

Anoka County Attorney's Office Truancy Intervention Program

Improving School Attendance and Reducing Crime

A Message from Anoka County Attorney Tony Palumbo

School attendance is mandatory in the state of Minnesota in order to make certain all children acquire the necessary skills for success as adults.

Studies show a direct link between truancy and a child having problems, including criminal activity. Truant students often place themselves in situations that could affect their future, including difficulty finding and holding a job. By addressing truancy, we can improve the lives of our children and increase the likelihood that they will be productive members of society. That is why the Anoka County Attorney's Office has established the Truancy Intervention Program (TIP).

The County Attorney's Office works collaboratively with school officials, law enforcement, corrections and social services to intervene early in the truancy cycle. TIP empowers schools, families and the community to fight truancy, increase attendance and decrease daytime crime.

The focus of the TIP is to get truants off the streets, in school, and out of juvenile court. It gives kids a better chance at life and benefits all of us as a community.

Sincerely,

Anoka County Attorney Tony Palumbo

Truancy and Absences

Definition of a Truant

Children 12 and older are considered truant if they are absent, without a legal excuse, for three or more class periods on three days. Children 17 and older will be considered truant if they have not lawfully withdrawn from school with their parent's permission.

Schools have discretion to use the Truancy Intervention Program process if a student has been absent one or more school periods on three or more days.

Absences

A parent/guardian may seek an excused absence from school for his or her child. A school has the right to accept or deny an application for an excused absence.

Acceptable Excuses Include:

- Illness: vomiting, diarrhea, fever above 101 degrees
- Doctor and dental visits, including mental health, if unable to schedule outside school hours

- Religious holiday not already on the school calendar
- Extreme family emergency: death or critical illness of near family member

Examples of Invalid Excuses:

- Staying home to babysit/needed at home
- Work, or rest because of work
- Travel
- Cold weather when school has not closed
- Missed the bus
- Child is not immunized

A Message for Parents

Truancy Intervention Program Four Step Process

It is the goal of the Anoka County Attorney's Office to end truancy. The Truancy Intervention Program utilizes a four step process to combat truancy.

Step One: The school sends a letter notifying parents/ guardians that their child is truant.

Step Two: If, after receiving the notification letter, there is an additional unexcused absence, the school will notify the County Attorney's Office. A letter is sent to the parent/guardian and the student, inviting them to attend a meeting. This meeting will emphasize three major points:

1. Parents should send their children to school to improve the children's quality of life.
2. Education is as essential as food, clothing, and shelter in a child's life.
3. The prosecution process will be addressed and explained.

Step Three: If, after the meeting, the child again truants without a lawful excuse, the child may be sent to an Anoka County Diversion hearing. At this hearing, the child's attendance contract is negotiated with the student and the parents. The central message is the parent's obligation to send their children to school and the child's obligation to attend school.

Step Four: If the Diversion hearing does not result in improved school attendance, the County Attorney's Office may bring the case to Juvenile court.

Potential Consequences

Consequences for Violation of Compulsory School Attendance Laws

- Parents of the truant could be fined.
- Students age 12 and older could lose their driving privileges until their 18th birthday.
- Students could be fined up to \$100 or ordered to complete community work service hours.
- Parents could be required by the judge to deliver their child to school every morning.
- A student could be placed on probation supervision with the child staying in the home and school.
- A student could be placed under court-ordered house arrest.

- A student could be ordered to participate in counseling or therapy.
- A student could be ordered to complete a chemical dependency assessment/evaluation and ordered to follow recommendations for counseling, education, treatment and after care.
- A student could be ordered to attend the PINES School at the juvenile center or to attend summer school.
- A student may be placed outside of the home by the judge.

Stay in school. It's the key to your future. A high school graduate can expect to earn \$388,000 more in his or her lifetime than a high school dropout.

A Message for Students

As a student, you have a legal obligation to be in school every day, attending every class.

If you are absent, you must have a valid, legal excuse to be out of school. We want you to have pride in yourself and in your school and we want you to succeed in school and in life. We care and have people who can help you. We want you in the classroom, not on the street.

What to expect at Truancy Intervention Program meetings

When you arrive at school, you will check in with the main office. School staff will tell you where the truancy meeting is. Other parents and students might be at the meeting too. Make sure you sign in to get credit for attending.

You will see a presentation about truancy. The presentation will take about 30-45 minutes. There will be time for questions after the presentation. After that, the meeting will be done. You may stay later if you have more questions.

Contact Information

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