

XII. PIPESTONE COUNTY TRUANCY POLICY, April, 2008

Research data tells us that students who become truant do not perform as well in school as those who attend school each and every day. Truancy could also lead to a student dropping out of school and sabotaging their opportunity for future employment success. The community, schools, parents, and the student share in the responsibility to promote regular attendance.

What is the Definition of Truancy?

There are two classifications of truancy according to Minnesota Statutes 260A.02, subd. 3. A continuing truant and habitual truant are defined as follows:

A **continuing truant** is a student, under the age of 18, who is absent from attendance at school without lawful excuse for:

- *three or more days in one school year in elementary school; or
- *three or more class periods or three or more days in one school year in middle, junior, and senior high school.

A **habitual truant** is a student, under 18, who is absent without a valid excuse for:

- *seven or more days in elementary school; or
- *one or more class periods on seven school days or seven or more days in middle, junior, and senior high school.

District/School Responsibility

The school is the arbitrator of whether or not student's absences are excused or unexcused. Examples of excused absences could be parent/doctor verified illness, family emergencies, and medical/dental appointments. Examples of unexcused absences could be overslept, babysitting, missed the bus, and no call/note from parent. Family vacation may be considered unexcused if prior arrangements have not been made with the school.

The districts, under the umbrella of the mission of public education, shall provide instruction to every child between the ages of 7 and 18 (Minnesota Statue 120A.ss, subd. 5). This means according to Minnesota Statue 260A.03, that a child who has **one to three unexcused absences, the parent must be notified** immediately. The school is legally responsible to begin the intervention (see Truancy Intervention Levels) which includes parent notification. It also includes the school setting up a meeting with a parent and child (and Family Services after 3-6 absences) and /or detention for the child. **A school is required to report the student in violation of the law at seven unexcused absences** according to Minnesota Statue 260.131, subd 1b.

Parent Responsibility

Parents hold primary responsibility for their child's attendance at school (Minnesota Statute 120A.22, subd. 1). Failure for parents to compel their children to attend school could result in criminal penalties of a \$700 fine and/or 90 days in jail.

Any student between the ages of 16 and 18 may withdraw from school if the student's parents or guardians do the following:

- *Attend a meeting with school personnel to discuss the educational opportunities available to the student including alternative education opportunities; and
- *Sign a written election to withdraw.

Pipestone County's Responsibility

Upon receipt of the Truancy Offense Report and referral form from the school:

- *Review the information to insure that the Truancy Offense Report and Referral form is complete.
- *Participate in a team meeting with the child/family/school.
- *Provide intervention, and services as needed to assist the child to return to school and stay in school.
- *Involve the court only when necessary.