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**Education Interim Committee**  
**65th Montana Legislature**

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TO: Education Interim Committee Members  
FROM: Laura Sankey Keip, Staff Attorney  
DATE: September 31, 2018  
RE: Definitions related to chronic absenteeism

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The Office of Public Instruction has posted on its website guidance from the US Department of Education containing definitions of terms related to the ESSA Chronic Absenteeism reporting requirement.

Absenteeism: In accordance with the Office for Civil Rights' guidance, a student is absent if he or she is not physically on school grounds and is not participating in instruction or instruction-related activities at an approved off-grounds location for the school day. Chronically absent students include students who are absent for any reason (e.g., illness, suspension, the need to care for a family member), regardless of whether absences are excused or unexcused.

Tardies: A student who is absent for less than 50 percent of the school day.

Note from OPI: if the student is absent for 50% or more of the day, the student is considered to be ESSA absent for the full day.

Source: [Chronic Absenteeism Data as Required by the Federal Every Student Succeeds Act \(ESSA\), December 2017.](#)