

HOUSE REPUBLICAN STAFF ANALYSIS

Bill: Senate File 277	House Committee: Passed on 4/1/25 (21-2)
Committee: Education	House Floor: Passed on 4/17 (93-0)
Floor Manager: Rep. Hayes	Senate Floor: Passed on 3/10/25 (47-0)
Date: April 17, 2025	Governor: Signed on 5/6/25
Staff: Kristin Rozeboom (1-3015)	

Compulsory Education, Truancy and Chronic Absenteeism

- Introduces a model policy for county attorneys regarding enforcement of truancy laws.
- Adds new exceptions for absences: military entrance processing, military service, attending funerals, and weddings.
- Requires school policies to describe how exceptions may be met and consider travel time.
- Changes notification procedures for chronic absenteeism, allowing for ordinary mail, electronic mail, or in-person delivery instead of certified mail.
- Mandates engagement meetings only if absences negatively affect academic progress.

Section by Section Analysis

Section 1: Amendment to Section 256.9

New Subsection: The director of the Department of Education is required to develop a model policy regarding the enforcement of compulsory education laws (Chapter 299) in consultation with the Iowa County Attorneys Association. This model policy will be distributed to county attorneys, school districts, and accredited nonpublic schools for reference.

Section 2: Amendment to Section 299.1

Subsection 4, Paragraph b: New exceptions are added to the list of circumstances under which a child may be excused from compulsory attendance:

- (7) Undergoing military entrance processing.
- (8) Engaged in military service.
- (9) Traveling to attend a funeral.
- (10) Traveling to attend a wedding.

New Paragraph c: The policy or rules adopted by public school districts must outline how children can meet these exceptions and must consider travel time when evaluating attendance.

Section 3: Amendment to Section 299.12

Subsection 2, Paragraph a: The requirement for a school official to send a notice regarding chronic absenteeism is modified. The notice to the child's parent or guardian (or to the child if emancipated) can now be sent via ordinary mail, electronic mail, electronic message, or delivered in person. The school must keep a copy of this notice until the child graduates, turns 21, or is no longer enrolled.

Section 4: Amendment to Section 299.12

Subsection 3, Paragraph a, Subparagraph (1): The requirement for school officials to find the cause of a child's absences is maintained, but now they are only required to initiate a school engagement meeting if it is determined that the absences are negatively affecting the child's academic progress. The purpose of this meeting is to identify barriers to attendance and discuss interventions to improve attendance.