

What Can YOU Do As A Parent?



Remember... you are not alone! Many families are concerned about their children's school attendance, and help is available.

TALK TO THE STAFF AT YOUR CHILD'S SCHOOL.

Teachers, principals, counselors, and social workers at your child's school may be able to help you understand why your child is truant. Visit the school if possible to understand what's going on in your child's day.

ASK SCHOOL STAFF HOW THEY CAN HELP YOU.

The district may offer extra programs and services—such as tutoring or alternative settings—that would help your child with attendance.

REACH OUT TO OTHER FAMILY MEMBERS AND FRIENDS. Talk to other parents, especially the parents of your child's friends. They may have information or ideas that can help.

CONNECT WITH PROFESSIONALS. Community programs, school social workers, family counselors and therapists, and clergy can all offer insight and support.

MONITOR YOUR CHILD'S ATTENDANCE. Request your child's attendance records from school, ask the school to contact you immediately if your child is absent without a valid excuse, and periodically check in with your child's teachers to find out how things are going for your child.



Truancy Issues? Look Us Up...

**Lincoln, Lyon & Murray
Human Services**

Call

800-810-8816

or

507-532-1247

**LINCOLN, LYON & MURRAY
HUMAN SERVICES**

Truancy... A Family Guide to Understanding & Seeking Help



**Questions? Call us
toll-free at:
800-810-8816**

School Attendance Makes A Difference!

One of the most important things families can do to help children succeed is to make sure they attend school regularly.

Students might skip school once or twice on a whim, but when they frequently miss school, they need help. Truancy is often a warning sign that a student is having trouble. Left unchecked, truancy can have strong negative effects on students' lives. Trouble at school is one of the main reasons that students become truant. Some common reasons include: having friends who skip school, money problems, depression, learning problems, drug or alcohol use, friendship difficulties, fear of bullying, harassment or violence, language or cultural barriers.

Strategies To Encourage Attendance...

1. Let kids know that YOU value education.
2. Talk with your child about school. Are they struggling with schoolmates, classes or other problems?
3. Discuss your concerns with your child's teacher. Ask them to help create a written plan to help your child succeed.
4. Does your child need a tutor or to be assessed for special service? Ask for referrals to community programs.
5. Get to know your child's friends and their families.



Truancy... Remember, You Are Not Alone!

Excused Absences: Schools know there are times when students won't be able to attend classes. They allow students to miss class for reasons such as:

- **Illness**
- **Death in the family**
- **Doctor & dental appointments**
- **Religious holidays**

Because each school has a different way of defining a "valid" or "excused" absence, check with your child's student policy handbook to find out its definition. If you have additional questions, contact the school office for clarification.

If your child is absent with a valid excuse... contact the school office the day of the absence. State the reason for the absence and when you think the child will return. Keep a written record of who you spoke to and when you called. **When your child returns to school...** make sure you give the school a written note explaining the absence. Keep a copy for your records.

Unexcused Absences: When students miss school for other reasons, the absence is unexcused. Schools define unexcused absences in different ways, too, so check the policy at your child's school. Some examples of unexcused absence might include:

- **Staying home to care for siblings**
- **Missing the school bus**
- **Refusing to attend school**
- **Skipping school for the day or for a class period**
- **Working at a job**



When Are Students Truant?

Students are considered truant when they miss school or class without a valid excuse. In Minnesota, students must attend school until age 16. Teens ages 16 & 17 may lawfully withdraw from school *only if their parents give written permission following a meeting with school personnel.* Students who become truant may be classified as either continuing or habitual truants, depending on how often they miss school.

CONTINUING TRUANT:

Middle school, junior high, high school—absent for three or more class periods on three or more days in the school year without a valid excuse.

HABITUAL TRUANT:

Middle school, junior high, high school—absent for one or more class periods on at least seven days in the school year without a valid excuse

WHEN A STUDENT BECOMES A HABITUAL TRUANT:

- Student and/or parents may be required to attend a truancy meeting at the school.
- Student may have to go to juvenile court and face a Child in Need of Protective Services Petition (CHIPS).
- Student's license may be suspended, delayed or restricted.
- Parents may be found guilty of a misdemeanor.