

# A FACT SHEET FOR PARENTS ON: ENROLLMENT AND ATTENDANCE IN SOUTH CAROLINA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

It is important for your child to attend school everyday. You are responsible for your child's attendance and can be fined or put in jail if your child is absent too much. Below is a list of things to keep in mind in regard to school attendance and enrollment.

- In South Carolina, children aged five through seventeen must go to school. Children can go to a public or private school, or can be home-schooled. Immigrant children must attend school, too.
- Your child will most likely need be enrolled in the school closest to where you live. If you are not sure which school to enroll your child in, you can call the school district office. The number will be listed in the blue pages of the phone book.
- Bring proof of your child's age, such as a birth certificate, and immunization record when enrolling your child. The district will probably also need some proof that you live in the district, such as a utility bill or lease. Give the new school all the information you can about your child when enrolling in a new school. Remember to tell them about the old school and whether your child was in gifted or special education classes.
- Sometimes schools expect only birth parents to enroll students, but sometimes children are living with other adults for a very good reason. Some school officials may try and stop their enrollment. However, if the child is not living with the parent for a good reason, the school must enroll the child immediately.
- If you live in the district and meet all legal requirements for attendance, your child should be enrolled without delay. In addition, the school should not stop the enrollment of your child because it is waiting on your child's records to be sent over from the last school. Schools should admit your child, and then wait for the records.





- Remember to contact your child's school if your child is sick or must miss school. You will want to attach a doctor's note if you have one to the excuse when turning it into the school. Be sure to keep a copy of the doctor information as well. Schools record both lawful and unlawful absences. Lawful absences include serious illness, illness or death in the immediate family, a religious holiday, or some other reason that has been approved by the school board. Students are usually allowed ten lawful absences a school year. If you do not notify your child's school for the reason of their absence, it will be considered unlawful regardless of the reason.
- You are still responsible for your child's attendance even if he or she skips school without your knowledge. The school will consider this absence an unlawful absence.
- Once a student has three unlawful absences in a row or five unlawful absences during a school year, they are considered a truant. (This does not include suspensions.) The law requires schools to do something about students who miss school unlawfully. Once these days have been missed, schools must create a written plan along with the student and parent to try to prevent further unlawful absences. The school may involve or refer the family to other organizations or service providers who could help solve issues that are causing the absences. If the student does not follow the plan, the school may refer that student to Family Court.

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This is not all the information you need to know if you have questions about school attendance laws in our state. You may want to talk to a lawyer about your individual situation. If you don't have a lawyer, the South Carolina Bar Lawyer Referral Service can give you the name of a lawyer who is willing to meet with you and advise you at a lower rate. For the name of a lawyer in your area, call the Lawyer Referral Service at (800) 868-2284 (statewide) or 799-7100 in Richland and Lexington counties. If you have a very low income, your local legal services office may be able to help you. To get in touch with them, call the Legal Assistance Telephone Intake Service for a referral at 744-9430 in Columbia or toll-free, (888) 346-5592 from other places in the state.

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