

Under Minnesota State Law, a child who misses school without a valid excuse is considered truant per *Minnesota State Statute 120A.34*.

In Minnesota, it is considered the Parent/Guardian's responsibility to ensure children between the age of 5 and 11 are enrolled in and attend school regularly. Minnesota law requires that a child is in need of protection or services when a child is without the necessary food, clothing, shelter, **education**, or other required care for the child's physical or mental health, or morals because the child's parents, guardian, or custodian is unable or unwilling to provide that care.

It is important to understand that if the child is not in school as required, the County Social Services and Behavioral Health Division and the Anoka County Attorney's Office may file a Child in Need of Protection or Services petition to require court involvement. Additionally, a criminal complaint may be filed against the parents or guardians of a child who fails to compel the attendance of the child at school in addition to the actions taken in juvenile court.

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Parent Guide to Educational Neglect Diversion

A collaborative effort to
overcome barriers and
achieve consistent attendance
for every student.





Message from Anoka County.

We are committed to ensuring all children in Anoka County receive the highest quality of education. We believe that students can only benefit from the education in school through regular school attendance. We will, therefore, strive to achieve the maximum possible attendance for all students. With the inclusion of parents and school administrators, we will make sure that any barriers to attendance are identified and resolved quickly.

Definition of a Truant

Children 11 and younger are considered truant if they are absent, without a legal excuse, for three or more days. Schools are asked to make a referral to Anoka County once an enrolled student between the ages of 5 and 11 reaches 6 unexcused absences.

Absences

A parent/guardian may seek an excused absence from school for his/her child. A school has the right to accept or deny an application for an excused absence. Parents/Guardians should always refer to the school attendance policies in the school or district handbook or on the school or district website.

Examples of typical valid/excused absences:

- Illness: vomiting, diarrhea, fever (above 101)
- 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 a near family member.

Examples of typical invalid/Unexcused absences:

- 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.



Step One

The school documents their efforts to resolve the attendance issues with the family. Students must have at least 6 unexcused absences from an academic period (not homeroom, lunch, or after school activities). Typically, tardies do not equal truancy unless noted by school or district policy. School staff completes the online referral form and sends it to Anoka County. School staff sends a letter to parents informing them a referral has been sent to Anoka County.

Step Two

The Anoka County social worker will contact parents by letter noting a pre-arranged meeting date and time. If parents cannot make it to the meeting they are to contact the social worker or school staff to reschedule.

Step Three

At the meeting, school personnel and an Anoka County social worker will be present to meet with the parent(s)/guardian(s) to discuss the issues surrounding the child(ren)'s truancy. The group will come to terms on a diversion contract. The parent(s)/guardian(s) will be informed of the law and the consequences for not keeping their child(ren) in school.

Step Four:

The School will continue to monitor the child(ren)'s attendance and provide notice to the County Social Worker if there are any additional absences or concerns. If attendance concerns continue or worsen the Anoka County Social Worker can make a referral to Child Protection to be screened as a Child Maltreatment Report.