



Attendance and Truancy Policy

1. Purpose and Commitment

The University of Chicago Charter School (UCCS) is committed to providing a quality education for every student. Regular and punctual attendance is essential to academic achievement, student well-being, school engagement, and long-term success. Students are expected to attend school every day, arrive on time, and be present for each scheduled class.

UCCS recognizes that absenteeism is not solely a compliance issue. Student absences may reflect academic, social-emotional, health, family, transportation, housing, school climate, or other barriers. UCCS therefore uses a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) approach to prevent absenteeism, identify barriers, partner with students and families, and provide appropriate interventions before pursuing more intensive truancy responses.

The Comprehensive Policy is reviewed by UCCS and the board every two years. The policy was last updated September 15th, 2026, and approved by the board on September 17th, 2026. This policy will be incorporated into the UChicago Charter Student & Family Handbook and posted on the UChicago Charter School website.

2. Definitions

Attendance

Attendance means a student's presence and participation in the school day and scheduled classes in accordance with applicable law and UCCS procedures.

Valid Cause / Excused Absence

A student may be absent for a valid cause. At a minimum, valid causes include:

- Illness, including the mental or behavioral health of the student;
- Observance of a religious holiday;
- Death in the immediate family or a family emergency;
- Other situations beyond the control of the student, as determined by UCCS administration; and
- Other circumstances that cause reasonable concern to the parent or legal guardian for the student's mental, emotional, or physical health or safety.

UCCS may recognize additional valid causes for absence as permitted by applicable law and School Policy.

Unexcused Absence and Truancy

An absence is unexcused when it is not supported by a valid cause under applicable law and UCCS policy. A student is truant when absent without valid cause for a school day or portion of a school day. Undocumented absences are unexcused.

Chronic Absenteeism

A student is considered chronically absent when the student misses 10% or more of the school year, regardless of whether the absences are excused or unexcused, subject to applicable statutory exclusions. Chronic absenteeism is distinct from truancy because it considers the total amount of instructional time missed, not only unexcused absences.

Tardiness

A student is tardy when the student is not present in class at the time established by the campus bell schedule. Repeated tardiness and accumulated lost instructional time may trigger attendance intervention.

3. Parent/Guardian Notification and Verification of Absences

Parents and legal guardians are expected to notify the school when a student will be absent and provide the reason for the absence in accordance with campus procedures and applicable law. UCCS may request appropriate documentation when permitted by law and necessary to verify an absence.

Absences that cannot be verified or that do not meet the requirements for a valid cause may be classified as unexcused. Verification requirements will be administered consistently with applicable Illinois law, including requirements governing mental or behavioral health absences. Undocumented absences are unexcused. Students are not permitted to participate in after-school activities or functions if they have an unexcused absence on the same day. If at all possible, students are encouraged to make medical or other appointments after school hours or on the weekends.

UCCS encourages families, when reasonably possible, to schedule routine appointments outside instructional hours.

4. Diagnostic Procedures for Attendance Concerns

When a student demonstrates a pattern of unexcused absences, truancy, chronic absenteeism, repeated tardiness, or is at risk of becoming chronically absent, UCCS will make reasonable efforts to identify the underlying causes or barriers contributing to the attendance concern.

At a minimum, the diagnostic process will include:

- An interview or conference with the student;
- An interview or conference with the parent or legal guardian; and
- Consultation with teachers, administrators, counselors, social workers, case managers, or other school officials who may have information relevant to the student's attendance.

As appropriate, UCCS may also review attendance patterns and consider transportation, housing instability, physical health, mental or behavioral health, family circumstances, caregiving responsibilities, school safety or belonging, bullying, academic difficulty, special education or Section 504 needs, economic hardship, disciplinary concerns, or other circumstances affecting attendance.

The purpose of the diagnostic process is to identify barriers and determine appropriate supports, not merely to assign consequences.

5. MTSS Attendance Intervention Framework

UCCS will provide increasingly individualized attendance supports based on student need. Interventions will be documented and monitored for effectiveness. The School may provide additional interventions beyond these minimum supports based on the results of the diagnostic process and the student's individual circumstances.

UCCS recognizes families as essential partners in improving student attendance. Attendance interventions will emphasize relationship-building, shared problem-solving, and mutual capacity rather than notification and compliance alone.

School staff and families will work together to identify barriers, develop solutions, monitor progress, and build their shared ability to support consistent student attendance. Families will receive clear information about attendance expectations, their student's attendance patterns, available school and community supports, and opportunities to participate in developing attendance solutions.

Tier 1 - Universal Prevention and Engagement

- Clear communication of attendance and punctuality expectations to students and families.
- Routine monitoring of attendance, tardiness, and early dismissal patterns.
- Welcoming school environments and relationship-centered family engagement.
- Attendance education emphasizing the connection between daily attendance, learning, belonging, and student success.
- Positive recognition of strong or improved attendance, implemented in ways that do not stigmatize students with legitimate absences.
- Early family outreach when emerging attendance concerns are identified.
- Schoolwide and classroom strategies that strengthen student belonging and engagement.

Tier 2 - Targeted Early Intervention

- Student and family attendance conference and diagnostic interview.
- Individualized attendance success plan with measurable goals.
- Regular student check-ins, mentoring, or check-in/check-out supports.
- Counseling, social-emotional, academic, or behavioral supports as appropriate.
- Transportation, housing, food, health, or other resource referrals when barriers are identified.
- Increased progress monitoring and regular communication with the family.
- Coordination among teachers, student support staff, administrators, and family members.

Tier 3 - Intensive Individualized Support

- Individualized case management and multidisciplinary problem-solving.
- Intensive attendance plan developed with the student and family.
- Student counseling and, when appropriate, family counseling or referrals.
- Mental or behavioral health supports and community-based service referrals.
- Transportation, housing, safety, or other intensive resource coordination.
- Individualized academic supports and re-engagement planning.
- Coordination with appropriate external agencies when legally authorized and necessary.

8. Chronic Absenteeism Data Review and Systems of Support

UCCS collects and regularly reviews chronic absence data at the board, Network, and individual campus level. The review will include analysis of chronic absence data from each UCCS attendance center or campus and will be used to determine what systems of support and resources are needed to engage chronically absent students and their families.

The review process will be used to:

- Identify students approaching or exceeding chronic absenteeism thresholds;
- Identify attendance patterns by campus, grade level, student population, and other relevant factors;
- Identify recurring barriers affecting students and families;
- Evaluate the effectiveness of Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3 interventions;
- Determine whether additional resources or community partnerships are needed;
- Identify opportunities for earlier intervention; and
- Develop strategies that strengthen student and family engagement and improve daily attendance.

UCCS will incorporate applicable chronic absenteeism review, reporting, and support provisions of the Illinois School Code into its attendance practices and policy implementation.

9. Progressive Truancy Response

UCCS uses a progressive, support-first response to truancy. The general sequence is: family contact; diagnostic conversation; barrier identification; support and intervention; progress monitoring; and increased intervention when needed.

Initial Truancy / Emerging Concern

The teacher or designated staff member will address the concern with the student, notify the parent or guardian, and document the contact. Staff will begin identifying possible barriers when a pattern is emerging.

Repeated Truancy

The teacher or designated attendance staff member will contact the parent or guardian to discuss the pattern, complete or initiate the diagnostic process, and identify appropriate Tier 2 supports.

Continued Truancy

The student will be referred to administration and/or the campus attendance team. The family will be contacted, interventions will be reviewed, and an attendance success plan may be developed or intensified.

Persistent / Chronic Truancy

A mandatory attendance conference may be convened with the student, family, administration, and relevant support staff. UCCS will review diagnostic information, interventions attempted, student progress, and additional Tier 3 supports. Formal truancy action or outside agency involvement will occur only in accordance with applicable law and after appropriate school-based interventions and supports have been considered or implemented.

12. Extended Unexplained Absence and Enrollment Status

When a student fails to attend school for multiple consecutive days without parent or guardian notification, UCCS will make reasonable efforts to contact the family, determine the student's status, identify barriers to attendance, and provide appropriate supports.

Any disenrollment, withdrawal, or change in enrollment status will occur only in accordance with applicable law, enrollment requirements, UCCS policy, and required procedural protections. A student's seat will not be released solely on the basis of an automatic three-day absence rule without the required review and procedures.

10. Tardiness and Lost Instructional Time

Students are expected to arrive at school and each class on time. A student is considered tardy if they are not present in class at the time of the bell. Campus-specific arrival times, bell schedules, passing periods, and tardy-pass procedures are published in the Student & Family Handbook.

Repeated tardiness will be treated as an attendance concern requiring intervention, particularly when the pattern results in significant lost instructional time. Before escalating consequences, staff will make reasonable efforts to determine whether transportation, family circumstances, health concerns, school avoidance, or other barriers are contributing to the pattern.

Disciplinary responses to tardiness, when used, will be consistent with applicable law, the Student Code of Conduct, and this policy's support-first approach.

Woodlawn Middle School: Any student arriving late to school must report to the main office for a tardy slip. Any student arriving late to class must see an admin or a dean for a tardy slip. Repeated tardiness may result in disciplinary action, including detention or class absences being recorded.

Woodlawn High School: School begins promptly at 8 am. It is important that students arrive to school and to class on time each day. Arriving to class after 8 am requires that students report to the Dean of Students to obtain a tardy pass. There is a 5 minute passing period between classes. After the 5 minute passing period is over, students will not be allowed into the class. The following steps will be followed if students fail to arrive on time to class: 1. Late students will report to the Dean of Students to get a tardy pass 2. Students will report to class within 5 minutes and provide the pass to their teacher for that period.

11. Academic Impact and Make-Up Work

For excused absences, students will be permitted to make up missed schoolwork in accordance with UCCS academic procedures. Students are provided a reasonable period to complete missed assignments, with additional arrangements available when appropriate.

Absenteeism will not automatically result in a failing grade solely because a student has exceeded a specified number of absences. Academic grades should reflect demonstrated learning and completion of course requirements in accordance with UCCS academic policies. When absenteeism interferes with a student's ability to demonstrate mastery or complete required coursework, the school will work with the student and family to identify appropriate academic and attendance interventions.

13. Early Dismissal, Drop-Off/Pick-Up, and Closed Campus Procedures

Early Dismissal

Please do not take your child out of school earlier than the dismissal time. Students are not permitted to get early dismissal for night school. In the rare event that a student needs an early dismissal, the following procedures must be followed:

1. The legal guardian, on record in the main office, must come and sign the student out of school.
2. The student must get work from all missed classes prior to departure and make up all missed work.

Drop-Off/Pick Up

UCCS expects timeliness for both drop-off and pick-up. UCCS is not responsible for students who remain in school after building hours. Failure to comply with this expectation will lead to action from the campus.

Late Pick Up Fine: Donoghue and NKO

School is dismissed at 3:30 p.m. (but 1 p.m. on Wednesdays), and parents are expected to pick up their children on time. Parents/guardians who pick up their children after 3:45 p.m. will be charged \$10 for every 15 minutes late (i.e., 3:46–4 p.m. is \$10; 4:01–4:15 p.m. is \$20 etc.) These late fees will be added to the student's FACTS account.

Leaving Campus/Closed Campus Policy

The University of Chicago Charter School has a closed campus policy; students are not permitted to leave campus during the school day, from the time of their arrival through dismissal. Students are not to be on campus before the campus opening time or after 4 p.m. unless they are attending an authorized school activity, such as dual enrollment. If students are waiting for an activity, they must stay in a predesignated area. This policy also applies when students are participating in physical education activities off campus or when on field trips beyond the school property. Students are to remain under

the supervision of adults at all times. Students are not allowed to order lunch to be delivered to the campus, nor are they allowed to operate school appliances. Any student not abiding by these rules will be subject to disciplinary action as outlined in the Student Code of Conduct.