

**Senate File 277 - Introduced**

SENATE FILE 277  
BY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

(SUCCESSOR TO SSB 1077)

**A BILL FOR**

1 An Act modifying provisions related to compulsory education,  
2 truancy, and chronic absenteeism.  
3 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF IOWA:

unofficial

1 Section 1. Section 256.9, Code 2025, is amended by adding the  
2 following new subsection:

3 NEW SUBSECTION. 69. In consultation with the Iowa county  
4 attorneys association, develop and distribute to county  
5 attorneys, school districts, and accredited nonpublic schools a  
6 model policy that county attorneys may reference when determining  
7 whether and to what extent to enforce the provisions of chapter  
8 299.

9 Sec. 2. Section 299.1, subsection 4, paragraph b, Code 2025,  
10 is amended by adding the following new subparagraphs:

11 NEW SUBPARAGRAPH. (7) Who is a military applicant undergoing  
12 military entrance processing.

13 NEW SUBPARAGRAPH. (8) Who is engaged in military service.

14 NEW SUBPARAGRAPH. (9) Who is traveling to attend a funeral.

15 NEW SUBPARAGRAPH. (10) Who is traveling to attend a wedding.

16 Sec. 3. Section 299.1, subsection 4, Code 2025, is amended by  
17 adding the following new paragraph:

18 NEW PARAGRAPH. c. The policy or rules adopted by the board  
19 of directors of a public school district pursuant to paragraph  
20 "a" must describe how the exceptions described in paragraph "b"  
21 may be met by a child and must give reasonable consideration to  
22 travel time.

23 Sec. 4. Section 299.12, subsection 2, paragraph a, Code 2025,  
24 is amended to read as follows:

25 a. When a child becomes chronically absent, a school official  
26 shall send a notice by ordinary mail or electronic mail to  
27 the county attorney of the county in which the public school's  
28 central administrative office is located, and a notice by  
29 ~~certified mail~~ to the child's parent, guardian, or legal or  
30 actual custodian of the child, if the child is not an emancipated  
31 minor, or to the child, if the child is an emancipated minor,  
32 that includes information related to the child's absences from  
33 school and the policies and disciplinary processes associated  
34 with additional absences. The notice the school official sends  
35 to the child's parent, guardian, or legal or actual custodian

1 of the child, if the child is not an emancipated minor, or to  
2 the child, if the child is an emancipated minor, may be sent by  
3 ordinary mail, electronic mail, or electronic message, or may be  
4 delivered in person. The school shall maintain a copy of the  
5 notice until the child graduates, turns twenty-one years of age,  
6 or is no longer enrolled in the school, whichever occurs first.

7 Sec. 5. Section 299.12, subsection 3, paragraph a,  
8 subparagraph (1), Code 2025, is amended to read as follows:

9 (1) If a child is absent from school for greater than or  
10 equal to fifteen percent of the days or hours in the grading  
11 period, a school official shall attempt to find the cause for the  
12 child's absences and. If the school official determines that the  
13 child's absences are negatively affecting the child's academic  
14 progress, the school official shall initiate and participate in a  
15 school engagement meeting. The purpose of the school engagement  
16 meeting is to identify the child's barriers to attendance and the  
17 interventions that may be used to improve the child's attendance.

18 EXPLANATION

19 The inclusion of this explanation does not constitute agreement with  
20 the explanation's substance by the members of the general assembly.

21 This bill modifies provisions related to compulsory education,  
22 truancy, and chronic absenteeism.

23 The bill requires the director of the department of education  
24 to develop, in consultation with the Iowa county attorneys  
25 association, a model policy that county attorneys may reference  
26 when determining whether and to what extent to enforce the  
27 provisions of Code chapter 299 (compulsory education). The  
28 bill also requires the director to distribute the model policy  
29 to county attorneys, school districts, and accredited nonpublic  
30 schools.

31 Current law requires the board of directors of a public  
32 school district to adopt a policy or rules relating to children  
33 who are chronically absent. Current law establishes exceptions  
34 to the policy or rules for children taking part in certain  
35 specified activities. The bill adds undergoing military entrance

1 processing, engaging in military service, traveling to attend  
2 a funeral, and traveling to attend a wedding to the list of  
3 specified activities. Absences related to such activities are  
4 not included when determining whether a child of compulsory  
5 attendance age is deemed to be a truant. The bill provides the  
6 policy or rules must describe how the exceptions may be met by a  
7 child and must give reasonable consideration to travel time.

8 Current law requires that when a child becomes chronically  
9 absent, a school official is required to send a notice by  
10 certified mail to the child's parent, guardian, or legal or  
11 actual custodian of the child, if the child is not an emancipated  
12 minor, or to the child, if the child is an emancipated minor,  
13 that includes information related to the child's absences from  
14 school and the policies and disciplinary processes associated  
15 with additional absences. The bill provides that a school  
16 official may send such notice by ordinary mail, electronic mail,  
17 or electronic message, or may deliver the notice in person. The  
18 bill requires the public school to maintain a copy of the notice.

19 Current law provides that if a child is absent from school for  
20 greater than or equal to 15 percent of the days or hours in the  
21 grading period, a school official is required to attempt to find  
22 the cause for the child's absences and initiate and participate  
23 in a school engagement meeting. The bill provides that a school  
24 official is only required to initiate and participate in a school  
25 engagement meeting if the school official determines that the  
26 child's absences are negatively affecting the child's academic  
27 progress.