

## Absences

## School Attendance Makes a Difference

### Examples of lawful absences:

- Illness/Medical
- Family Emergency
- Funeral/Bereavement
- Religious Holiday

**When your child is absent: contact the school the day of the absence.**

### Examples of unlawful absences:

- Missing the bus
- Oversleeping
- Sleepiness or boredom
- Didn't feel like going to school
- Staying home to babysit
- Working at a job

**Each school has a different way of defining valid/excused/lawful absences, contact your school to find out its definitions.**

Definitions are typically found in student handbooks and/or school policies.

One of the most important things families can do to help their children succeed is to make sure they attend school regularly.

Research shows that children who are truant are more likely to be unemployed, rely on public assistance, and engage in criminal or delinquent behavior. There are many causes of truancy... alcohol or chemical use; family problems; mental health issues; peer pressure or child neglect to name a few. Whatever the cause, it is important that the child and the problem be identified early.

### Strategies to Encourage School Attendance

- 1) Value education and insist on regular attendance.
- 2) Talk about school with your child. What is working? What changes are desired?
- 3) Talk to the staff at your child's school and ask how they could help.
- 4) Get to know your child's friends and their families.
- 5) Connect with professionals for advice. Ask for community program referrals.

# SCHOOL ATTENDANCE



School Districts in  
Northern St. Louis County



St. Louis County  
Family Service Collaboratives  
Working together to build better lives  
for children and families

## What is Truant?

### CONTINUING TRUANT (260A.02)

**Elementary students** absent three or more days in a school year without a valid excuse.

**Secondary students** absent three or more class periods on three or more days in the school year without a valid excuse.

### HABITUAL TRUANT (260C.007(19))

**Elementary students** absent for seven or more days without a valid excuse.

**Secondary Students** absent for one or more class periods on a least seven school days without a valid excuse.

An enrolled student is subject to compulsory attendance provisions, meaning a legal guardian that fails to provide instruction shall be guilty of a petty misdemeanor. (120A.22 and 120A.34)

MN Students must attend school until age 17. *A 17 year old student may lawfully withdraw from school only if their parents give written permission to a school administrator.* (120A.22)



## What Could Happen to a Truant Student?

Local school administrators use the following process as a guideline and may make adjustments based on individual circumstances. Students under 12 are presumed to be truant due to parental failure; a student may be referred to child protective services for educational neglect in place of the following process.

Habitual truant student attendance records carryover to the next school year meaning students may be petitioned to county courts later in the school year and reassessed in the fall.

School staff shall notify a parent/guardian when a student is continuing truant.

(MN Statute 260A.03)

The school may schedule a Truancy Review Team (TRT)<sup>1</sup> meeting in an effort to avoid court. A School Truancy Review Form and a written signed Plan of Action will be completed. The Plan will be sent to all participants and local courts.

A habitual truant student and their parent/guardian may be subject to juvenile court proceedings under chapter 260C. (MN Statute 260A.03)

The School may file the School Truancy Review Form and a Truancy Petition to the District County Attorney. A court date will be set for the student.

Parents/guardians and student are required to attend the court hearing. A school administrator, probation officers, and/or social services may also attend the court hearing.

<sup>1</sup> A Truancy Review Team's meeting goal is to act as a problem solving group to help the student attend school and be successful. Meetings are typically held within seven days of the referral phone call from a school administrator and are held at a courthouse.