

Plan for Success!!

Students' Responsibilities

- Attend school every day and be on time
- Talk to someone at school if you are having problems
- Attend school meetings
- Complete homework on time
- Be involved in groups or activities that interest you
- Know and follow school policies and rules

Parents' Responsibilities

- Send your child to school
- Ensure your child has completed required homework
- Communicate with school and know the attendance policy
- Don't cover for your child's unexcused absence
- Attend school meetings
- Get your child services if problems interfere with school attendance

Truancy Worker Responsibilities

- Assess students for risk of ongoing truancy and develop a plan of needed services
- Implement services to address truancy
- Conduct follow-up service meetings
- Identify problems accessing services and difficulties in improving attendance, adding or adjusting services as needed.
- Coordinate interventions with school and other service providers

Schools Responsibilities

- Provide a program/schedule that meets the students educational needs
- Address problems identified as barriers to the students ability to attend and learn
- Maintain accurate attendance records and document communication with parents/guardians and students about attendance
- Intervene early to prevent habitual truancy by meeting with student and/or family after 3 unexcused absence
- Report truancy to county agency after 7 unexcused absences

What is our Goal?

Crow Wing County Social Services' goal is to increase school attendance and improve community connections across Crow Wing County through a collaborative early intervention providing education and support services to school-age youth and their families.

For Questions and information regarding truancy contact:

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School Attendance and the Law

Information on truancy
and consequences for
skipping school

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School Attendance - IT IS THE LAW!

Minnesota Law states that a child between the ages of 7 & 17 years of age must attend school every day and be on time unless they have lawful excuse for being absent. A child 17 years of age cannot drop out of school without permission of their parents. Written forms must be completed at a school meeting. We are mandated by law to refer truant students to the County Attorney's Office, but **we would very much like to see your student's attendance improve before county intervention.**

Examples of excused absences include:

- Sickness: You may be required to provide proof from your doctor
- Medical or mental health appointments
- Religious Holidays
- Extreme Family emergency

Examples of unexcused absences include:

- Missing the bus
- Employment
- Need of sleep or rest/oversleeping
- Babysitting or other work
- Cold weather

If a student is absent without lawful excuse on three or more days *or any part of the school day*, they are considered truant.

Truancy is a violation of the Minnesota state law.

The law also mandates that parents compel their children to attend school. There are potential criminal penalties if a parent fails to do so. This can include up to a \$700 fine and/or 90 days in jail.

Truancy Intervention Services

The parents, school, and community are all partners in working toward the goal of school attendance and educational success. The law is "designed to provide a continuum of intervention and services to support families and children in school and in combatting truancy and educational neglect."

When a child has had *one or two unexcused absences*, the school will begin the initial interventions. This may include a contact with the parent, a school meeting, or detention.

At *three unexcused absences*, the school is legally required to notify the parent or guardian that the child is a "*continuing truant*." A letter is usually sent outlining potential legal consequences as well as recommended actions for the parent.

If the child has seven unexcused absences, they are then considered "*habitually truant*." The school is required to report that the student is in violation of the compulsory attendance laws to their local county agency. The school will then coordinate with the county social worker, parents and child to schedule a formal meeting. At this time, the county social worker will gather information and will make recommendations to provide further support for the child and family. This meeting occurs in lieu of court, in an effort to compel the child to attend school. A contract is established with the child and he or she is placed under supervision to attend class. Significant consequences can occur at this level and appropriate service referrals are made. At this time, it is also determined whether or not a referral to Lakes Area Restorative Justice would be appropriate in lieu of a court referral.

Consequences and Court Action

If a student continues to be truant after all less restrictive interventions have been tried, the matter will be referred to the Crow Wing County Attorney's Office to determine what action should occur. At this point, the parent or guardian can be criminally charged if they have not compelled their child's attendance. The student can be petitioned as a child in need of protection or services based on truancy. The judge has the authority to administer a variety of consequences or dispositions which can include the following:

- A child may lose electronics privileges;
- A child can be fined up to \$100;
- A child can be placed on probation while remaining in their own home and school;
- A child can be put on house arrest and cannot leave the residence unless at school or with a parent;
- A child can be assigned community work service hours;
- A child can be removed from their home and placed in shelter or foster care or a short term residential facility;
- A child may lose their driving privileges until he or she is 18 years old;
- The court can order that any necessary evaluations, treatment, and counseling services be completed.

The most far reaching consequences for truancy are not the court sanctions. Children who do not attend school are more likely to become involved in delinquent and ultimately criminal behaviors. These young people are severely limiting their opportunities and truancy can be the beginning of a lifetime of problems.