TRUANCY

FACT SHEET FOR PARENTS AND STUDENTS

Minnesota has compulsory education laws. This means any child under the age of 16 is *required by law to attend school*. Children ages 16 and 17 must attend unless they have been signed out by a parent. Wabasha County takes these laws seriously*.* Social Services, your home school district, and the County Attorney’s Office will take action to enforce them.

**What is a Truancy CHIPS petition?**

If a child age 12 or older has 7 or more unexcused absences (class periods or full days) they are considered a habitual truant. The school then has the option to file a Truancy CHIPS petition. That means the court would then have jurisdiction over the issue and could order the child or the parents to do certain things to correct the truancy problem.

**What is an unexcused absence?**

* The school absence and attendance policy, not the parent, determines if an absence is excused or unexcused
* A parent simply “calling in” does not necessarily mean the absence will be excused

**What happens if a Truancy CHIPS petition is filed?**

* Both the child and the parents will be expected to appear in court
* Social Services will open a case
* Both the child and the parents will be required to work with a county social worker

**What could the court order?**

*The plan might address and the court might order the following services:*

* Therapy/Counseling for the child, the parents, or the whole family
* Chemical Dependency evaluation/treatment for the child or the parent
* Psychological or Psychiatric evaluation/treatment for the child or the parent
* Community Work Service for the child
* Fine of up to $75 for the child or the parent
* Order the parents to attend school with the child
* Electronic Home Monitoring for the child (ankle bracelet)
* Loss of Driver’s License or driving privileges for the child
* Placement of the child at a work camp for a “consequence weekend” (or longer)
* Placement of the child in a foster home, group home, mental health treatment facility, or chemical dependency treatment facility

**How do we avoid going to court?**

* Both parents and child need to be honest with the county social worker and school officials about why school attendance has been a problem
* Be creative and help come up with a plan to prevent further truancies
* Follow the plan that is devised at the pre-petition meeting
* Student: attend school every day, all day, unless you have a serious medical issue
* Parent: do not call to excuse your child if she/he really is not sick

*Prepared by Wabasha County Social Services*

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