

HWDSB

Dear Families,

At Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board (HWDSB), one of our greatest priorities is ensuring that all students safely arrive at school every day.

To strengthen our procedures for absences, we will be deploying **SafeArrival**, a student absence reporting system that will make it very easy for you to report absences. It will also allow school staff to respond quickly and thoroughly to all unexplained absences. Our goal is to continue to have all absences explained and all student accounted for each day, knowing that they are all safe.

With **SafeArrival**, families report a child's absence in one of three ways:

1. Use the SafeArrival website, go.schoolmessenger.ca: The first time you use the website, select **Sign Up** to create your account. Select **Attendance** then **Report an Absence**.
2. Using your mobile device, download and install the **SchoolMessenger** app from the Apple App Store or Google Play Store (or from links at go.schoolmessenger.ca). The first time you use the app, select **Sign Up** to create your account. Select **Attendance** then **Report an Absence**.
3. Call the toll-free number 844-506-4350 to report an absence using the automated phone system.

These options are available 24 hours/day, seven days a week. You can report a future absence any time.

In addition, we will use the **SchoolMessenger Communicate** automated notification system to contact parents whose child is absent when the absence was not reported in advance. The automated notification system will attempt to contact parents multiple times until parents confirm and explain the absence. If this system cannot reach the designated contacts, office staff will follow up.

If you report your child's absence in advance using either the **SafeArrival** toll-free number, the website or the mobile app, you will NOT receive these notifications.

Starting April 23, 2019, please report absences in advance using **SafeArrival** instead of sending notes or calling/emailing the school. On this date, staff will begin using the **SafeArrival** notifications to let you know if your student is absent (when you haven't reported the absence in advance).

If you have questions, please speak with your school office or principal. Find more resources on **SafeArrival** at bit.ly/safearrivalHWDSB and on your school's website.

Thank you for your patience and cooperation as we implement this new system.

Frequently Asked Questions

SafeArrival for Families FAQ

What is SafeArrival?

SafeArrival is an absence management system that improves student safety and makes it easy for you to let the school know about your child's absence.

You are asked to report your child's absence in advance whenever possible using one of these convenient methods:

SchoolMessenger app (free)

1. Provide your email address to the school.
2. Get the app from the Apple App Store or the Google Play Store (or from the links at <https://go.schoolmessenger.ca>).
3. Tap **Sign Up** to create your account.
4. Select **Attendance** from the menu, and then select **Report an Absence**.

Web and Mobile Web: go.schoolmessenger.ca

1. Provide your email address to the school.
2. Go to the website.
3. Click **Sign Up** to create your account.
4. Select **Attendance** from the menu, then select **Report an Absence**.

Interactive Toll-free Phone

1. Call the toll-free, interactive telephone system.
2. Follow the instructions to report an absence.

Absences can be reported in advance:

- 24 hours/day
- 7 days a week
- For any school day in the school term
- Up to the cut-off time on the day of the absence.

Whenever an absence is reported or updated, you will receive a confirmation notice by email and/or text message (assuming you have provided your contact information to the school).

If you don't report your child's absence in advance, the automated notification system will try to contact you (using your communication preferences if you have set them up in the SchoolMessenger app). This may include push notifications to the app, email, SMS text messages, or phone calls. You will be asked to provide the reason for your child's absence immediately. You may do so using the phone line, website or mobile app.

If an absence is not explained within approximately 20 minutes of the time that the school starts the notification process, school staff will follow up to make sure that your child is safe. If you try to explain an absence using SafeArrival, but are then told that it is past the cut-off time, please contact the school directly.

If you don't want to receive notifications when your child is absent, be sure to report your child's absence in advance.

If you do receive notifications of your child's absence, be sure to provide the reason as quickly as possible, using one of the methods listed above or during the phone call notification itself.



Why do I need a SchoolMessenger app account?

A SchoolMessenger app account is not required to use the toll-free phone line to report absences. However, we strongly recommend that you provide your email address to the school and set up your SchoolMessenger app account. This allows you to review and update absences, review your contact information and communication preferences and more.

Please see related SchoolMessenger app documentation for setting up your account, resetting your password, reviewing contact information, and specifying communication preferences. Once you have set up your account, choose ATTENDANCE from the menu.

If you cannot set up your account, you do not see the ATTENDANCE option, or you do not see your child(ren) listed in your account, please contact the school directly to check that your correct email address is associated with your child(ren).

How do I use the toll-free phone line?

When you call the toll-free phone line, follow the instructions for reporting an absence.

If the phone number you are calling from matches a phone number on file with the school for your student(s), you will hear your student'(s) name(s). If the system doesn't recognize your caller ID, you will be asked to enter the student's home phone number.

If you have difficulty using the toll-free phone line, please consider using the SchoolMessenger mobile app or website. Otherwise, contact the school directly.