

WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE

2024 REGULAR SESSION

Introduced

Senate Bill 345

By Senator Woelfel

[Introduced January 12, 2024; referred
to the Committee on Education]

1 A BILL to amend and reenact §18-8-4 of the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended; and to
 2 amend said code by adding thereto a new section, designated §18-8A-5, all relating to
 3 creating a homeless education coordinator in counties designated by the state board as an
 4 urban county.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia:

ARTICLE 8. COMPULSORY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE.
§18-8-4. Duties of attendance director and assistant.

1 (a) The county attendance director and the assistants shall diligently promote regular
 2 school attendance. The director and assistants shall:

3 (1) Ascertain reasons for unexcused absences from school of students of compulsory
 4 school age and students who remain enrolled beyond the compulsory school age as defined under
 5 section one-a of this article;

6 (2) Take such steps as are, in their discretion, best calculated to encourage the attendance
 7 of students and to impart upon the parents and guardians the importance of attendance and the
 8 seriousness of failing to do so;

9 (3) For the purposes of this article, the following definitions apply:

10 (A) "Excused absence" includes:

11 (i) Personal illness or injury of the student;

12 (ii) Personal illness or injury of the student's parent, guardian, custodian, or family
 13 member: *Provided*, That the excuse must provide a reasonable explanation for why the student's
 14 absence was necessary and caused by the illness or injury in the family;

15 (iii) Medical or dental appointment with written excuse from physician or dentist;

16 (iv) Chronic medical condition or disability that impacts attendance;

17 (v) Participation in home or hospital instruction due to an illness or injury or other
 18 extraordinary circumstance that warrants home or hospital confinement;

- 19 (vi) Calamity, such as a fire or flood;
- 20 (vii) Death in the family;
- 21 (viii) School-approved or county-approved curricular or extra-curricular activities;
- 22 (ix) Judicial obligation or court appearance involving the student;
- 23 (x) Military requirement for students enlisted or enlisting in the military;
- 24 (xi) Personal or academic circumstances approved by the principal; and
- 25 (xii) Such other situations as may be further determined by the county board: Provided,
- 26 that absences of students with disabilities shall be in accordance with the Individuals with
- 27 Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 and the federal and state regulations adopted in
- 28 compliance therewith; and

29 (B) "Unexcused absence" means any absence not specifically included in the definition of

30 "excused absence"; and

31 (4) All documentation relating to absences shall be provided to the school no later than

32 three instructional days after the first day the student returns to school.

33 (b) In the case of three total unexcused absences of a student during a school year, the

34 attendance director, assistant, or principal shall make meaningful contact with the parent,

35 guardian, or custodian of the student to ascertain the reasons for the unexcused absences and

36 what measures the school may employ to assist the student in attending and not incurring any

37 additional unexcused absences.

38 (c) In the case of five total unexcused absences, the attendance director or assistant or

39 principal shall again make meaningful contact with the parent, guardian, or custodian of the

40 student to ascertain the reasons for the unexcused absences and what measures the school may

41 employ to assist the student in attending school and not incurring any additional unexcused

42 absences.

43 (d) In the case of 10 total unexcused absences of a student during a school year, the

44 attendance director or assistant may make a complaint against the parent, guardian, or custodian

45 before a magistrate of the county. If it appears from the complaint that there is probable cause to
46 believe that an offense has been committed and that the accused has committed it, a summons, or
47 a warrant for the arrest of the accused shall issue to any officer authorized by law to serve the
48 summons or to arrest persons charged with offenses against the state. More than one parent,
49 guardian or custodian may be charged in a complaint. Initial service of a summons or warrant
50 issued pursuant to the provisions of this section shall be attempted within ten calendar days of
51 receipt of the summons or warrant and subsequent attempts at service shall continue until the
52 summons or warrant is executed or until the end of the school term during which the complaint is
53 made, whichever is later.

54 (e) The magistrate court clerk, or the clerk of the circuit court performing the duties of the
55 magistrate court as authorized in §50-1-8 of this code, shall assign the case to a magistrate within
56 10 days of execution of the summons or warrant. The hearing shall be held within 20 days of the
57 assignment to the magistrate, subject to lawful continuance. The magistrate shall provide to the
58 accused at least 10 days' advance notice of the date, time, and place of the hearing.

59 (f) When any doubt exists as to the age of a student absent from school, the attendance
60 director and assistants have authority to require a properly attested birth certificate or an affidavit
61 from the parent, guardian, or custodian of the student, stating age of the student. In the
62 performance of his or her duties, the county attendance director and assistants have authority to
63 take without warrant any student absent from school in violation of the provisions of this article and
64 to place the student in the school in which he or she is or should be enrolled.

65 (g) The county attendance director and assistants shall devote such time as is required by
66 section three of this article to the duties of attendance director in accordance with this section
67 during the instructional term and at such other times as the duties of an attendance director are
68 required. All attendance directors and assistants hired for more than 200 days may be assigned
69 other duties determined by the superintendent during the period in excess of 200 days. The county
70 attendance director is responsible under direction of the county superintendent for efficiently

71 administering school attendance in the county.

72 (h) In addition to those duties directly relating to the administration of attendance, the
73 county attendance director and assistant directors also shall perform the following duties:

74 (1) Assist in directing the taking of the school census to see that it is taken at the time and in
75 the manner provided by law;

76 (2) Confer with principals and teachers on the comparison of school census and
77 enrollment for the detection of possible nonenrollees;

78 (3) Cooperate with existing state and federal agencies charged with enforcing child labor
79 laws;

80 (4) Prepare a report for submission by the county superintendent to the State
81 Superintendent of Schools on school attendance, at such times and in such detail as may be
82 required. The state board shall promulgate a legislative rule pursuant to §29A-3B-1 et seq. of this
83 code that set forth student absences that are excluded for accountability purposes. The absences
84 that are excluded by rule shall include, but are not limited to, excused student absences, students
85 not in attendance due to disciplinary measures and absent students for whom the attendance
86 director has pursued judicial remedies to compel attendance to the extent of his or her authority.
87 The attendance director shall file with the county superintendent and county board at the close of
88 each month a report showing activities of the school attendance office and the status of
89 attendance in the county at the time;

90 (5) Promote attendance in the county by compiling data for schools and by furnishing
91 suggestions and recommendations for publication through school bulletins and the press, or in
92 such manner as the county superintendent may direct;

93 (6) Participate in school teachers' conferences with parents and students;

94 (7) Assist in such other ways as the county superintendent may direct for improving school
95 attendance; and

96 (8) Make home visits of students who have excessive unexcused absences, as provided in
 97 subsection-a of this section, or if requested by the chief administrator, principal or assistant
 98 principal. ~~and~~

99 ~~(9) Serve as the liaison for homeless children and youth.~~

ARTICLE 8A. ATTENDANCE OF HOMELESS CHILDREN.

§18-8A-5. Homeless education coordinator.

1 (a) The state board shall employ a full-time homeless education coordinator in each county
 2 designated by the state board as an urban county and a part-time homeless education coordinator
 3 in each county designated by the state board as a rural county. Urban and rural designations may
 4 be based on the Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) designations of metropolitan and non-
 5 metropolitan or a substantially similar method of delimitating urban and rural areas.

6 (b) The state board may establish special and professional qualifications for homeless
 7 education coordinators as are deemed expedient and proper and are consistent with rules of the
 8 state board.

9 (c) A homeless education coordinator is responsible for:

10 (1) Ensuring that homeless children and youth are identified by school personnel, are
 11 enrolled in, and have a full and equal opportunity to succeed in schools of that county;

12 (2) Coordinating the referrals of homeless children to health care, dental care, mental
 13 health services, and other appropriate services;

14 (3) Expediting school placement decisions;

15 (4) Identifying homeless children, youth, and families in the community;

16 (5) Coordinating programs and services to prevent duplication of services;

17 (6) Monitoring programs and projects to ensure compliance with applicable statutory and
 18 regulatory requirements, if the county board receives funds under the McKinney-Vento Act;

19 (7) Informing parents or guardians of homeless children and youth of the educational and
 20 related opportunities available to their children, ensuring that they are provided with meaningful

21 opportunities to participate in the education of their children; Disseminating public notice of the
22 educational rights of homeless children and youth in the schools, community agencies, family
23 shelters, soup kitchens, and organizations where children and youth receive services;

24 (9) Ensuring that the parent or guardian of a homeless child or youth and any
25 unaccompanied youth is fully informed of all transportation services;

26 (10) Working with Title I administrators to ensure that Title I services are provided in
27 accordance with the reservation of funds required by McKinney-Vento Act;

28 (11) Coordinating and collaborating with the state coordinator and community and school
29 personnel responsible for the provision of education and related services to homeless children
30 and youth;

31 (12) Developing and implementing a program to train school personnel on the educational
32 rights of homeless children and youth, policies and procedures to identify and serve homeless
33 children and youth, and on the special needs of homeless children and youth;

34 (13) Assisting unaccompanied homeless youth in the school selection process; and

35 (14) Ensuring that enrollment disputes are mediated according to the county board's
36 appeal _____ process.

NOTE: The purpose of this bill is to create a homeless education coordinator in counties designated by the state board as an urban county.

Strike-throughs indicate language that would be stricken from a heading or the present law and underscoring indicates new language that would be added.