



## **GaDOE Model Student Attendance Protocol: Supporting Positive Attendance and Preventing Chronic Absenteeism through School Climate Committees**

Aligned to Compulsory Attendance Law and SB 123 (2025)

***Model use and local adoption.*** This model is intended to serve as a starting point. Each county Student Attendance and School Climate Committee (SASCC) and each local school system should adapt the procedures, forms, roles, and timelines to local context while meeting statutory requirements.

## Table of Contents

|                                                                 |    |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Introduction .....                                              | 3  |
| <i>Definition of Terms</i> .....                                | 3  |
| <i>Student Attendance and School Climate Committees</i> .....   | 6  |
| Committee Governance and Operations .....                       | 8  |
| Model District and School Attendance Intervention Process ..... | 9  |
| Family Engagement .....                                         | 9  |
| Court Intervention Process .....                                | 11 |
| Sharing and Use of Data .....                                   | 11 |
| Community Partner Roles and Responsibilities .....              | 12 |
| Signature(s) and Adoption .....                                 | 13 |
| Appendix .....                                                  | 14 |

## Introduction

Georgia Senate Bill 123 (2025) strengthens the state’s compulsory attendance framework by requiring each county to develop local attendance protocols and hold regular community meetings to address student attendance, engagement, and wellbeing. The law directs the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE), upon request from the committee, to provide a model protocol that counties may use as a starting point for this work.

**Purpose of the document.** The purpose of this document is to provide background information and components of a model protocol. It is intended as a practical, adaptable resource that local communities can tailor to their unique context while remaining aligned with state requirements. Each part of this document is grounded in a prevention-focused approach that emphasizes early identification, coordinated problem solving, and supportive responses to absenteeism, while reserving legal enforcement as a last resort.

The sections that follow outline required statutory components and recommended systems, practices, and templates to support local compliance and improve attendance, school climate, and student outcomes.

Portions of this document will explain requirements and legislative expectations while others will delineate specific steps in addressing attendance concerns and needs that may be included in local attendance practices. All aspects of this document are available for use in county attendance protocols, but *specific sections, including definitions, steps for prevention, and responsive actionable components of the model protocol will be identified by italicized font.* This distinction makes them easily discernable from the informational aspects of the document.

**Focus on cross-agency collaboration.** This resource is designed for collaborative use by cross-agency partners who share responsibility for student success, including education, courts, child welfare, juvenile justice, behavioral health, public health, law enforcement, and community-based supports. Effective attendance work is continuous, community-driven, and informed by multiple perspectives.

**Alignment within a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS).** Attendance efforts should not occur in isolation. For maximum efficiency, they should be an explicit part of a district’s GaMTSS for district improvement. GaMTSS is a prevention-focused framework that uses data to deliver layered supports, so all students receive strong universal practices, and students with greater needs receive targeted and intensive interventions. Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) is embedded within GaMTSS and includes establishing consistent, schoolwide expectations, teaching and acknowledging positive behavior, and using data to strengthen school climate, which directly supports improved attendance.

## Definition of Terms

***Attendance Review Team:*** A team established pursuant to [O.C.G.A. § 20-2-690.3](#) to review chronic absenteeism, identify causes, and coordinate interventions as required by SB 123 (2025).

**Chronic Absenteeism (CA):** Defined as missing 10% or more enrolled school days, regardless of reason. For students enrolled for the entire year in a typical school, chronically absent students miss 18 or more days per year, [SB 123 \(2025\)](#). Chronic absentee includes the total number of days absent, excused or unexcused.

**CHINS (Child in Need of Services):** A juvenile court pathway designed to address habitual truancy and its underlying causes. Governed by Georgia law ([O.C.G.A. § 15-11-2, 15-11-381](#)), a child subject to compulsory attendance may be referred to juvenile court as a CHINS matter if they accrue 10 or more unexcused absences.

**Compulsory Attendance:** The legal requirement for attendance for children ages 6 through 16, with associated parent or guardian responsibilities and school system notice requirements.

**Excused Absence:** Students are considered excused in accordance with the school policy and existing law [State Board Rule 160-5-1-.10](#). Examples include but are not necessarily limited to:

- Personally ill and attendance in school would endanger their health or the health of others.
- A serious illness or death in their immediate family necessitates absence from school.
- Mandated by order of governmental agencies, including pre-induction physical examinations for service in the armed forces, or by a court order.
- Celebrating religious holidays.
- Conditions render attendance impossible or hazardous to their health or safety.
- Registering to vote or vote, for a period not to exceed one day.
- A visit, up to five school days per year, with a parent or legal guardian who is on leave from or who is being deployed to military services.

**Georgia Multi-Tiered System of Supports (GaMTSS):** Georgia Multi-Tiered System of Supports (GaMTSS) is a data-driven, multi-level prevention system designed to meet the needs of the whole child by implementing a continuum of tiered supports. GaMTSS is grounded in the belief that academics, behavior, and wellbeing are interconnected and impact student success.

**Parent and Guardian:** A biological or adoptive parent, legal guardian, custodian, or other person with legal authority to act on behalf of a child

**Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS):** An evidence-based, proactive framework for improving school climate and student outcomes by teaching clear behavioral expectations, recognizing and reinforcing positive behavior, and using data to guide consistent, tiered supports for students. In Georgia, the essential elements of PBIS are integrated and embedded within the GaMTSS.

**Preventative Infrastructure:** The district and school teaming, data systems, decision guidelines, multi-level supports, and continuous improvement processes that enable early identification and support.

**School Climate:** A broad term that describes the quality of school life by measuring student and adult experiences related to academics, relationships, safety, and the environment.

**Student Attendance and School Climate Committee (SASCC):** The county committee established under [O.C.G.A. § 20-2-690.2](#) to coordinate compulsory attendance work and adopt/submit protocols.

**Student Attendance Protocol:** The written local procedures required by SB 123 for identifying, documenting, intervening, and, when necessary, referring to attendance cases.

**Tier 1 Supports:** High quality core instruction, curriculum, and learning environment designed for all students.

**Tier 2 Supports:** Targeted small group interventions and supports designed for 5-15% of students.

**Tier 3 Supports:** Individualized interventions and support designed for 3-5% of students.

**Truancy:** Truancy in Georgia is defined as any child who is subject to the compulsory attendance law who has more than 5 days of unexcused absences during the school year (as defined in [State Board Rule 160-5-1-.10](#)).

**Unexcused Absence:** An absence is unexcused when it does not meet the criteria for an excused absence under State Board Rule 160-5-1-.10 or local board policy. Districts may require parent/guardian notes or other documentation to validate an excused absence, consistent with local policy.

**Unexcused Tardy or Early Check-Out:** An unexcused tardy or early check-out is defined as any time a student arrives late to school or leaves school for a reason other than those defined by the State Board of Education as an excused absence.

## Requirements Under State Law

### Compulsory Attendance and Senate Bill 123 (2025)

[Georgia law](#) requires children ages 6 through 16 to attend school regularly.

Parents/guardians are responsible for enrollment and attendance, and students are expected to attend. This applies to public, private, and home study programs that meet state standards. Compulsory attendance establishes required notice and documentation steps when unexcused absences occur.

### **Senate Bill 123 Requirements:**

- Establishment Student Attendance and School Climate Committee in each county
- Adoption of student attendance protocol
- Reporting of county-level compliance

#### Key Provisions:

- No expulsion solely due to absenteeism
- Chronic absenteeism equates to missing 10% of enrolled days
- Required action of Attendance Review Teams

*For more information, review the [Attendance Requirements Document](#).*

### **Compulsory Attendance Requirements:**

- Annual notice of compulsory attendance requirements and potential consequences
- Notice of five unexcused absences
- Expectation of prevention
- At five unexcused absences, written notices to parent/guardian that outlines required attendance actions and potential legal consequences

*For more information, review the [Attendance Requirements Document](#).*

### **Senate Bill 123 (2025)**

Senate Bill 123 (2025) strengthens prevention by creating a county-level structure for shared planning, data use, and cross-agency collaboration to address barriers before absenteeism becomes chronic. Together, these laws reinforce both accountability and early intervention to improve attendance and school climate.

### **House Bill 268 (2025)**

**Students Who Stop Attending Without Notice ([O.C.G.A. § 20-2-785](#)):** If a student misses 30 consecutive days with no withdrawal or enrollment notice, the school must refer the case to DFCS and the RESA student affairs officer and, as appropriate, consider a wellness visit and law enforcement notification.

## **Student Attendance and School Climate Committees**

*Student Attendance and School Climate Committees (SASCC) per [O.C.G.A. § 20-2-690.2](#) are developed within each county and are established to ensure coordination and cooperation among officials, agencies, and programs involved in compulsory attendance issues, reduce unexcused absences, reduce chronic absenteeism, increase test participation, and improve school climate.*

### **HB 268 Requirements:**

- If a student is absent  $\geq 30$  days, the student is referred to DFCS and RESA Student Affairs Officer.

*For more information, review the [Attendance Requirements Document](#).*

*The statutory mandate of these committees is to develop a written protocol outlining procedures for **identifying, reporting, investigating, and addressing alleged violations of the compulsory school attendance law** ([O.C.G.A. § 20-2-690.1](#)). This work also includes identifying and supporting prevention, intervention, and school climate initiatives of community partners throughout each county, aimed at assisting students and families in achieving attendance goals.*

*Established by the Chief Judge of the Superior Court, **the SASCC members commit:***

- To implement and support prevention-first attendance practices.*
- To use data to identify barriers and monitor the effectiveness of interventions.*
- To coordinate referrals and services to remove barriers to attendance.*
- To ensure consistent documentation and statutory compliance prior to court action.*
- To review and revise this protocol as needed based on data and implementation feedback.*

### **SASCC Mission and Goals:**

- To adopt and maintain county attendance protocol to establish clear, county-specific processes that strengthen student attendance, well-being, and overall school climate
- To emphasize identifying the root causes and connecting students and families to supports
- To promote cross-agency coordination to improve attendance outcomes and strengthen school climate

### **District Consideration:**

The SASCC mission and goals align with the purpose of the GaMTSS District Leadership Team. To monitor district attendance data throughout the year, districts may include attendance in the data they already review, rather than examining data sources in isolation. Because academics, behavior, and wellbeing all contribute to the root causes of attendance concerns, these data should be reviewed collectively within the same meeting. To support coherence across structures, the District Leadership Team should establish a clear process for ensuring a feedback loop between the Student Attendance and Student Climate Committees and district leadership, allowing insights, trends, and recommendations to inform broader system-level decision making. Schools can apply this same integrated approach by problem-solving with academics, behavior, attendance, and wellbeing data during Tier 1 Leadership Team meetings, rather than forming additional attendance-specific committees.

## Committee Governance and Operations

Per the law, the committee must include a representative from each of the following:

- Chief judge of the superior court
- Juvenile court judge or judges of the county
- District Attorney for the county
- Solicitor-general of state court, if the county has a state court
- Department of Juvenile Justice (may include area juvenile detention facility representatives)
- Sheriff of the county
- Chief of police of the county police department
- Chief of police of each municipal police department in the county
- County Department of Family and Children Services (DFCS)
- County board of health
- County mental health organization
- County Family Connection commission, board, or authority (or similar county youth and family services entity)
- Court-approved community-based risk reduction program (juvenile court), if established

From each public school system in the county:

- Superintendent
- A certificated school employee
- A local school board member
- A certificated school social worker, if the system employs any

The committee must meet no later than November 1, 2025, and **at least twice annually** thereafter. These meetings serve as structured checkpoints to review attendance data, examine how the county protocol is being implemented, and identify barriers that require cross agency solutions.

### ***Expectations for local procedures:***

- *Define roles and responsibilities for daily attendance coding and outreach.*
- *Determine decision points for outreach and intervention.*
- *Specify when and how attendance plans are developed.*
- *Codify documentation standards.*
- *Establish escalation process/referral to attendance review teams.*
- *Determine court referral readiness standards and points of contact.*

By June 1, 2026, each committee must adopt a written student attendance protocol for every local school system within the county and submit it to GaDOE via the agency website. This protocol should clearly outline the processes for identifying, documenting, and addressing attendance concerns, specifically detailing how partners will collaborate to determine root causes and connect families to essential supports before problems escalate.

## Model District and School Attendance Intervention Process

*Each local board of education maintains a daily attendance monitoring process and adopts policies and procedures implemented consistently by all schools.*

### **Minimum recommended escalation structure**

*Local school systems should implement a structured response sequence, such as:*

- **Early concern trigger (example: 3 total absences):** Supportive outreach, barrier screening, encouragement, attendance messaging.
- **Escalation trigger (example: 5 unexcused absences as required by [SBOE rule](#)):** Attendance conference and plan, documentation, and statutory notice and required legal language; see Appendix - [5 Unexcused Absences Parent Letter \(Template\)](#).
- **Intensive trigger (example: 7 to 10 absences, repeated unexcused patterns, or chronic risk):** Advanced tier supports, coordinated case management, referral to community supports, and attendance review team consideration.
- **Chronic absenteeism threshold (10 percent):** Follow attendance review team processes where applicable and monitor outcomes.

*Local systems may adopt different triggers, but they should be written, consistent, and implemented with fidelity. When a pattern of absences, tardies or early check-outs emerges, the school should complete a brief root-cause review with the student and family to identify barriers (for example: transportation, health, caregiving responsibilities, housing instability, school avoidance/anxiety, bullying/safety concerns, scheduling, disengagement, or access to needed services). Interventions should be matched to the identified barrier(s) and documented.*

### **District Consideration:**

The Attendance Intervention Process and root-cause review fit well within the GaMTSS Tier 3 protocols for individualized student supports. Within GaMTSS, districts can shift from punitive responses to absences toward a Whole Child approach by using data to identify student needs and match students to interventions and supports that address the underlying root causes of attendance concerns. GaMTSS also establishes systems for monitoring implementation fidelity and student outcomes at both the school and district levels to ensure supports are delivered as intended and contribute to reducing chronic absenteeism.

## Family Engagement

Family engagement is a core strategy for improving attendance. When schools build trusting, responsive partnerships with families, they strengthen shared ownership for student success and reduce barriers to regular attendance. Effective family engagement is proactive and ongoing, not limited to times of concern.

*Districts and schools should establish consistent practices to communicate clear attendance expectations, share timely and understandable data, and invite families into problem-solving. This includes regular positive outreach, two-way communication in*

*families' preferred languages and formats, and accessible opportunities for families to connect with school staff.*

**Key family engagement practices include:**

- *Welcoming school climate and relationship-building starting before the first day of school*
- *Regular positive communication, not only contact about problems*
- *Clear, family-friendly information about attendance expectations and supports*
- *Two-way communication and shared decision-making*
- *Solution-focused problem solving rather than blame or punitive messaging*
- *Connections to school and community resources, including wraparound supports when needed*

**Communication Strategies**

*Consistent, coordinated communication keeps attendance priorities visible, builds shared accountability, and ensures community partners understand their role in prevention and intervention. Districts and schools should use clear messaging, common definitions, and regular reporting routines aligned to MTSS, PBIS, and the district and school improvement plan.*

**Partner-specific strategies**

- *Families and caregivers:* *Set expectations, recognize progress, reach out early, and simplify access to support*
- *Students:* *Make attendance relevant, connect to goals, and use age-appropriate messaging and recognition*
- *Teachers and staff:* *Provide timely data, clear referral pathways, and guidance to strengthen engagement and belonging*
- *Administrators:* *Review data routinely, monitor implementation, and address operational barriers*
- *District leaders and committees:* *Share regular summaries of trends, subgroup patterns, root causes, and results*
- *Community partners:* *Align referral and follow-up processes and follow FERPA-compliant information sharing when applicable*

**District Consideration:**

Districts should intentionally align their family engagement strategies with GaMTSS so that communication, relationship-building, and shared problem-solving are embedded within the tiered supports system rather than functioning as a separate initiative. When family engagement is integrated into GaMTSS, districts can ensure consistent practices across schools, reduce duplication, and create coherent supports that strengthen attendance, behavior, wellbeing, and academic outcomes.

## Court Intervention Process

Court referral is a last resort used only after the school has implemented and documented reasonable, progressive interventions, and the student continues to have unexcused absences

### Student accountability (CHINS)

In many counties, habitual truancy involving students under age 18 is addressed through juvenile court pathways that may include Child in Need of Services (CHINS) processes and other service-focused responses. Local protocols should clearly describe the county's juvenile court intake process, diversion options (if available), required documentation, and the appropriate referral point(s) of contact.

### Parent or guardian accountability (criminal enforcement)

*Georgia's compulsory attendance law ([O.C.G.A. 20-2-690.1](#)) allows enforcement actions against a parent or guardian in appropriate cases. Local protocols should identify the court venue(s), required prosecutor documentation, and any diversion options.*

*After five unexcused absences, the school system must send written notice to the family outlining attendance requirements and potential legal consequences. If unexcused absences continue, a parent/guardian of a child ages 5-16 subject to [O.C.G.A. § 20-2-690.1](#) may be referred for prosecution in State Court (where available) or Superior Court. Penalties may include misdemeanor charges, fines, and up to 30 days in jail.*

### Court Referral Readiness Checklist (Minimum)

*A referral packet should include, at minimum:*

- *Current-year attendance record showing excused and unexcused absences*
- *Documentation of the annual notice process (including signature verification, if applicable)*
- *Documentation of the five-unexcused absence notice process, including certified mail when required*
- *Family contact log with dates, methods, and outcomes*
- *Summary of interventions implemented and results*
- *Attendance review team notes and intervention plan (if applicable)*
- *Documentation confirming review for special protections and access needs (IEP/504, homelessness, foster care, English learner status, health-related needs)*

## Sharing and Use of Data

*Each member commits to sharing relevant attendance and school climate data with the Committee. Data will be reviewed during regular meetings to identify effective strategies, monitor trends, and highlight areas for improvement. The Committee will review data at least annually and use findings to recommend updates to the protocol.*

### Data may include:

- *Attendance rate, chronic absenteeism rate, and unexcused absence counts*
- *Disaggregated data by school, grade band, and student group*

- *Percentage of students receiving and responding positively to Tier 2 and Tier 3 supports*
- *Intervention participation and outcomes*
- *Discipline-related absences (OSS/ISS days) and key school climate indicators*

### **Attendance Assessment Measures**

*Local systems should identify and standardize the measures used to assess attendance barriers and progress, such as:*

- *Attendance plan templates with barrier identification,*
- *Root cause or barrier screening tools,*
- *Intervention progress monitoring (weekly or biweekly),*
- *Fidelity checks to confirm interventions occur as designed.*

### **School Climate Assessment Measures**

*Local systems should identify measures used to assess school climate, such as:*

- *Georgia School Climate Survey results and priority indicators,*
- *Local climate or engagement measures,*
- *Discipline patterns that may reflect climate-related barriers.*

### **Additional Measures**

*Local systems should identify additional data that could supplement understanding and inform decision-making, such as:*

- *Whole Child Health Data Dashboard,*
- *Community support services data,*
- *Other forms of information (e.g., anecdotal, counselor logs, discipline).*

*Climate and additional data should be reviewed alongside attendance data to guide Tier 1 improvements.*

## **Community Partner Roles and Responsibilities**

In a county Attendance Protocol, each SASCC member entity identifies: (1) prevention efforts, (2) intervention supports, (3) referral pathway and point of contact, and (4) feedback loop to schools or the committee.

### **Model role statements (to be localized):**

- *Superior Court: Convenes SASCC; supports protocol adoption and filing; ensures meeting cadence.*
- *Juvenile Court: Aligns juvenile intake and diversion pathways for attendance-related cases; identifies documentation requirements; coordinates service-first options when available.*
- *District Attorney and Solicitor-General: Clarify required documentation for enforcement referrals; identify diversion options and referral points of contact; participate in protocol monitoring.*
- *Local School Systems: Implement prevention and interventions; ensure statutory notices; operate attendance review teams when required; maintain documentation.*
- *DFCS: Clarify referral criteria; coordinate supports within agency authority; participate in barrier-solving where appropriate.*

- *DJJ: Coordinate with schools for youth under supervision and support attendance planning as applicable.*
- *Public Health and Behavioral Health: Support referrals for medical, behavioral health, and substance use barriers; coordinate community resources.*
- *Law Enforcement: Support coordinated responses consistent with local practice and legal requirements; assist with safety planning when relevant.*

## Signature(s) and Adoption

A statement of intent and signatures of committee members should be included at the end of the local protocol. A model summary is included below.

*To ensure that these written procedures are followed, the Protocol Committee will meet bi-annually, as required by law. The Committee's goal will be to improve communication between agencies, encourage inter-agency cooperation, and update the protocol as necessary. Agencies are not limited to the minimum requirements of the protocol if additional strategies are implemented. Each participation agency should monitor and evaluate compliance with the protocol and as needed, recommend protocol revision and implementation that best meets the needs of the community and complies with Federal, State, and local statutes, as well as agency policy.*

*This protocol is adopted by the [County Name] Student Attendance and School Climate Committee on [Date]. The committee will file the adopted protocol with the Georgia Department of Education consistent with statutory requirements.*

*Signatures:*

*Chair, SASCC*

*Chief Judge of Superior Court (or designee)*

*Superintendent(s) (or designee[s]) for each local school system*

*Additional SASCC members as determined locally*

## Summary

In accordance with Georgia Senate Bill 123 (2025), the Georgia Department of Education developed this model protocol to support local education agencies (LEAs) and Student Attendance and School Climate Committees (SASCC) as they work to meet legislative requirements related to student attendance. This resource is intended to provide guidance and structure while allowing flexibility for local adaptation.

When attendance efforts are addressed through a multi-tiered system of supports and grounded in strong school climate practices, communities are better positioned to prevent chronic absenteeism, identify and address root causes early, and sustain positive attendance outcomes. Through shared responsibility and continuous improvement, this work supports both legislative compliance and meaningful student engagement.

## Appendix

### GaMTSS Additional Information

[Guiding Questions to Ensure Your Multi-Level Prevention System Supports Attendance](#)

[Why MTSS Works for Attendance](#)

[GaMTSS Resources](#)

[GaMTSS District Fidelity Tool \(DFT\)](#)

[GaMTSS School Fidelity Tool \(SFT\)](#)

### Model Templates

[5 Unexcused Absences Parent Letter \(Template\)](#)

[Attendance Prevention Infrastructure Action Plan \(Template\)](#)

[Court Referral Readiness Checklist \(Template\)](#)

[SASCC Meeting Agenda \(Template\)](#)

[School Attendance Plan \(Template\)](#)

[Tier 1 Leadership Team Meeting Agenda](#)

### Resources

[Example Attendance Phone Call Scripts for Teachers](#)

[GaDOE Attendance Resources 2025](#)

[Identifying Root Cause Worksheet by Attendance Works](#)

[Student Attendance Postcard](#)

[Student Attendance Postcard in Black & White](#)