



EVERY DAY. EVERY STUDENT. **EVERY OPPORTUNITY.**

FAMILY HANDBOOK

2026-27

Office of Enrollment,
Attendance, & Truancy



901-416-2989



TruancySvc@scsk12.org



OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT
Dr. Roderick F. Richmond
Memphis-Shelby County Schools
160 Glenn Rogers Sr. St., Memphis, TN
38112
scsk12.org

Dear Families,

At Memphis-Shelby County Schools (MSCS), we know that every great achievement begins with showing up. When your child is present in the classroom, they are opening doors to discovery, growth, and a brighter future.

To ensure every student has the opportunity to succeed, we are proud to continue driving our district-wide commitment: Be Present. Be Great. This initiative is built on a simple truth: no family should have to navigate challenges alone. Whether you are facing hurdles with housing, meal stability, or personal hardships, MSCS is here to stand alongside you.

Through this effort, we are uniting our school leaders, staff, and community partners to deliver real, practical solutions tailored to your family's needs. From connecting you to nutritious meals to providing access to mental health resources and family support services, our goal is to eliminate barriers so your child can focus on learning and thriving.

Your child's potential is unlimited, and their journey starts with being here every day. We are deeply committed to partnering with you, and together, we will ensure this school year is defined by attendance, achievement, and success.

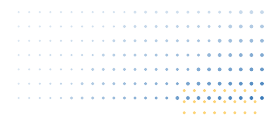
In Partnership,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Roderick F. Richmond, Sr." The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dr. Roderick F. Richmond

Superintendent

Memphis-Shelby County Schools



A MESSAGE FROM THE JUVENILE COURT JUDGE



TARIK B. SUGARMON
JUDGE

Juvenile Court of Memphis and Shelby County

616 ADAMS AVENUE • MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE 38105

August 13, 2026

Memphis and Shelby County Schools
Office of Enrollment, Attendance & Truancy
2687 Avery Avenue
Memphis, TN 38112

Greetings Memphis and Shelby County School Families and Students:

It is an honor and pleasure to participate in welcoming in the 2026-2027 school year. As you begin this new journey, I encourage you to make regular and consistent school attendance a high priority in accordance with the law. Without your presence, you will miss the mark of achieving success as well as experiencing what your school leaders, teachers and fellow students have to offer. Your timely presence at school, every day and all day, is mandatory for success. And the Memphis community is counting on you to excel in school so that you will experience the best that life has to offer you and your families.

As Juvenile Court Judge, I would like to assure you that we, the entire staff of the Memphis and Shelby Juvenile Court, are here to provide any assistance and services that will help you realize your goal of mandatory daily school attendance. If there are any challenges that you or your family are encountering, we are committed to partnering with the MCS school leaders, teachers, and your family members to overcome these circumstances so that you can enjoy regular attendance and excel in school. Please reach out to us. That is why we are here, to serve you and your families.

Congratulations on new beginnings as you embark on this new school year! I wish you nothing but a successful, healthy and exciting new year - the best year ever, with excellent grades, regular attendance, realized goals and new friends.

Yours in Service,

Judge Tarik B. Sugarmon
Memphis and Shelby County Juvenile Court Judge

"Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I remember. Involve me and I learn." – Benjamin Franklin

A MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF MAGISTRATE



Juvenile Court of Memphis and Shelby County

616 ADAMS AVENUE MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE 38105

August 13, 2026

Memphis and Shelby County Schools
Office of Enrollment, Attendance & Truancy
2687 Avery Avenue
Memphis, TN 38112

Dear Parents and Families,

Every school day matters. Regular attendance gives our children the opportunity to learn, build relationships, develop confidence, and stay connected to their school community. We also recognize that when a student begins missing school, there is often more to the story. Families may be facing transportation challenges, health concerns, academic difficulties, changes at home, or other barriers that make consistent attendance difficult. The most important thing is to address those concerns early.

I encourage parents and caregivers to stay connected with your child's school, communicate when challenges arise, and work with school staff and your truancy liaisons to identify solutions before attendance concerns become more serious. Asking for help early can make a meaningful difference. However, parents and caregivers must also understand that ensuring a child attends school is a legal responsibility. When repeated unexcused absences continue and families do not engage with the school or available services to address them, the matter may ultimately come before the Juvenile Court.

At that point, the consequences can be serious. Depending on the circumstances and applicable law, continued educational neglect may result in court intervention, including dependency and neglect proceedings, consequences affecting public assistance benefits, and even jail time. The Court's preference is always that families address attendance concerns long before those consequences become necessary.

My hope is that I never have to meet your family in the courtroom because of school attendance. Take absences seriously, respond when your child's school reaches out, and ask for assistance when there is a barrier you cannot resolve on your own. We would much rather help your family overcome a challenge today than address a crisis in court tomorrow.

Aftan Strong
Chief Magistrate
Juvenile Court of Memphis and Shelby County



Toolkit Includes:

- ◆ District Attendance/Truancy Policy
- ◆ Tennessee Compulsory Law
- ◆ List of Community Partners and Resource(s)
- ◆ Key Contacts for School/District



EVERY DAY. EVERY STUDENT. EVERY OPPORTUNITY.

EXTERNAL RESOURCES

NAME	WEBSITE	SERVICE	TELEPHONE
Community Services Agency	www.shelbycountycsa.org	Utility Assistance, Rent/Mortgage Assistance, Prescription Assistance	901-222-4212
Neighborhood Christian Center	https://www.ncclife.org/	Provide emergency food, clothing, and housing items to families in crisis throughout Memphis. Someone seeking assistance should visit their website and fill out an application	901-881-6013
Salvation Army	https://salvationarmymemphis.org/	Because of Memphis' long-term and interrelated problems of poverty, homelessness, addiction and violence, The Salvation Army has committed its resources to Heal Memphis with long-term solutions. Calling is available, but they prefer for people contact through website with the ability to contact the appropriate person based on need.	901-543-8586
Memphis Crisis Center	https://memphiscrisiscenter.org/	Crisis intervention and emotional support services via crisis line 24/7/365.	901-274-7477
Family Safety Center	https://familysafetycenter.org/	Assistance with Orders of Protection in critical safety cases (screening via telephone). Their staff can help you via telephone or online. Safety Screening via telephone. Domestic Violence Emergency Shelter 24/7/365.	901-222-4400 24-Hour Crisis Line 901-249-7611
Memphis, Light, Gas & Water	http://www.mlgw.com/	The Memphis Light, Gas and Water Division is a municipal public utility serving Memphis and Shelby County, Tennessee.	901-544-6549
MIFA Emergency Services & Emergency Housing	https://www.mifa.org/applyonline	Emergency utility, rent, mortgage, and housing assistance applications accepted online only. Shelter application available 7:30 a.m. to 2 p.m.	901-527-0208
Comcast	https://internetessentials.com/low-cost-computer	Providing 2 months of Free Internet Essentials Services for new Internet Essentials subscribers.	
Mid-South Food Bank	https://www.midsouthfoodbank.org/	Food for children, families, seniors, and Diaper Bank. Serving 14-Day food boxes with nonperishable food for low-income and vulnerable populations. Food boxes available through partner food pantries, food will be placed in your car by volunteers 11am – 1pm.	901-527-0841
Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)	https://www.tn.gov/health/health-program-areas/fhw/wic.html	Food benefits for women, infants, and children	1-800-342-5942
Child Care Payment Assistance	https://www.tn.gov/humanservices/for-families/child-care-services/child-care-payment-assistance.html	Eligible parents or guardians can receive payments for childcare. Visit the website to complete the application or apply online.	901-543-3651
ParentPlus	https://www.parentplus901.org/	Family services through home visits for expecting mothers and families with young children age 5 and younger.	901-577-2500
Memphis Area Transit Authority	http://www.matatransit.com/	MATA offers reduced fare rates for students enrolled in Shelby County Schools, senior	901-274-MATA (6282)

NAME	WEBSITE	SERVICE	TELEPHONE
		citizens 65 years and older, and people with disabilities on fixed route bus.	
MEMPHIS CRISIS CENTER	https://memphiscrisiscenter.org/	24/7 volunteer-powered crisis line providing telephone-based crisis intervention, empathic listening, emotional support services and linkage to community resources. Along with the main crisis line, the MCC administers the Elder Lifeline, the HIV Care Line, the Call4Kids Hotline and serves as the local affiliate of the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline and the National Veterans Hotline. All services are free, safe, and confidential.	901-274-7477
National Suicide Prevention LIFELINE	N/A	Emergency suicide prevention hotline	1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255)
Children's Mental Health	TNvoices.org	Tennessee source of mental health referral, support, and advocacy for families.	800-670-988
CASE MANAGEMENT INC	http://www.cmiofmemphis.org/	Full array of outpatient, addiction, and primary care services to the mentally ill in the Memphis and Shelby County area.	901-821-5600
SHELBY COUNTY CRIME VICTIMS & RAPE CRISIS CENTER	www.shelbycountyttn.gov/cvrcc	For victims of all crime: trauma counseling, victim compensation, orders of protection, support groups, please call or use the online form. 24/7 Sexual Assault Forensic Exams will still be provided in partnership with law enforcement. For the Sexual Assault Hotline: 901-222-4350	901-222-3950
DeNeuville Learning Center - GED/ESL/Adult Education for Women	www.dlcmemphis.org	Provides educational and support services to women: Microsoft Office (Word, Access, Excel, PowerPoint), typing, and Internet; GED preparation; citizenship test preparation; business skills and job readiness; and sewing classes.	(901) 726-5902
Goodwill Excel Center - Memphis - Adult High School Diploma Program	http://excelcentermemphis.org	Provides tuition-free adult contract school program for Shelby County adults who want to earn their high school diploma.	(901) 726-3100
Hope Works - Adult Basic Education/HiSet	www.whyhopeworks.org	Provides HiSet classes at several locations, including sites in Whitehaven, Midtown, Raleigh, Hickory Hill, and Summer Avenue.	(901) 396-8800
Asha's Refuge - Language and Job Skills Classes for Refugees and Approved Asylees	www.ashasrefuge.org	Provides a faith-based non-profit that offers free American life, language and job skills classes, and information about available resources to help refugees and asylees adjust to life in the US.	(901) 500-9200
Leadership Empowerment Center - Frayser	N/A	Provides faith-based programming such as youth leadership, media, sports teams, mentoring, tutoring and life skills classes through the BE3 (Be Empowered - Be Equipped - Be Educated) program for youth in the Frayser area.	(901) 358-7788
Refugee Empowerment Program	www.repmemphis.org	Provides ethnic community-based programs and services to address unique concerns of refugees and immigrants in the Memphis area.	(901) 500-3844

NAME	WEBSITE	SERVICE	TELEPHONE
CLOUD901 Teen Learning Lab - Benjamin L. Hooks Central Library	www.memphislibrary.org/cloud901	Provides a special space exclusively for teen ages 13-18; includes video and audio production labs, traditional and digital art studios, editing and mixing stations, formal and informal learning areas, digital and analog displays, a performance area, a Maker Space, and spaces for brainstorming, homework, and collaboration zones.	(901) 415-2760
Heal the Hood Foundation of Memphis	www.hthmemphis.org	Provides positive outlets for youth and young adults of all ages through singing, dancing, art, entertainment, acting, motivational speaking, screen writing, an annual basketball camp for children ages 8-15 and mentoring;	(901) 566-0743
Knowledge Quest - After School Program/Culinary Academy/Community Garden	www.knowledgequest.org/	Provides after school program for ages pre-K through 8th grade in the Knowledge Quest School Age Academy Monday - Friday 2:15 pm - 6:00 pm, targeting the 38106 and 38126 zip codes.	(901) 942-1512
Red Zone Ministries	www.redzonememphis.org	Provides outreach club, Bible Study, academic and educational programs for inner-city youth in Orange Mound neighborhood of Memphis.	(901) 350-0661
Shelby County Office of Re-Entry	https://www.scofficeofreentry.com/	The Shelby County Office of Re-Entry is a collaborative program to help persons with criminal backgrounds access reentry services.	(901) 222-4550
Dress for Success Memphis	dfsmemphisvirtualcc.org	Provides interview and work appropriate attire, confidence boost programming, and career development services.	(901) 363-3100
Agape Child and Family Services - Memphis - TeamWorks - Job Readiness Program	www.agapemeanslove.org/workforce-readiness/	Provides a collaborative workforce program with over 24 community partners through which Agape connects adults in Frayser, Hickory Hill and Whitehaven with job readiness training and education and employment placement.	(901) 323-3600
JobLINC Mobile Career Center - Memphis Public Libraries	www.memphislibrary.org/JobLinc	Mobile technology career center with information on job and career options through specialized library collections and assistance in using those materials.	(901) 415-2787
Urban Family Ministries- Mental Health & Substance Abuse	ufm@ufmcddc.org	Urban Family Ministries offers comprehensive outpatient mental health services, substance use counseling, and community support programs.	(901) 323-8400
Alpha Express Transportation LLC	alphaxpress.org	Alpha Express Transportation LLC offers professional corporate, event, and personal transportation services across the local area.	(901) 612-9993
All Children Excel-ADHD	www.allchildrenexcel.com	All Children Excel offers expert educational advocacy, school search guidance, behavior coaching, and support services for families navigating neurodiverse learning needs.	(901) 409-6203

HANDBOOK FOR IMPROVING CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM AND TRUANCY

Introduction

Chronic absenteeism and truancy are significant barriers to student success. The purpose of this handbook is to provide guidance and resources to support families and students who are struggling with consistent school attendance. By addressing known and unknown barriers, we aim to build a collaborative approach that includes students, families, school leaders, and community partners.

Understanding Chronic Absenteeism and Truancy

- **Chronic Absenteeism:** Missing 10% or more of school days for any reason (excused or unexcused) in one school year.
- **Truancy:** Missing school without a valid excuse, leading to a violation of state attendance laws.
 - In the state of Tennessee, a student is truant if he or she accrues five (5) unexcused absences.

Compulsory Attendance Law in Tennessee

Students between the ages of 6 and 17 are required by law to attend school. Parents are responsible for ensuring their child's attendance, and failure to do so can result in legal consequences, including court involvement.

Common Barriers to Attendance and Solutions

1. Transportation

- **Barrier:** Lack of reliable transportation to get to and from school.

Suggestions:

Personnel: School counselor, transportation coordinator, family engagement specialist or advisor. Provide school bus passes or coordinate with local transportation services for free

- Provide school bus passes or coordinate with local transportation services for free or reduced fares.
- Create a carpool network with other parents in the community.
- Partner with local rideshare services or organizations that provide transportation to families in need.

2. Houselessness

- **Barrier:** Families facing housing instability may struggle to maintain a stable routine, impacting school attendance.

Suggestions:

Personnel: Special Populations advisor, school social worker, family and community engagement specialist or advisor.

- Partner with local shelters or community housing programs to provide temporary housing solutions for families.
- Establish a point of contact at the school to assist with securing necessary school supplies, clothing, and hygiene products.
- Coordinate with McKinney-Vento Act liaisons to ensure students have access to transportation and services.

3. Job Insecurity

- **Barrier:** Parents working multiple jobs or irregular shifts may find it challenging to ensure their child's attendance.

Suggestions:

Personnel: School counselor, community job placement officer, parent engagement coordinator.

- Provide before- and after-school care options so parents can manage their work schedules while ensuring their children are in school.
- Offer flexible meeting times with school staff to accommodate parents' work schedules.
- Engage community job programs that support parents in finding more stable employment.

4. Food Insecurity

- **Barrier:** Families lacking consistent access to nutritious food may struggle with sending children to school regularly.

Suggestions:

Personnel: School nutritionist, community outreach worker, local food bank representative.

- Enroll students in free or reduced-cost school meal programs (breakfast, lunch, and weekend meals).
- Collaborate with local food banks or backpack programs that provide meals for families to take home.

- Offer nutrition workshops for families, promoting available community resources.

5. Bullying

- **Barrier:** Fear of bullying can cause students to avoid school.

Suggestions:

Personnel: School counselor, anti-bullying coordinator, student support team, school administrator.

- Implement and enforce strong anti-bullying policies at the school.
- Provide counseling and peer support groups for students affected by bullying.
- Use restorative justice approaches to help resolve conflicts and create a safe school environment.

6. Other Barriers (Mental Health, Family Issues, etc.)

- **Barrier:** Students may face other challenges such as mental health issues, family conflicts, or caregiving responsibilities.

Suggestions:

Personnel: School psychologist, community mental health workers, family engagement specialist.

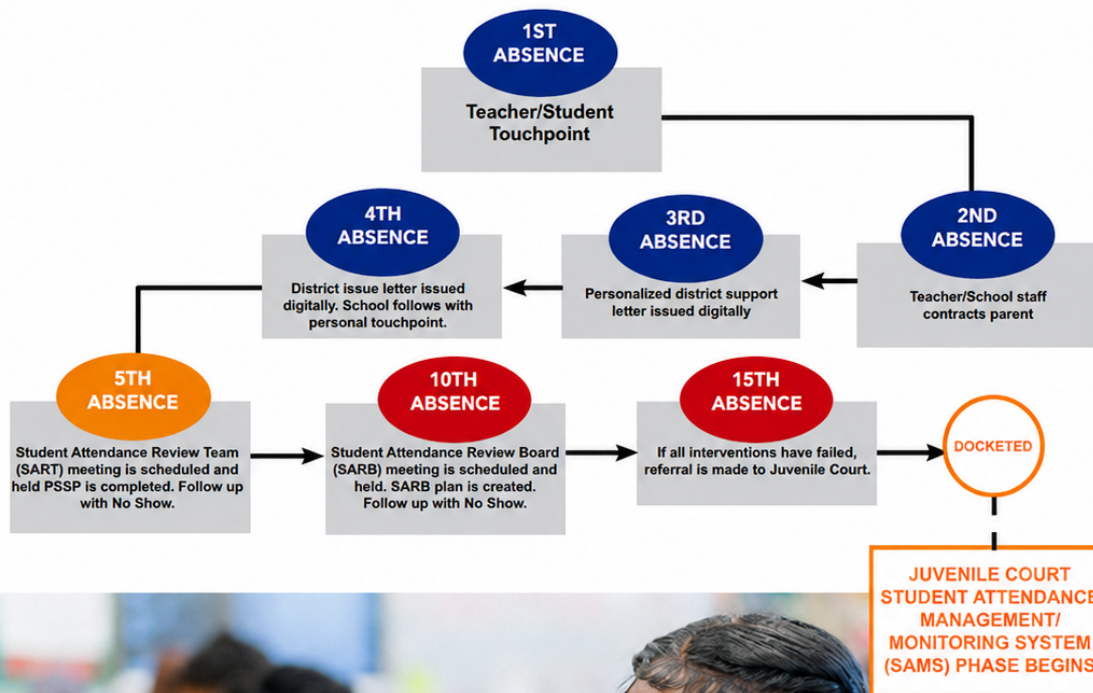
- Provide on-site counseling and mental health services to support students.
- Partner with community mental health providers to offer resources outside of school hours.
- Arrange for family therapy or support programs to address broader issues at home.

TRUANCY & INTERVENTION PROCESS

A Tennessee student is considered truant at **five (5) unexcused absences**. Under the “compulsory education” law in Tennessee, children must regularly attend school from the time they are **6 years old until they turn 18**.

Except as otherwise provided by law, a child may be truant under the law who is less than six (6) years of age, provided that a child may be withdrawn six (6) weeks of initial enrollment without penalty.

INTERVENTION PROCESS FLOWCHART



SART

TN state law requires school districts to provide a tiered intervention model to work collaboratively with parents to remove barriers for attendance.

The SARB Process is facilitated by the Truancy Liaisons after the 10th absence.

attendance
MATTERS



01

SARB meeting occurs at 10th unexcused absences
The Student Attendance Review Board (SARB) meeting is scheduled after the student accumulates 10 unexcused absences.

02

Official SARB letter is sent to schedule meetings
An official letter is sent to the parent/guardian to notify them of the 10th unexcused absence and to schedule the SARB meeting.

03

SARB meetings are held in-person at least bimonthly and by phone
SARB meetings are conducted in-person at least every two months. Phone meetings may be used when in-person is not possible.

04

SARB plans are completed during the hearing
The student's attendance intervention plan and required actions are developed and finalized during the SARB hearing.

05

SARB actions are entered in Log Entries
All actions, communications, and updates related to SARB interventions are recorded in Log Entries.

06

Follow up conducted for No Shows
If the parent/guardian or student does not attend a scheduled SARB meeting, follow up is conducted to reschedule and ensure engagement.



DISTRICT RESOURCES

RESOURCE	TELEPHONE
Enrollment & Attendance	901-416-2989
Mental Health Office	901-416-8484
Migrant Families	901 416-8069
Transportation	901-416-6077
Crisis Hotline	901-416-8484
Coordinated School Health	901-416-6091
Counseling Services Elementary	901-416-6348
Counseling Services Middle	901-416-4376
Counseling Services (Secondary)	901-416-8329
Exceptional Children and Health Services	901-416-5600
Fostercare	901-416-7393
Gang Awareness (Student Safety)	901-416-6295
Homelessness	901-416-8337
MSCEA	901-454-0966
UEA	901-467-8800
MSCS Matters (PWC)	901-416-5300
Multilingual Learners	901-416-5411
Nursing Services	901-416-6091
Student Health Clinic (operated by Christ Community)	901-842-2379
Volunteers	901 416-0118



Memphis-Shelby County Schools offers educational and employment opportunities without regard to race, color, religion, sex, creed, age, disability, national origin, or genetic information.