# Sample Forms/Letters

The following section provides sample letters that can be used by LEAs to address the legal steps that should be taken for unlawful absences. All letters should conform to individual LEA policies and procedures. An enclosure, to be used with the letters are also provided for convenience purposes.

## Letters to Parent of Absent/Truant Student

**(all letters should be on LEA letterhead and dated)**

**First Unlawful Absence**

Parent/Guardian Name

Address

City, PA Zip Code

Dear <PARENT’S (OR GUARDIAN’S) NAME>,

<STUDENT NAME> was absent unlawfully on <DATE>. This letter is sent to make you aware of this absence. 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 requires regular daily attendance. When absences accumulate, it may ultimately result in academic difficulty for <STUDENT NAME>.

Our LEA has an active Student Assistance Team 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. All absences are counted as unlawful until the <LEA NAME> receives a written excuse explaining the reason for the absence. If a written excuse is not received within three days, the absence will permanently be added to the student’s file as unlawful. This letter serves as our first communication regarding <STUDENT NAME>’s unlawful absences.

In addition, any absences of ten cumulative days will require a written excuse that indicates <STUDENT NAME> was seen by a doctor or medical practitioner. Enclosed are the penalties for violation of compulsory attendance requirements.

If you have any questions, please call my office at <PHONE> or the guidance office at <PHONE> so that we may work together to ensure <STUDENT NAME>’s educational success.

Sincerely,

<Principal, Assistant Principal, or Attendance Officer>

cc: Student Assistance Team

Attendance Office/Home School Visitor

Guidance Counselor

Student File

(Enclosures: Law and SAP brochure)

*NOTE: The Department of Education recognizes that a best practice would include sending a similar letter to any students over the age of 13 years old to reinforce the importance of regular attendance and their academic success. See this section for a sample letter.*

### Second Unlawful Absence

Parent/Guardian Name

Address

City, PA Zip Code

Dear <PARENT’S (OR GUARDIAN’S) NAME>,

This letter is to inform you that <STUDENT NAME> was absent unlawfully from school on <DATE>. This is the second unlawful absence recorded this year. 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 <STUDENT NAME> complete missed assignments on those occasions when

<STUDENT NAME> must be absent.

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania law and school policy require that every child of compulsory school age attend school daily. A child must present a written excuse from the parent/guardian or medical practitioner within three days of an absence, or the absence will be counted as unexcused. Enclosed are penalties for violation of compulsory attendance requirements.

I strongly encourage you to contact the guidance office or the student assistance team to discuss ways to ensure your child’s school attendance. Continued unlawful absences could lead to notification of the magisterial district judge, as well as a referral to the County Children and Youth Agency. You may request a school attendance improvement conference at this time to explore possible solutions to your child’s unlawful absences. If you have any questions, please call my office at <PHONE>.

Sincerely,

<Principal, Assistant Principal or Attendance Officer> (Enclosures: Law and SAP brochure)

cc: Student Assistance Team

Attendance Officer/Home School Visitor

Guidance Counselor

Student File

### Third Unlawful Absence (sent via certified mail and return receipt requested)

Parent/Guardian Name

Address

City, PA Zip Code

## OFFICIAL NOTICE OF CHILD’S UNLAWFUL ABSENCE

Dear <PARENT’S (OR GUARDIAN’S) NAME>:

This letter is to officially notify you that <STUDENT NAME> has been absent from school without a lawful excuse on the following dates: <DATE 1, DATE 2 and DATE 3 (add subsequent dates as appropriate)>. These absences are unlawful and, therefore, constitute a violation of the compulsory attendance provision of the Pennsylvania Public School Code (24 P.S. 13-1327).

You are therefore notified of your child’s repeated unlawful absences and strongly encouraged to ensure that your child receives no subsequent unlawful absences. Three unexcused absences during a single school year constitutes truancy under the Public School Code.

Be advised that the process for development of a School Attendance Improvement Plan for your child has now begun, which requires a school attendance improvement conference (SAIC). A SAIC is a conference where the child's absences and reasons for the absences are examined in order to improve attendance, with or without additional services. The school will make every attempt to conduct the SAIC with <PARENT’S (OR GUARDIAN’S) NAME> present, however, the school must hold the SAIC conference even if the person in parental relation declines to participate or fails to attend.

If <STUDENT NAME> accumulates six or more school days of unexcused absences during the current school year, this series of absences will constitute habitual truancy. If a habitually truant child is under age 15, the school must refer the child to either (1) a school-based or community-based attendance improvement program or (2) the county children and youth agency for services or possible disposition as a dependent child. Additionally, the school may file a truancy citation in the office of the appropriate judge against the person in parental relation to the child.

If a habitually truant child is 15 or older, the school must either (1) refer the child to a school-based or community-based attendance improvement program or (2) file a citation in the office of the appropriate judge against the student or person in parental relation to the child. If a habitually truant child 15 or older incurs additional absences after a school refers the child to a school or community-based improvement program or the child refuses to participate in an attendance improvement program, the school may refer the child to the county children and youth agency for possible disposition as a dependent child.

A person convicted of a violation of compulsory attendance laws may be: (1) sentenced to pay a fine for the benefit of the school, (2) sentenced to perform community service, or (3) required to complete an appropriate course or program designed to improve school attendance.

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.

Sincerely,

<Attendance officer>

(Enclosures: Law and SAP Brochure)

cc: Student Assistance Team

Attendance Officer/Home School Visitor

Principal

Assistant Principal Guidance Counselor Student File

## Letter to Truant Student Over the Age of 15

Student Name

Address

City, State, Zip Code

**CERTIFIED AND RETURN SERVICE FIRST CLASS MAIL**

Dear Mr./Ms. Name:

Based upon your attendance history, while a student in the, <School District>, it has become necessary to formally notify you of key components of the PA School Code and < School District> policies dealing with attendance. As a student over the age of 15 this letter shall serve as official notification that you are aware of the following:

* You are required by School Code and District Policy to attend school every day it is in session unless illness, injury, or other urgent reasons prevent you from attendance. Signed notice that you were absent with parental permission must be submitted to the school within three days of the absence. If you are absent three or more consecutive days, a note that you were seen by a physician must be submitted to the school, also within the three day time period.
* Should you acquire too many unlawful/unexcused absences you may be denied credit for courses, regardless of your current grade in the class.
* Failure to attend school each day it is in session can result in:
  + Revocation of any work permits (working papers) issued to you by the District.
* Accumulation of six or more school days of unexcused absences during the current school year will constitute habitual truancy and the school must either:
  + refer you to a school-based or community-based attendance improvement program; or
  + file a citation in the office of the appropriate judge against you or your parent/guardian.
  + Such prosecution may result in you or your parent/guardian being fined up to $300.
  + Additionally, the District Justice may:
    - Impose a sentence to perform community service or impose a sentence to complete an appropriate course or program designed to improve school attendance. Suspend your privilege to possess or apply for a PA driver’s license if convicted and subsequently fail to comply with the penalty imposed.
* Continued failure to attend school may result in a referral to other County agencies for additional actions and/or placements.

Leaving campus prior to dismissal time is considered truancy and subject to prosecution.

I certainly hope that your attendance record improves, and you have a successful school year. It is my desire that we do not need to resort to any of the above actions.

Respectfully,

Signature and Name of

Attendance Officer for District

c: Parents via regular mail

Truancy File

## Compulsory School Attendance Hearing Notes

RE: Defendant’s Name

Defendant in this case is the parent or guardian of record for name of student.

This student has a date of birth of mm/dd/yy making him/her XX years of age at the time of this offense and subject to the compulsory school age attendance laws as set forth in the PA School Code, as amended.

This student was assigned to the Xth grade at School, Township/Borough/City, Name of County, PA. This school is within the jurisdiction of this Magisterial Court.

A notice of compulsory attendance letter was mailed to the defendant on Date of Letter referencing unlawful absence dates for this student of list dates here

This letter was signed for on mm/dd/yy by name **or** letter was returned unclaimed.

This notice was also sent first class return service requested mail and the envelope was/was not returned to the school.

A notice requiring a physician’s note was mailed to the defendant via certified mail on: date. This letter was signed for on mm/dd/yy by name **or** letter was returned unclaimed.

This notice was also sent first class return service requested mail and the envelope was/was not

returned to the school.

[NOTES: have copy of Attendance Improvement Plan, letter and certified mail cards available for the hearing; referral to county Children and Youth Agency occurs simultaneously with notification.

[List chronologically any other actions taken home visits, calls to parents’ other letters, meetings with student etc.]

Student had absences again on:

Resulting in the filing of citation # The student had absences on:

Resulting in the filing of citation #