

Attendance & Truancy Program

All students are expected to maintain good attendance. The best way to ensure learning and achieve good grades is through regular school attendance.

To address the issue of regular school attendance your child's school, with the cooperation of the 33rd Circuit Juvenile Office, the Truancy Court, and the Scott/Mississippi County Prosecuting Attorney's Office, will utilize a multi-level approach to reduce unexcused absences. All students under the age of 17 and/or their parents/custodians will be referred to this program when the student's unexcused absences meet certain guidelines as explained below.

The Student Handbook will address in more detail excused and unexcused absences, as well as required documentation for an absence to be considered excused.

Attendance & Truancy Program (ATP):

Your child's school, with the cooperation of the 33rd Circuit Juvenile Office and the Scott/Mississippi County Prosecuting Attorney's Office, has developed a coordinated response to address the issue of excessive school absences. Depending on the circumstances of the unexcused absences this program will focus on either the student being the cause of the absences or the parent as the responsible party failing to prevent the absences. The number of unexcused absences is cumulative for the entire school year.

- Children 12 years of age or older – case will be opened for Truancy and the child and parent will be sanctioned.
- Children under the age of 12 – case will be opened for Educational Neglect and the parent will be sanctioned.

Possible Sanctions: Weekly meetings with the Juvenile Officer, Community Service (child & parent), 24 hour detention holds (child), court costs, Children's Division involvement (cases where child is less than 12), residential placement, contempt of Court/jail (parents), removal of the child from the parent's custody (foster care), misdemeanor criminal charges (parents)

ATP consists of three distinct phases:

Phase One: Truancy Diversion Program – This phase will not result in any official court record, but will require the student and parent/custodian to meet with the Truancy Monitor or a Deputy Juvenile Officer to discuss ways to help reduce your child's unexcused absences. Refer to the school handbook for the number of unexcused absences that will result in a referral to this phase of the Attendance & Truancy Program.

Phase Two: Juvenile Office Informal Adjustment - This program results in an official juvenile court record, placement on informal probation that is supervised by a Deputy Juvenile Officer and participation in the Truancy Court Program. Refer to the school handbook for the number of unexcused absences that will result in a referral to this phase of the Attendance & Truancy Program.

Phase Three: Juvenile Court – This phase results in a formal petition being filed in Juvenile Court. The petition will be heard by the Juvenile Court Judge and if the petition is found to be true the Judge

will enter Court Orders directing what must be done to eliminate unexcused absences. The parent/custodian shall be made a party to the court case and shall be liable for court costs, which may exceed \$100.00, and shall also be subject to any orders of the court which will include participation in the Truancy Court Program. It is possible that continued unexcused absences **could result in the removal of the child from the home for reasons of educational neglect.** Ten (10) unexcused absences will result in a referral to this phase of the Attendance & Truancy Program.

NOTE: At any time a student exceeds the maximum number of unexcused absences in a school year a referral may be made to the Prosecuting Attorney for **criminal charges** to be filed against the parent/custodian alleging “Violation Of Education Requirement For A Child; *Misdemeanor “C” RSMo: 167.031*) which could result in a fine, probation and/or incarceration. This referral may originate with the school or the Juvenile Office. The Juvenile Office will make the referral to the prosecutor when a child has accumulated twelve (12) or more unexcused absences.

******167.061. Any parent, guardian or other person having charge, control or custody of a child, who violates the provisions of section 167.031 is guilty of a class C misdemeanor.**

******Class C Misdemeanors – up to fifteen days in jail and/or a fine of up to \$300.**

Suspended or Expelled from School:

Days suspended or expelled from school shall **not normally** be counted as unexcused absences for the purpose of a referral to the Attendance & Truancy Program. **However**, if the School Superintendent has good reason to believe the student is purposefully doing things to cause a suspension so that the student does not have to attend school, the School Superintendent may make a referral to the program based on this belief.

Truancy Court Program:

This is an intensive program that may be used during any phase of the Attendance & Truancy Program. Truancy Court is presided over by the Truancy Court Judge. It combines supervision by a Deputy Juvenile Officer, attendance at all scheduled Truancy Court proceedings, and following the direction of the Truancy Court Judge. Normally, Truancy Court is held at the student’s school on a weekday prior to the start of the regular school day once a month.

THE STUDENT HANDBOOK MAY CONTAIN OTHER RELEVANT INFORMATION CONCERNING THE SCHOOL DISTRICT’S ATTENDANCE POLICY. THE ABOVE POLICY STATEMENTS ONLY CONCERN THE POLICY RELATED TO THE ATTENDANCE & TRUANCY PROGRAM.