

How to Improve School Attendance

Active participation in your child's education is essential.

- Engagement in your child's education demonstrates it is a priority to you and encourages daily attendance.
- Talk to your child about going to school every day and ask how their day went.
- Set clear and high expectations for attendance, school engagement, and homework.

Understanding the teenage brain.

- The adolescent brain is growing. In fact, the brain doesn't completely develop its pre-frontal cortex (the decision making part of the brain) until the age of 25.
- To help position teenagers to succeed, getting enough rest and establishing healthy routines should be two main components. Teenagers require 9-10 hours of rest. Healthy routines make a chaotic stage of life less stressful.
- The adolescent brain is undergoing a lot of learning and may be more prone to stress. Helping your child navigate the complexities of adolescence is vital to their mental health and school engagement.

Partner with your child's school.

- Communicate with the school and familiarize yourself with the school's attendance policy.
- If your child has to miss school for a legitimate reason, it is a parental responsibility to notify school staff and provide documentation, if needed.

FAQs

What is an excused and unexcused absence?

- Excused absences include a family emergency, illness/medical or mental health appointments and religious holidays.
- Unexcused absences include babysitting, missing the bus, oversleeping and weather.
- Please check with your school for additional guidance.

What is the role of the school in this process?

- Provide a program/schedule that meets the student's educational needs.
- Address problems identified as barriers to the child's ability to attend and learn.
- Maintain accurate attendance records and document communication with parents/guardians and student about attendance.



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A Guide to Truancy Diversion Services in Washington County

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School Attendance: Essential for Success

When students improve their attendance rates, they are more likely to remain on track for graduation and improve their future prospects.

- Truancy and poor attendance are the primary reasons why students fail to graduate on time.

The impacts of truancy go beyond school.

- Truancy leads to a higher likelihood of delinquent and criminal behavior; severely limiting future opportunities including higher education and employment.
- It opens the potential of juvenile court for truancy.

It's the Law

Truancy is a violation of Minnesota State Law. Minnesota State Statute requires that youth, ages 12-18, attend school.

- The law also mandates that parents/guardians compel their child to attend school.



Attendance Intervention Meeting (AIM)

At 3-5 unexcused absences, the school will notify the parent or guardian that the child is a “continuing truant.”

- Students and parents/guardians will receive an invitation from the County Attorney’s Office to attend AIM.
- This meeting is the first step of progressive intervention and services offered to support families and children in keeping children in school and combating truancy.

Truancy Diversion Process

When a student has seven or more unexcused absences, they are then considered “habitually truant” and a truancy referral can be made to Washington County.

- Washington County arranges a formal meeting between the school, parents/guardians, and child.
- This meeting occurs in lieu of court, in a final effort to remove barriers to school attendance and compel the child to attend classes.
- An attendance contract is established with the child, and school attendance is monitored by a truancy social worker.
- If a student continues to miss school and efforts to address truancy have been exhausted, a petition can be filed in Juvenile Court.

Legal Consequences

In court, a judge has the authority to order a variety of dispositions that focus on both the student and parents/guardians.

- A child can be placed on probation.
- A child may lose their ability to obtain a driver’s license or lose driving privileges.
- A child can be ordered to pay a fine.
- A child can be ordered to undergo evaluation and treatment for chemical dependency or mental health issues.
- A child can be assigned community work service hours.
- A child can be placed on home detention and not allowed to leave the residence without a parent/guardian unless at school.
- A child can be removed from their home and placed in shelter care/foster care/residential treatment facility at the parent’s/guardian’s cost.
- A child’s cell phone or any other electronic devices can be removed from their possession.
- A parent/guardian can be ordered to take their child to school at the beginning of each school day.
- A parent/guardian can be ordered to participate in evaluations and receive services.
- Any other services or conditions deemed appropriate.

**Absences in the
first month of school
can predict poor attendance
throughout the school year.**