 - 1. Reached the age of 15 years or completed the 9th grade; and
 - 2. Permission to permanently leave school from his/her parent; and
 - 3. Been approved by the Building Administrator (BA) for a suitable program of work and study or training; and
 - 4. Permission to permanently leave school from the RSU Board (RSUB) or its designee; and
 - 5. Agreed in writing with his/her parent and the RSUB or its designee to meet annually until the student’s 17th birthday to review his/her 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 Department of Education (DOE).

- C. A student whose absence is excused under 20-A MRSA § 5051; (Policy JHCA) or
- D. A student 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 DOE.

Alternatives to Attendance at Public Day School

- A. Equivalent instruction alternatives are as follows:
 - 1. A student shall be excused from attending a public day school if he/she obtains equivalent instruction in:
 - a. A private school approved by the DOE for attendance purposes pursuant to 20-A MRSA § 2901; or
 - b. A private school recognized by the DoE as providing equivalent instruction; or

- 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 Regional School Unit 24 (RSU) and approved by the DOE.
 2. A student shall be credited with attendance at a private school only if a certificate showing the student's name, residence and attendance, and signed by the person(s) in charge of the school, has been filed with the Superintendent.
 3. The following provisions apply to home instruction program:
 - a. The student's parent must provide written notice of intent to provide home instruction that meets the requirements of 20-A MRSA § 5001-A(3)(A)(4)(a) simultaneously to the Superintendent and to the DOE within ten (10) calendar days of the beginning of home instruction.
 - b. On or before September 1 of each subsequent year of home instruction, the student's parent must file a letter with the Superintendent and the DOE stating the intention to continue providing home instruction and enclose a copy of one of the forms of annual assessment of the student's academic progress described in 20-A MRSA 5001-A(3)(A)(4)(b).
 - c. Dissemination of any information filed under 20-A MRSA § 5001-A(3)(A) is governed by the provisions of 20-A MRSA § 6001 (dissemination of information); the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) of 1974, 20 USC § 1232g (2002); and the federal Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, 20 USC § 1401-1487 (2002), except that "directory information" as defined by the (FERPA) is confidential and is not subject to public disclosure unless the parent specifically permits disclosure in writing or a judge orders otherwise. Copies of any information filed under 20-A MRSA § 5001-A(3)(A) must be maintained by the student's parent until the home instruction program concludes. The records must be made available to the DOE upon request.
 - d. 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 RSU High School BA shall determine the value of the prior educational experience toward meeting the standards of Maine's System of Learning Results.
- B. A person may be excused from attendance at a public day school pursuant to 20-A MRSA 5104-A or § 8605 (other public or private alternative programs).

Excusable Absence

A student's absence is excused for 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.
- F. RSU transportation unable to transport the student due to a system problem.
- G. RSUB approved school sponsored trip or event.

Parents are responsible for the attendance of students until the student's 17th birthday. The Superintendent and/or his/her designee shall work with families in an effort to ensure compliance.

Students who received and/or are receiving special education services may remain in school through their 20th year if deemed appropriate by the IEP team.

Secondary school students 20 years of age or more will be admitted to the RSU only with prior RSUB approval. However, if a student transfers into the RSU with an IEP and is 20, by law he/she will be allowed to finish the remainder of that school year.

Legal Reference: 20-A MRSA § 5001-A; 5003; 5201
Ch. 125 § 8.06 (Maine Dept. of Ed. Rules)

Cross Reference: IHBG – Home-School Instruction
JFC - Student Withdrawal from School/Dropout Prevention Committee
JEA-R- Student Attendance and Absence/Tardiness

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