

# Lower Moreland Township School District

## ATTENDANCE GUIDELINES



**Lower Moreland Township School District**  
**2551 Murray Avenue**  
**Huntingdon Valley, PA 19006**  
**215-938-0270**

## Overview

The purpose of these student attendance guidelines are to identify various laws, regulations and guidelines for attendance which are mandated or agreed upon, and to present the procedures to implement enforcement of Student attendance regulations.

## Compulsory School Attendance

Regular school attendance is necessary for a successful school experience. Instructional continuity is interrupted and the valuable interaction that occurs with teachers and among fellow students is lost when a student is frequently absent, tardy or dismissed early from school. Realizing that regular attendance in school is necessary for students to gain maximum benefits from public education, the School District urges all parents/guardians to stress punctuality and regular attendance habits with their children. Policy No. 204 of the Lower Moreland Township School District regulates attendance in the schools of Lower Moreland. In addition, the school laws of Pennsylvania require every parent, guardian, or other person having control or charge of a child or children between the ages of eight and seventeen to send them to school. The laws further require that, "Once a parent elects to send his child to school, the child must attend continuously until seventeen years of age, has graduated from a senior high school or has secured legal employment at age sixteen." If parents will not insist that the child take advantage of the free educational opportunities offered, it becomes the duty of the state and the district to require that the student attends school.

## Excused Absence

The school will classify an absence as "excused" for one of the following reasons only:

- Illness
- Quarantine
- Death in the family
- Family Educational tours or trips WITH prior approval (not to exceed ten days per year)
- Religious holidays or observances

Any absence that can be anticipated beforehand should be brought to the attention of the building principal well in advance of the absence.

Secondary students who are absent in excess of twenty percent (20%) of the regularly scheduled class meetings of a particular course may be denied credit for the course, at the discretion of the building principal.

**Educational Tours or Trips:** Requests by parents/guardians for permission to have children absent from school for educational tours or trips must be made to and processed by the principal or his/her designee. The request must be received by the principal at least two weeks prior to the anticipated absence. ***The total number of approved days of absence shall not exceed ten (10) days in a given school year.*** Days exceeding these guidelines shall be considered unlawful and/or unexcused. The parent/guardian must assume the responsibility for checking with the principal or his/her designee, at least one (1) week or more if possible, in advance of the trip, to ascertain the present scholastic standing of the child in the class. The student shall be held responsible for making up missed assignments. Families are encouraged to avoid family vacations or educational field trips during the state testing windows.

**Religious Observation:** All absences occasioned by observance of the student's religion on a day approved by the Board as a religious holiday shall be excused. A penalty shall not be attached to an absence for a religious observance.

### **Unexcused or Unlawful Absences**

All absences for reasons other than those previously cited will be considered as "unexcused." Unexcused absences include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Shopping trips
- Oversleeping
- Car trouble
- Missed the bus
- Pleasure trips/sporting events
- Illegal absences from school

All "unexcused" absences for students under the age of seventeen are also recorded as "unlawful."

### **Parent Responsibility**

When a student is absent from school, the parent must notify the school by calling 215-938-0270 early in the morning to report any absences. Upon the student's return to school from an absence, a parent/guardian must provide a "blue card" excuse card complete with the date of the absence, the reason for the absence, and a parent/guardian signature supporting the absence. The "blue card" is to be given to the Attendance Clerk or Secretary in the Main Office. A "blue card" must be presented within five (5) days of the student's return to school. Electronic submission of this excuse may also take place in the form of an email or fax to the building principal's secretary. If a "blue card" is not returned, the absence will be permanently considered unlawful.

### **District Responsibility**

An automated call will be sent to families whose student is marked absent and the family has not reported their student's absence to alert them that their child is not in school. The District will notify the parent/guardian in writing of the first, second, and third unlawful absence (s). Following the third unlawful absence, the District will coordinate a school-family conference to discuss truancy and develop a mutually agreed upon Truancy Elimination Plan (TEP). The fourth unlawful absence, and every one that follows, will result in referral to the magisterial district judge or the local Children and Youth agency.

### **Tardiness and Early Dismissal**

Whenever students arrive late or depart prior to the end of the school day, parents must present the school with a "yellow card" written note explaining the situation. These incidents are recorded as "excused" or "unexcused" applying the same criteria as those for full-day absences.

Students arriving after the midpoint of the school day or departing before the midpoint of the school day will be recorded as ½ day absent.

Timely arrival to school is another key element for a student's academic success. If your student arrives to school after the normal arrival time, the student and/or parent/guardian must complete a tardy slip in the lobby of the school with the greeter.

Occasionally, student appointments are scheduled during the school day. If this need arises, please send a note to the main office stating the rationale for the appointment and the time for pickup. The office will call the classroom for your student to report to the office upon parent/guardian arrival. The student and or parents/guardian must report to the greeter in the lobby to sign "out" of school for all appointments.

Students in the high school will need to carry their student id card as this card will be scanned to record the late arrival or early dismissal.

### **Cumulative Absences**

Whenever a student accumulates fifteen or more absences in a school year, an "Attendance Improvement Plan" will be developed to improve student attendance. Pre-approved family educational trips/tours, pre-approved college visitation absences, absences excused by a doctor's note, absences excused for quarantine, death in the family, and religious holidays or observances will not be included. All absences beyond fifteen cumulative days will require an excuse from a physician.

### **Consecutive Absences**

Whenever a student has ten (10) consecutive absences and there is no evidence that these absences are "excused," the district shall begin the process to remove the student from its active membership roll.

### **Unlawful Absence Consequences**

Schools are a critical part of a child's support system and have a significant opportunity to assist children and families. Therefore, a letter will be sent to the parent/guardian after each unlawful absence.

#### **(1) First Unlawful Absence**

Parent/guardian receives a letter of unlawful absence from the school district. The legal penalties established by law for violation of compulsory attendance requirements are attached to the letter. In addition to stating the legal punishments, the name and telephone number of a school contact person shall be included. Parents are then able to contact a specific person to request assistance.

#### **(2) Second Unlawful Absence**

Parent/guardian receives a second letter of unlawful absence from the school district. Once again, the legal penalties established by law for violation of compulsory attendance requirements and the name and telephone number of a school contact person shall be included. Additionally, another offer of assistance should be made to the parent.

#### **(3) Third Unlawful Absence**

Parent/guardian receives a third letter of unlawful absence by certified mail providing "official notice of child's third illegal absence." Attached to this letter will be penalties for violation of compulsory attendance requirements as they pertain to both the student and the parent/guardian, including information that three days after giving such notice, the student or parent/guardian who again violates the compulsory attendance requirements shall be liable without further notice. The School district shall coordinate a school/family conference to discuss the cause of the child's truancy and develop a mutually agreed upon Truancy Elimination Plan (TEP) to

resolve truant behavior. Issues to be reviewed at the school/family conference include the appropriateness of the child's educational environment, current academic difficulties, physical or behavioral health issues, and family/environment concerns. At the end of the conference all parties should sign a comprehensive TEP that is agreed to by the school representative, the child, and the parents and/or family. The plan could include accessing academic and social/health supports from the school and community organizations, an outline of family/parent and student responsibilities, and levels of performance monitoring that include rewards and consequences.

#### **(4) Subsequent Unlawful Absence**

After agreeing to a truancy elimination plan (TEP), or if there is not agreement on a TEP and three (3) days have passed since the parent/guardian received the official letter of the child's third illegal absence, if a child is unlawfully absent, at any point within the school year, an official letter of unlawful absence will be sent home. The purpose of this correspondence is to inform the child's parent/guardian that the child has again violated the compulsory attendance requirements, and advise the parent/guardian that a citation will immediately be sent to the magisterial district judge. To ensure the parent/guardian receives the notice, the notice will be sent through certified mail. After this step, the school shall continue to contact the parent/guardian to inform them of additional truant behavior. The school will refer all future incidents of truancy directly to the magisterial district judge having jurisdiction in the region.

#### **Habitually Truant**

The School Code defines habitually truant as absence for more than three (3) school days or their equivalent following the first notice of truancy given after a child's third unlawful absence.

#### **Referral to County Children and Youth Agency**

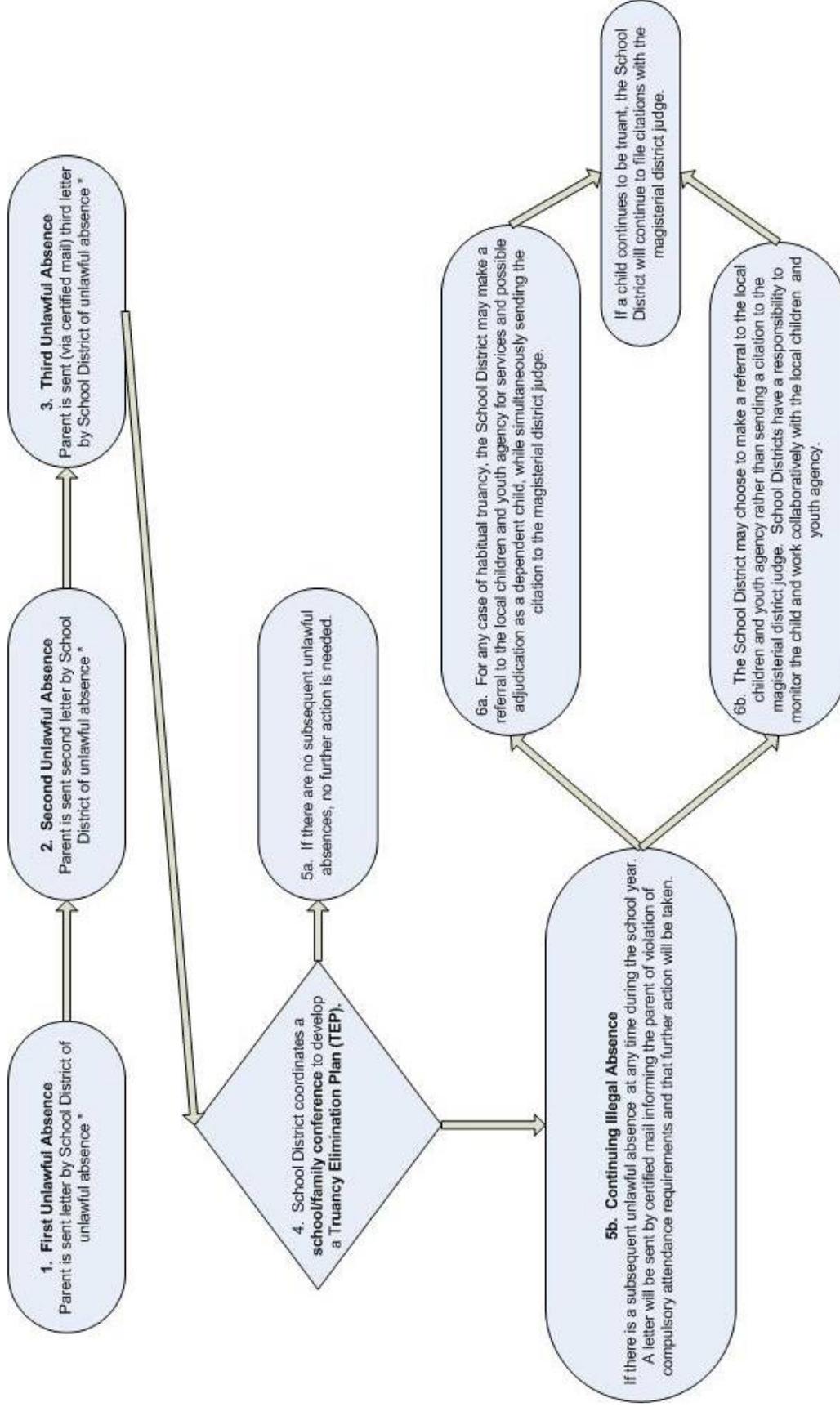
##### **(a) Children Under 13 Years of Age**

Any child who has not attained the age of 13 who fails to comply with the compulsory attendance requirements and is habitually truant, shall be referred by the school district to the local county children and youth agency for services, which may include addressing family issues that may be responsible for the child's truant behavior, or possible adjudication as a "dependent" child under the Juvenile Act. The referral to the county children and youth agency may be in addition to proceeding against the parent/guardian by sending the citation to the appropriate magisterial district judge or a school may decide to refer a family to the local county children and youth agency instead of sending a citation to the appropriate magisterial district judge. If the parent/guardian provides written consent, a copy of the TEP should be forwarded to the county children and youth agency.

##### **(b) Children 13 Years of Age and Older**

Any child who has attained the age of 13 who fails to comply with the compulsory attendance requirements and is habitually truant may, in lieu of being prosecuted (as described below), be referred by the school district to the local county children and youth agency for services, which may include addressing family issues that may be responsible for the child's truant behavior or, possible adjudication as a dependent child under the Juvenile Act.

# Lower Moreland Township School District Responses to Unlawful Absences



**FIRST UNLAWFUL ABSENCE OFFENSE LETTER**

DATE of LETTER

Parent/Guardian Name  
Address  
City, PA Zip Code

Re:    **First Unlawful Absence**  
      <STUDENT NAME>  
      <GRADE>  
      <DAY OF ABSENCE>  
      (or dates of unexcused tardies)

Dear <PARENT'S (OR GUARDIAN'S) NAME>,

Your child was absent unlawfully on the above date or has accumulated unexcused latenesses that are equivalent to an unlawful absence. This letter is sent to make you aware that this absence has been permanently recorded as unlawful.

All absences are counted as unlawful until the Lower Moreland Township School District receives a "blue card" written excuse explaining the reason for the absence. When a "blue card" written excuse is not received within five (5) school days, the absence is permanently recorded as unlawful. This is your child's first unlawful absence of the school year. If your child accumulates three additional days of unlawful absences or the equivalent during a school year, the district must notify the magisterial district judge. Following an absence of five consecutive days due to illness, a student must provide a doctor's note to be admitted to school and for the absences to be considered excused.

Our school has an active Student Assistance Program and additional services that are available to you and your family. We share a common goal to ensure that your child reaches his/her full potential. Regular attendance at school is an important part of every student's success and is necessary in order to gain the greatest benefit from the educational experience. Students who are frequently absent from school miss direct instruction and regular contact with their teachers. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania law and school policy require regular daily attendance. When absences accumulate, it may ultimately result in academic difficulty for your child.

If you have any questions, please call my office 215-938-XXXX or your child's guidance counselor so that we may work together to ensure your child's educational success.

Sincerely,

Building Principal

cc:    Guidance Counselor  
      Student File

**SECOND UNLAWFUL ABSENCE OFFENSE LETTER**

DATE of LETTER

Parent/Guardian Name  
Address  
City, PA Zip Code

Re: **Second Unlawful Absence**  
<STUDENT NAME>  
<GRADE>  
<DATE OF ABSENCE>  
(or dates of unexcused tardies)

Dear <PARENT'S (OR GUARDIAN'S) NAME>,

Your child was absent unlawfully on the above date or has accumulated unexcused latenesses that are equivalent to an unlawful absence. This letter is sent to make you aware that this absence has been permanently recorded as the second unlawful absence this school year.

If your child accumulates two additional days of unlawful absences or the equivalent, the district must notify the magisterial district judge. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania law and school policy require that every child of compulsory school age attend school daily. A child must present a "blue card" written excuse from the parent/guardian within five (5) school days of an absence or the absence will be recorded as unlawful. Following an absence of five consecutive days due to illness, a student must provide a doctor's note to be admitted to school and for the absences to be considered excused.

Attendance requirements are meant to benefit your child's educational experience. I appreciate your cooperation in trying to improve your child's school attendance and in helping your child complete missed assignments on those occasions when your child must be absent. I strongly encourage you to schedule a school-family conference through your child's guidance counselor at this time to explore possible solutions for your child's unlawful absences. If you have any questions, please call my office at 215-938-XXXX.

Sincerely,

*Building Principal*

cc: Guidance Counselor  
Student File

**THIRD UNLAWFUL ABSENCE OFFENSE LETTER**

TO BE SENT CERTIFIED MAIL  
DATE of LETTER

Parent/Guardian Name  
Address  
City, PA Zip Code

Re: **Third Unlawful Absence**  
<STUDENT NAME>  
<GRADE>  
<DATES OF ABSENCES>

Dear <PARENT'S (OR GUARDIAN'S) NAME>:

This letter is to officially notify you of your child's third unlawful absence. If your child is unlawfully absent again, the matter will be referred to a magisterial district judge. Please refer to the enclosed sections in the Pennsylvania School Code for specific penalties for violation of compulsory attendance requirements for both you and your child.

You are therefore notified of your child's repeated unlawful absences and strongly encouraged to ensure that your child receives no subsequent unlawful absences. Additional unlawful absences constitute a summary offense under the Public School Code for which penalties may be imposed against you as parent or guardian. Act 29 of 1995 provides for up to a \$300 fine and allows the court to impose parent education classes and/or community service sentences for a truant child. Student penalties may include revocation of any work permits (working papers) issued. Act 29 also provides that truant students may lose their driver's license for ninety (90) days for the first offense, and six (6) months for the second offense.

Please be advised that the process for development of a Truancy Elimination Plan for your child has now begun, which requires your participation in a school-family conference. The meeting is scheduled for \_\_\_\_\_. Please contact my office at 215-938-XXXX to confirm your attendance. It is our hope that by working together we can create a plan that will support your child's attendance for the remainder of the school year.

Sincerely,

Building Principal

cc: Guidance Counselor  
Student File  
Superintendent of Schools

Enc: 24 PA Statute, Section 1333- Penalties for Violation of Compulsory Attendance

Requirements

**MAGISTRATE REFERRAL LETTER**

TO BE SENT CERTIFIED MAIL  
DATE of LETTER

Parent/Guardian Name  
Address  
City/State/Zip Code

**Re:** Student Name  
**Grade:**

**OFFICIAL NOTICE OF CHILD'S CONTINUING ILLEGAL ABSENCE**

Dear Parent/Guardian:

This letter is to officially notify you that <student name> has had unlawful absences from school on the following dates: <date 1 >, <date 2 >, <date 3 >, <date 4 >. This series of unexcused absences is unlawful and, therefore, constitutes a violation of the compulsory attendance provision of the Pennsylvania Public School Code (24 P>S> 13-1327).

Please be advised that the above absences are being forwarded to the magisterial district court and a citation will be issued. All future incidents of truancy will be referred directly to the magisterial district judge. Please contact my office at 215-938-XXXX with any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Building Principal

cc: Guidance Counselor  
Student File  
Special Education file (if applicable)  
Superintendent of Schools

Enc: 24 PA Statute, Section 1333- Penalties for Violation of Compulsory Attendance  
Requirements

**AGE 13 and UNDER HABITUALLY TRUANT LETTER**

TO BE SENT CERTIFIED MAIL  
DATE of LETTER

Parent/Guardian Name  
Address  
City/State/Zip Code

**Re:** Student Name  
**Grade:**

**OFFICIAL NOTICE OF CHILD'S CONTINUING ILLEGAL ABSENCE**

Dear Parent/Guardian:

This letter is to officially notify you that <student name> has had continued absences from school without a lawful excuse on the following dates: (LIST DATES which constitute habitual truancy). The Pennsylvania School Code defines habitually truant as absence for more than three school days or their equivalent following the first notice of truancy given after a child's third unlawful absence.

Please be advised that this matter is being referred to the local Office of Children and Youth for services, which may include addressing family issues that may be responsible for the child's truant behavior, or possible adjudication as a "dependent" child under the Juvenile Act.

All future incidents of truancy will be referred directly to the Office of Children and Youth and/or the magisterial district judge. Please contact my office at 215-938-XXXX with any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Building Principal

cc: Guidance Counselor  
Student File  
Special Education file (if applicable)  
Superintendent of Schools.

Enc: 24 PA Statute, Section 1333- Penalties for Violation of Compulsory Attendance Requirements