



HEADQUARTERS IOWA NATIONAL GUARD
Office of the Adjutant General
Camp Dodge Joint Maneuver Training Center
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NGIA-TAG

4 December 2024

MEMORANDUM FOR Members of the Iowa General Assembly

SUBJECT: Department of Public Defense policy bill relating to Military Applicant and Military Service Exceptions from Truancy Provisions (Amend Chapter 299, Compulsory Education – Section 299.2, Exceptions)

1. The Iowa Legislature passed a law regarding school attendance and chronic absenteeism that became effective on July 1, 2024. Under the new law, school districts are required to track absenteeism and take specific actions based on a student's rate of non-exempt absences. Attendance is tracked and factors into schools' ratings determined by the State; this rating is factored into a school's Iowa School Performance Profile.
2. An absence is determined if a student is not physically on school grounds or not participating in an expected and school-directed activity under the direction, supervision or instructional guidance of educational staff at an approved off-grounds location for at least half the school day.
3. Currently, six exceptions not counting towards an absence include court-ordered jury duty or court appearance, medical, religious, or educational in nature. However, no specific exception for military duty/service or activities required to enter the military, including military entrance processing, is among the legal exceptions. Based on the current rules, the only way for a military applicant to process during the school week is to have a parent call the school and explain the situation. At that point, it is at the school's discretion whether the absence is excused.
4. Since enactment of new truancy law, recruiters have experienced confusion from school districts and a few isolated issues with applicants being unable to leave school to go to Military Entrance Processing Stations.
5. The proposed solution is to include military exceptions that allow a student to be excused if they are absent due to military duty (current service members) or military entrance processing (military applicant). This solution would also provide consistent data coding across school districts and would ensure military service does not adversely impact students' academic records.
6. Point of contact is Tina Shaw: 515-252-4406 or tina.k.shaw.civ@army.mil.

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