

Parent Information

What Does Truancy Diversion Mean in Scott County?

The diversion process begins with the initial efforts between student, family and school. Students and families who engage with school staff in an attempt to develop a plan to increase attendance have higher rates of changing the behavior. Therefore, early responses from parents when their child first begins to show signs of avoiding school is essential to increasing school attendance and therefore overall school success.

Compulsory Attendance is the Law

Youth from the age of 7 years old through their 17th year are required to attend school.

Pursuant to Scott County's Diversion Program...

Youth under the age of 12 years old may be referred to Scott County Health and Human Services for unexcused absences equaling 7 or more school days. During that age it is important that parents realize they are determined as 100% responsible in assuring their children are enrolled and attending school.

Youth who are 12 years old through 17 years old may be referred to the County Attorney's Office once their unexcused absences have reached 7 full school days and attempts to increase school attendance through collaboration with school staff have been unsuccessful.

Possible Sanctions

Students and parents should be aware that once a truancy referral has been accepted by the County Attorney's Office sanctions may be requested of the court including:

- Court adjudication as a "child in need of protection or services";
- Mandatory meetings with probation or social services;
- Community Service or Sentence to Serve (including weekends);
- Fines up to \$100;
- Suspension or denial of driving privileges (to age 18);
- Counseling for child and parents;
- Chemical or mental health evaluations / services / programs; or
- Any other activities or . . . treatment programs deemed appropriate by the court, etc.).

Hope for Students and Families

Many times students missing school is a symptom of a greater challenge the student or family is going through. There are many reasons, which may include: unmet physical health, mental health or chemical health needs, feelings of not belonging to the community or school, financial hardship, unstable housing, conflicted relationships within family, community, school or special education needs.

Many times by addressing the above concerns, the student's attendance will increase, leading to greater school success. Parents and students should reach out to school staff to discuss the concerns and work on making specific step by step plans that include positive interventions balanced with appropriate consequences. This would support the student's success in changing school attendance patterns.

What parents can do:

- 1) Talk to your child about the importance of school and make it clear that the expectation is to attend school every day. Be honest with the school when your child is skipping school. Making excuses for your child's absence will not help to increase their attendance and may actually lead to the child missing more and more and therefore fall further behind and disconnected from school.
- 2) Connect your child with services if problems interfere with school attendance.
- 3) Discuss with your child their hopes for the future. It is hard for a youth to feel that school is important to their future if they cannot relate how that attendance may help them achieve their goals.
- 4) Talk to the school about ways to increase your child's feeling of belonging, whether through groups, sports or activities. Schools often have scholarships to help students who otherwise would not be able to afford to participate.
- 5) Take time at night to check in with your child regarding homework and any questions they may have. Students have a hard time wanting to go to school the next day if they were unable to complete their homework for fear of negative consequences. Schools may offer opportunities before or after school for homework assistance if that would benefit the student. Getting your child involved in a support like this earlier rather than later would be helpful in keeping them from falling too far behind and avoiding school due to feeling confused and behind in classes.
- 6) Remove incentives or possible reinforcements a student may feel to skip school. Remove access to gaming systems, television and cell phones during the school day. Staying home from school should not be more enjoyable than attending school. If your child skips school do not allow him/her access to friends in the evening. If the child wants to spend time with friends, visiting with them at school is a great way to accomplish this.
- 7) Let your child know how proud you are of them when they do attend school and remove the word "but" when you do so. Many times, as parents it is hard in our frustration not to compare our children's good decisions against times they did not follow expectations. When giving praise to them leave it at that and let your child feel the pride in having made a good choice.

Links to Forms

- [MHC Brochure](#)
- [Truancy Brochure](#)
- [Resource List](#)

Linked Website Resources

Attendance Works <http://www.attendanceworks.org/>

This website gives a variety of information on positive ways to increase attendance and how that benefits student, school and community. Attendance Works "Advancing Student Success By Reducing Chronic Absence" (found within the above website), gives sample Facebook Page posts recommended for everyday in September with many great links to specific tool kits, handouts or interactive links for parents/students/teachers to access regarding increasing attendance.

Magic Johnson Video <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C24aoX7U-d8&feature=related>

Video of Magic Johnson describing to students and parents why school is important.

Attendance Works Parent Tool Kit <http://www.attendanceworks.org/tools/for-parents/>

Article with handout and tool kit for parents who are looking for ideas on how to help their child engage in school and increase attendance.