

Revised: 2013

STUDENT ATTENDANCE PROTOCOL
2014

Cook County Schools

This document includes a protocol for addressing and decreasing the incidence of truancy in Cook County. This protocol reflects commitments that various local agencies, offices, and individuals have made to promote the educational progress of children and families in Cook County.

This protocol was created by a local Student Attendance Protocol Committee, which included representatives of the following entities:

Cook County Superior Court
Cook County Juvenile Court
Cook County District Attorney's Office
Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice
Cook County Board of Education Representatives
Cook County Board of Education Attorney
Cook County Sheriff's Office
Cook County Department of Family and Children Services
Cook County Health Department
Cook County CCY (Family Connection)
Cook County Chamber of Commerce
Chief of Police from Adel, Lenox, and Sparks

The purpose of the committee is to make recommendations to the Cook County Board of Education regarding attendance policy and procedures, as well as to create guidelines for collaboration between local and state agencies having an interest or function related to educational achievement and school attendance in Cook County.

The Student Attendance Protocol Committee has agreed upon procedures, which are intended to allow the reduction of truancy at the individual, family, and community levels. It is understood, however, that these procedures are general guidelines, and extenuating circumstances may be considered, as allowable by law, for each student and family. In addition, it is understood that each state and local agency involved must first adhere to its own policies, which were considered in the development of this protocol.

Operational Authority

The Student Attendance Protocol Committee is operational under authority of the chief superior court judge as defined in O.C.G.A. 20-2-690.2. Following adoption of this written protocol and filing with the Georgia Department of Education (GADOE), the committee will meet quarterly during its first year and twice annually thereafter for the purpose of evaluating compliance and effectiveness, and to modify the protocol as appropriate.

Tardies and Early Checkout

Definition of Terms

Tardy to School: Any student arriving at school following the ringing bell, chime, or other audible signal established by the Principal and intended to indicate the start of the school day. Any student who is on school property but is not in his or her assigned classroom or other authorized area following the bell, chime, or other audible signal will be considered tardy to school.

Tardy to Class: A student is “tardy to class” when he/she arrives to class following the ringing bell, chime or other audible signal indicating the beginning of instructional time.

Excused Tardy: A tardy resulting from events beyond a student’s control shall be determined excused by the Principal or designee. Events may include an accident, road closed due to an accident, area power outage, late bus, or other incidents. Documentation is required to excuse a tardy.

Unexcused Tardy: Incidents including over-sleeping, heavy traffic, errands, delays at a train crossing, or similar excuses determined by the Principal or designee as unacceptable are unexcused. Documentation will not obligate the Principal or designee to excuse an unexcused tardy.

Early Checkout: Leaving school prior to the end of instructional time and/or the end of the official school day.

- Excused: Early checkouts for emergency, illness, or other reasons that the Principal deems necessary or reasonable. Documentation is required to excuse an early dismissal. Records will be kept at each school to document the number of days a student misses due to early checkouts. Excessive incidents of unexcused early checkout may result in disciplinary action or referral to the SST as the Principal deems necessary.
- Unexcused: Early checkouts for reasons other than those approved by the Principal. Excessive incidents of unexcused early checkout may result in disciplinary action or referral to the SST as the Principal deems necessary.

Official School Start/End Time: The time designated by the principal and advertised to students and parents as the official start or end of the school day. Correct time will be the time as determined accurate by the school principal, indicated on a designed school clock, and displayed in a prominent location.

Student Support Team (SST): An interdisciplinary group that uses a systematic process to address learning, behavior, and/or attendance problems of K-12 students in a school.

Unexcused Tardies and Early Checkouts:

- Students accumulating three (3) days of unexcused tardies to school will receive a referral to the Principal or Principal’s designee for violation of Board Policy JCDA: Student Code of Conduct.
- At the school system’s discretion, students establishing a pattern of early checkouts may be referred to the Principal or Principal’s designee for disciplinary or other appropriate action.
- Students leaving early or arriving late to class may be counted absent from the class or classes missed if they are not present more than 15 minutes of the entire instructional period.

Consequences and Penalties for Unexcused Tardies/Early Checkouts

The Principal or Principal's designee may assign consequences and penalties for unexcused tardies and/or early checkouts that may include, but are not limited to the following:

- **Third Tardy:** Written notification from teacher to notify parent(s), guardian(s) or other person(s) having control or charge of the student of possible consequences for continued tardies.
- **Fourth to Ninth Tardies:**
Elementary and Middle School Students: Referral(s) to the Principal or the Principal's designee for Disciplinary consequences, counselor's referral or other appropriate action.
High School Students: Upon a student's fourth (4th) tardy, a disciplinary referral will be made to the Principal or Principal's designee. Consequences may include loss of driving privileges, detention, in-school suspension, or other action in accordance with local school system policy.
- **Ten or More Tardies:** Ten or more tardies may result in immediate referral to support agencies outside the school system as the Principal deems appropriate. Among these agencies are the Department of Family and Children Services (DFCS), law enforcement, Juvenile Court, Family and/or Youth Connections, or other external agencies.

Truant Students

Definition of Terms

Truant: Any child subject to compulsory attendance who during the school calendar year has more than five days of unexcused absences.

Exception for Suspension: School days missed as a result of an out of school suspension shall not count as unexcused days for the purpose of determining student truancy.

Excused Absences: Local board of education shall adopt policies and procedures excusing students from school under the following circumstances, as a minimum:

- Personal illness (Excessive or extended absences may require an excuse from medical doctor)
- Circumstances where attendance in school endangers a student's health or the health of others
- Serious illness in a student's immediate family
- A court order or an order by a governmental agency, including pre-induction physical examinations for service in the armed forces, mandating absence from school
- Observing religious holidays, necessitating absence from school
- Conditions rendering attendance impossible or hazardous to student health or safety
- Local boards of education may allow a period not to exceed one day for registering to vote or voting in a public election
- Local boards of education shall count students present when they are serving as pages of the Georgia General Assembly

Grades and Absences: Final student course grades shall not be penalized because of absences if the following conditions are met.

- Absences are justified and validated for excusable reasons.
- Make up work for excused absences were completed satisfactorily. Local boards of education are not required to provide make-up work for unexcused absences.

Absence Reduction Plan: The board of education adopts the following policies and/or procedures to reduce unexcused absences.

Parental Notification: Statement of Receipt

- The school system will provide the parent(s), guardian(s), or other person(s) having control or charge of each student enrolled in public school with a written summary of possible consequences and penalties for failing to comply with compulsory attendance.
- By September 1 of each school year or within 30 school days of a student's enrollment in the school system, the parent(s), guardian(s), or other person(s) having control or charge of such student must sign a statement indicating receipt of the written statement of possible consequences for non-compliance with local school compulsory attendance policy and protocol.

Consequences and Penalties for Violation of Compulsory Attendance

The Principal or Principal's designee may assign consequences and penalties for unexcused absences and/or early checkouts at any time if he/she deems necessary. Consequences and penalties may include, but are not limited to the following:

Five Unexcused Absences in the School Calendar Year:

- Schools will notify the parent(s), guardian(s) or other person(s) who has control or charge of the student when such student has accumulated five unexcused absences in the school calendar year.
- Notice of five accumulated absences will include notification of the penalties and consequences of such absences.
- After five unexcused absences in the school calendar year, each subsequent absence will constitute a separate offense.

Notification

- Schools will make two reasonable attempts by phone, conference, letter, email, or other appropriate means to notify the parent(s), guardian(s) or other person(s) who has control or charge of the student when five unexcused absences in an academic year have occurred and of the penalties and consequences for violation of compulsory attendance.
- If two reasonable attempts to notify the parent(s), guardian(s) or other person(s) who has control or charge of the student have been unsuccessful, the school will send written notice via first class mail. Such notification will include a reminder of previous notice to the parent(s), guardian(s), or other person(s) having control or charge of each student enrolled in public school containing a written summary of possible consequences and penalties for failing to comply with compulsory attendance.

Six or More Unexcused Absences in an Academic Year

Six Unexcused Absences: Students accumulating six (6) days of unexcused absences in a semester will receive a referral to the Principal or administrative designee for violation of Board Policy JCDA: Student Code of Conduct. Upon a student's accumulation of six (6) or more unexcused absences in the school calendar year, a student's homeroom teacher will make a referral to the Principal or designee for Student Support Team (SST) intervention. Prior to the first SST meeting, a school social worker, school nurse or other appropriate staff member will attempt contact with the student and parent(s), guardian(s) or other person(s) who has control or charge of the student.

The school social worker will participate as part of the SST to assist with the development of interventions and strategies for improvement of the student's school attendance.

Ten Unexcused Absences: Upon a student's accumulation of ten (10) unexcused absences in the school calendar year, the school social worker will refer the student and parent to Cook County Truancy Education and Mediation (TEAM) for contracted participation in the TEAM truancy diversion program. The school social worker will serve to coordinate efforts between the school SST and TEAM in monitoring attendance.

Violation of TEAM Truancy Diversion Contract or refusal to participate in the TEAM truancy diversion program may result in immediate referral to the appropriate court, including but not limited to one or more of the following:

- Students ages six (6) to seventeen (17) and their parent(s), guardian(s), or other person(s) having control or charge of the student to the Juvenile Court for possible Protective Order or other appropriate disposition.
- Parent(s), guardian(s), or other person(s) having control or charge of students ages six (6) to seventeen (17) to State Court for Failure to Comply with Compulsory Attendance.

Student Attendance Protocol

I. School System Procedures

Cook County Board of Education will monitor student attendance daily. Codes for attendance used in the student records database (Powerschool) will be consistent between schools to indicate excused absences, unexcused absences, excused tardies, unexcused tardies, early withdrawals, in-school suspensions, and out-of-school suspensions. The Cook County Board of Education will adopt policy and procedure outlining the specific steps to be taken to monitor and address student attendance. Each school will create a building level procedure in accordance with this policy.

Upon enrollment and registration each school year, parents and guardians will be given notice of State Compulsory Attendance Law pursuant to O.C.G.A. Code 20-2-690.1 and the Cook County Board of Education school attendance policy JBD. The school will make reasonable efforts to ensure receipt and comprehension of the policy by requesting signatures from parents/guardians that this notice was received and understood. At the middle and high school, students will also receive this notice and provide a signature. At the elementary school, this notice will be received by all students who have reached age ten (10) or above by September 1 of that school year. This notice should also be included in each school's Code of Conduct.

Each school will utilize the Student Support Team (SST) to address attendance concerns. An SST meeting that is convened for the purpose of discussing attendance will be chaired by each school's Principal or other designated Administrator and include as its members a rotating committee of faculty having direct contact with the parents/guardians of or providing direct service to the specific student(s) to be discussed as well as the School Social Worker. School Resource Officers will also be invited to participate, as appropriate. Each school's SST will meet as needed and be responsible for implementing and monitoring policy to reduce tardy days, early withdrawals, and truancy. Parents/guardians shall be invited to and encouraged to attend these meetings.

Daily attempts will be made to call the parents/guardians of absent students. In cases known to involve joint or shared custody or guardianship of a student, efforts should be made to contact all individuals with custodial rights. This principal shall also apply to steps mentioned hereinafter.

Attendance letters will be sent at five (5) unexcused absences.

After five (5) unexcused absences:

1. A referral will be made to the SST, which will assess the student's absences and determine strategies to address attendance, including the possibility of referral to the School Social Worker. Each school will take reasonable steps to ensure that parents/guardians are, in writing, invited to and encouraged to attend these meetings. Students may also participate in SST meetings, as deemed appropriate by the SST.
2. In addition to notice of the SST meeting, two (2) reasonable attempts will be made by the school to notify parents/ guardians, in writing, of attendance to date (absences, tardies, and early check-outs), compulsory attendance law, and potential consequences and penalties for failure to comply. A signature of receipt of this notice will be obtained, and kept on file for the remainder of the school year. Students age ten (10) and older will also receive a copy of the notice and provide a signature of receipt.
 - A. First attempts to meet this requirement shall be made in conjunction with the notice of an SST meeting and/or during an SST meeting when the Parent/guardian(s) are in attendance.
 - B. After two (2) unsuccessful reasonable attempts to provide notice to parent(s)/guardian(s) and obtain signatures, notice shall be sent via first class mail.. At ten (10) unexcused absences, the SST will review the case again and make a referral to the School Social Worker, if a referral has not been made previously.

The School Social Worker will:

1. Review available information from the SST and parent contacts from school staff.
2. Meet with the student(s) and attempt a home visit within no more than two business days from the date of the receipt of the referral to further explore reasons for absence and offer assistance to the student and family for addressing the causes of absences. Examples of such assistance would include, but is not limited to:
 - Brief individual or group therapeutic intervention with students at school
 - Referral to public or private mental health or counseling services
 - Referral to public or private medical or dental services
 - Referral to public assistance programs
 - Referral to the school's Student Support Team
 - In-home support facilitated by the School Social Worker
 - Referral to outside social service or counseling providers for intensive in-home support
 - Referral to Department of Family and Children services, if deemed necessary.
3. Upon further investigation, determine the need for immediate referral of:
 - Students ages ten (10) to sixteen (16) to Juvenile Court for truancy
 - Parent(s)/guardian(s) of students ages six (6) to sixteen (16) to the Magistrate Court for Deprivation, or to Superior Court for Failure to Comply with Compulsory Attendance
 - Refer to the Cook County Truancy Reduction Program in Appendix 1

In most cases, Court referral will be made at this point or at the next unexcused absence. The family will be referred to the Department of Family and Children Services for suspicion or indicators of abuse and/or neglect. If a referral is necessary, the local Child Abuse Protocol will take precedence regarding further action.

4. Continue to monitor student attendance weekly and provide support related to the student and family's educational needs once a referral is made to a court or to the Department of Family and Children Services.
5. Review end of year attendance records with each school's Principal and determine a list of active referrals for the beginning of the next school year.

In general, students known to be on probation for truancy are monitored for attendance concerns on a monthly basis the next school year.

II. Criminal Prosecution for Violation of School Attendance Law

O.C.G.A. 20-2-690.1 requires any person in this State who has control or charge of a child between the ages of six and sixteen to enroll and send that child to school, including public, private, and home schooling.

A child is responsible to attend school and is subject to adjudication in Cook County Juvenile Court as an unruly child for violation of this statute. If a parent, guardian or other person who has control or charge of the child causes the child's absence, then that person, and not the child, is in violation of this statute. Such a violation is a misdemeanor and carries a penalty of up to \$100 fine and 30 days in jail for each violation. The law specifies that each day's absence constitutes a separate offense.

For purposes of this Protocol, the term "parent" may include any adult who has charge and control over the child, including a biological, adoptive, foster, or step-parent, a guardian or any other person who has control or charge of the child's attendance at school. In this regard, two parents residing in the same household with the child are equally responsible for the child's attendance at school.

A. Filing Juvenile Complaints

A juvenile complaint should be filed in the Juvenile Court of Cook County against a child who is habitually and without justification truant from school. Such a child is “unruly.”

For the purposes of this Protocol, habitual truancy or absence is defined as six (6) or more days of unexcused absence from school. At this point the child’s circumstances will be reviewed by the SST, to which the parent will be invited to attend. At this review the following options will be discussed:

- Refer the child and/or parent to the appropriate social services
- Request further medical documentation if appropriate
- File an “unruly child” complaint with the Juvenile Court of Cook County
- Seek a protective order for the parent from the Juvenile Court
- Seek a criminal warrant for the parent from the Magistrate Court of Cook County for Deprivation

The School Social Worker will be responsible for obtaining and monitoring compliance with the recommendations of the SST.

B. Juvenile Justice Procedures

1. Intake Process for Juvenile Complaints

- a. The Clerk of Juvenile Court in Cook County will immediately forward a copy of all truancy complaints, to the Intake Officer of the Department of Juvenile Justice for Cook County. The Intake Officer will process complaints as follows:
- b. Complaints will be entered into the Juvenile Tracking System and any past history will be assessed.
- c. The Intake Officer may contact the School Social Worker for any further pertinent information.
- d. The complaint may be forwarded to the District Attorney’s Office, accompanied by any legal history and brief summary of involvement with the Department of Juvenile Justice. This may include offense history, placement history, a summary of any past or current interventions, as well as current information.
- e. Truancy complaints will receive immediate attention and be informally adjusted in ten (10) days.

2. Adjudication and Disposition

- a. A youth may be placed on Probation for Truancy by the Juvenile Court Judge upon adjudication of a Truancy charge. At this time, the District Attorney and/or the Department of Juvenile Justice may request a Protective Order to ensure that the parent(s)/guardian(s) actively assist in the youth’s compliance with Conditions of Probation and the youth’s attendance at school.
- b. The Probation Officer will monitor the youth’s attendance, at a minimum, on a weekly basis. Further unexcused absences from school by youth will result in immediate sanction by the Department of Juvenile Justice, including possible Violation of Probation. Upon adjudication for Truancy-related Violation of Probation, the Juvenile Court Judge will determine what further action or intervention is appropriate.
- c. Judicial truancy reviews will be held on a monthly basis from the date of the initial Probation Order for Truancy-related Probation cases. These reviews will assess the youth’s attendance at school and effectiveness of any services that may be involved to assist youth and/or family. All parties involved should be prepared to report on youth’s progress at these reviews.

d. A Probation Order may be terminated by the Juvenile Court Judge prior to the expiration date if youth's attendance and/or progress have reached a level satisfactory to all parties involved.

B. Prosecution in Superior Court

After referral is made to the truancy reduction program, and it is determined that the parent is the direct cause of the child's absence, a warrant for violation of OCGA 20-2- 690.1 should be sought against the parent. In other circumstances, the SST may, but is not required to, take into account the following considerations when recommending a criminal warrant is sought for the parent of a child:

1. The child is under the age of 13 years.
2. The child has an illness for which the parent has not been diligent in pursuing medical attention or in seeking financial assistance to procure the proper medical attention.
3. The parent has not actively sought assistance from community social services and resources to assist in getting the child to school.
4. The parent is absent from the home or neglectful to an extent that it hinders the child's willingness or ability to attend school.
5. The child is a deprived child.

The child and parent must comply with the SST's recommendations. Failure of the child or parent to comply with the recommendations, including further unexcused absences from school, will result in juvenile adjudication of the child and/or criminal prosecution of the parent. In any event, if the child accumulates ten (10) or more unexcused absences in a semester, the School Social Worker will file a juvenile complaint and/or apply, via the School Resource Officer, for a criminal warrant for violation of mandatory school attendance laws. When a parent is prosecuted, regular school attendance will be assigned as a condition of bond.

C. Notification to Parent(s)

Notification to the parent of a truant child shall include notice of an SST review and information about attendance law and the penalties that may occur as a result of the child's continued absence. After two unsuccessful attempts to serve such notices and obtain signature of receipt, notification should be sent first class mail to the parent and should contain the following language:

"Decisions as to appropriate action recommendations will be made at an SST Review that could include recommendations for criminal prosecution of you or your child. Parent(s) may be charged with a misdemeanor if they are causing the child's absence from school. The penalty can be up to \$100 fine and up to 30 days in jail for each day the child has an unexcused absence from school."

III. Community Support

A. Law Enforcement

Each school in Cook County has access to, either on- site or within minimal driving distance, an employee of the Cook County Sheriff's Department or the Adel Police Department. These individuals are certified peace officers designated as "School Resource Officers." In support of improved school attendance, the School Resource Officers shall:

1. Attend SST meetings, as appropriate.
2. Forward complaints against parents directly to the Sheriff's Department and/or relate City Police Department regarding compliance with mandatory attendance law.
3. Honor any applicable school-related transportation orders issued by a court.

B. Public Health

Each school in Cook County has licensed staff available to serve students via on-site school "clinics." These personnel are hired by the Cook County Board of Education but operate annually under the

protocol of Dr. Feldman with the South Health District 8-1. The School Health Nurses shall:

1. Be responsible, in cooperation with other staff, for the final determination at each school regarding when a child should be sent home early for the day, due to health related concerns.
2. Be available to parents for preliminary verification to the school of illness pending an appointment with a physician and advocate with physician's offices for timely appointments.
3. Follow any orders written by students' physicians regarding medication or other medical treatment to be provided during school hours.
4. Work in conjunction with teachers, school administrators, and the school social worker to promote general health and safety for students, school staff, and the community.

The Cook County Health Department is an integral partner in community health related to school readiness, attendance, and success. The Cook County Health Department shall:

1. Continue to support and promote the Cook County School Nurses
2. Provide immunizations and immunization records required for school enrollment
3. Provide various medical, dental, and prescription services, referrals, and education to Students and families in Cook County to promote personal and community health.

A. Mental Health

The Cook County Mental Health provides crucial support for the mental, physical and emotional well being of students and their families, including individual and group sessions on-site at the schools or at the Mental Health office. In support of this Protocol, Cook County Mental Health shall:

1. Notify and/or refer student clients to the School Counselor or Social Worker when efforts to conduct individual or group sessions at school repeatedly fail due to absences.
2. Coordinate and host regular Inter-Agency Staffing Committee meetings, which facilitate support and treatment planning for at-risk youth, including students who are truant.
3. Attend court proceedings, when appropriate, for cases involving truancy and support any court orders for treatment of emotional or family issues contributing to absences.
4. Offer clinical support, when possible and appropriate, to any truancy prevention or treatment programs instituted.

B. Department of Family and Children Services

The Cook County Department of Family and Children Services often provides social services to the families of truant students. In support of this Protocol, the Cook County Department of Family and Children's Services shall:

1. Accept and consider information related to school attendance, behavior, and performance in reports and investigations of other suspected abuse and/or neglect.
2. Address school attendance in departmental case plans and safety plans.
3. Ensure school enrollment and regular attendance for students in emergency shelter care, temporary guardianship arranged by the department, or foster care.
4. Verify involvement of the School Social Worker when available attendance information indicates more than ten (10) unexcused absences.
5. Attend court proceedings, when necessary, for cases involving truancy and/or complaints against parents related to mandatory school attendance. Subpoena(s) should be issued to the appropriate Case Manager and/or Investigator when participation by the Department of Family and Children Services is desired.

IV. Monitoring the Protocol

To ensure that these written protocol procedures are followed, the Protocol Committee will meet quarterly for a year, which will begin on the date of the protocol's adoption. The Protocol Committee will then meet bi-annually, as required by law. The Committee's goal will be to improve communication between agencies, encourage inter-agency cooperation, and update the protocol as necessary. Each participating agency shall monitor and evaluate compliance with this protocol and, as needed, recommend protocol revision and implementation that best meets the needs of the community and complies with Federal, State, and Local statutes, as well as agency policy.

V. Steps to Prevent Truancy

Various measures are currently being explored to address truancy from a prevention perspective.

- A. The Department of Juvenile Justice in conjunction with the Cook County Juvenile Court, The Cook County Mental Health, and Cook County Schools are working together to develop a plan to work on preventing truancy.
The Cook County Commission on Children and Youth (CCCY) is a collaborative partnership working to address the educational, social and physical needs of local children and youth. The Commission serves as the local Family Connection collaborative with dedicated members representing a cross-section of the community. The specific goals of the Commission for Children and Youth are to increase the number of students who graduate from high school on time, to decrease the number of teen pregnancies and to decrease the school drop out rate.
- B. Local businesses, clubs, and civic organizations will be asked to consider developing incentive or even scholarship programs for those students whose grades and attendance exhibit significant improvement.
- C. Drivers Licenses Denial
The Cook County Board of Education requires the local school superintendent or the superintendent's designee to use his or her best notify students age 14 and older when the student has only three absences remaining before violating the state's attendance requirements pursuant to O.C.G.A. 40-5-22 regarding the denial of driver's permits and licenses. Cook County Schools will be responsible for certifying that students enrolled in public schools and in home schools in its district satisfy the attendance requirements. They will do this by using the *Certificate of Attendance* form. Cook County Schools will be responsible for making this form available to private schools in Georgia in which students living in the public school district are enrolled. The private schools will complete the forms.
- C. The Central Office of Cook County Schools is required by this law to report information regarding non-compliance to the Department of Motor and Vehicle Safety through a process developed jointly with the Department of Education. Cook County Schools must report this information from the public schools in its district, from private schools attended by students who reside in the public school district, and from home schools in the public school district. A non-compliant student is one who:
 1. Has dropped out of school without graduating and has remained out of school for ten consecutive school days;
 2. Has more than ten school days of unexcused absences in any semester or combination

of two consecutive quarters; or

3. Has been suspended from school for:
 - (a) Threatening, striking, or causing bodily harm to a teacher or other school personnel;
 - (b) Possession or sale of drugs or alcohol on school property;
 - (c) Possession or use of a weapon on school property. For purposes of this subparagraph, the term “weapon” shall be defined in accordance with Code Section 16-11-127.1 but shall not include any part of an archeological or cultural exhibit brought to school in connection with a school project.
 - (d) Any sexual offense prohibited under Chapter 6 of Title 16; or
 - (e) Causing substantial physical or visible bodily harm to or seriously disfiguring another person, including another student. O.C.G.A § 40-5-22 (a.1)

COOK COUNTY TRUANCY REDUCTION PROGRAM

Proposal and Goal

The District Attorney's Office for the Alapaha Judicial Circuit, in cooperation with the Department of Juvenile Justice, has approved a truancy reduction program. The goal of this program is to reduce truanancies throughout the county. The mission of the program is to reduce overall delinquency rates by identifying at-risk children and providing early intervention. Truancy is an early indicator of children who are at risk for delinquent behavior. Therefore, reducing truancy is a good starting point for reducing overall juvenile crime rates.

Procedure

When a child incurs ten (10) unexcused absences, the school reports the absences to the school social worker. The social worker then makes contact with the family and places the family on notice of the child's absences and of the provisions of Georgia's compulsory attendance law. At a total of five (5) unexcused absences after initial contact by the social worker, the social worker refers the case to the District Attorney's Office by forwarding Exhibit "A" attached hereto. The social worker should check for other siblings in the family who may be having truancy problems so that all children may be seen in one conference. The Assistant District Attorney (ADA) then sends a certified letter to the parents notifying them of a mandatory conference at the District Attorney's Office regarding their child's school attendance. A copy of this letter is attached hereto as Exhibit "B."

Conferences are scheduled for fifteen (15) minute increments beginning at 3:30 PM after school. Some conferences may take between twenty (20) and twenty-five (25) minutes. The ADA, social worker, parents, and child must all be present at the conference. The ADA begins the conference by introducing all parties and stating the purpose of the meeting. The ADA then explains Georgia's Compulsory Attendance Law to the parents and the children and the consequences of noncompliance. Possible consequences for the child include the filing of a formal complaint with Juvenile Court. Consequences for the parents include arrest and release on a formal misdemeanor warrant with charges brought before the Grand Jury for indictment and prosecution in

Superior Court pursuant to O.C.G.A. §20-2-690.1. At the referral meeting, the school social worker shall discuss the child's school record including attendance and disciplinary problems. The parents and child are given an opportunity to explain the absences as well as other potential problems that need to be identified and addressed.

All parties to the conference sign a contract. A copy of the contract is attached hereto as

Exhibit "C." The contract requires a doctor's note for any additional absences from school. If other problems are identified, such as drug or alcohol abuse, chronic lice, anger management, or the need for parenting classes, those problems shall also be addressed in the contract. The parents and social worker are given copies of the contract and the ADA keeps the original. The parents are informed that any violation of the contract may result in a referral to Juvenile Court and/or misdemeanor criminal charges against the parents. Notes are taken by the ADA for statistical purposes as well as for potential legal action in the future. The note form is attached hereto as Exhibit "D."

A copy of the contract is given to the school to be placed in the student's file. If a violation of the contract, another truancy violation, does occur the school shall immediately notify the school social worker. After any report of a violation, the social worker must notify the ADA in writing and include a current attendance print-out on the student so a Juvenile Complaint form can be completed.

All truancy complaints filed with the Juvenile Court shall be prosecuted by the District Attorney's Office for the Alapaha Judicial Circuit. If the child continues to have truancy problems after the initial truancy referral meeting, then formal action shall be taken by the ADA. It shall be the policy of the ADA of the Alapaha Judicial Circuit, the Juvenile Court, and the Department of Juvenile Justice, for first time truancy offenders to seek a ninety (90) day valid court order from the Juvenile Court. This shall be an informal period of supervision used to monitor attendance. It shall be the duty of the school social worker to monitor said attendance and report to the Department of Juvenile Justice all violations of the court's order.¹ A truant juvenile upon the conviction of a

¹For all purposes in this program, it shall be deemed a violation of the courts' order when the student has obtained three (3) unexcused absences in any month. Second offense shall be placed under formal supervision with the Juvenile Court with another valid court order. These valid court orders shall be good for a period of twelve (12) months. A juvenile who violates the terms and conditions of their valid court order because of another truancy violation shall receive forty-eight hours at the Regional Youth Detention Center (RYDC).² A second violation of the valid court order because of

² This does not apply for violations of probation for causes other than truancy.

truancy shall incur a sentence of ten (10) days at the RYDC. Any subsequent violations of the court's order where the violation is based on truancy shall receive twenty (20) days at the RYDC.³

These are policy guidelines followed by the truancy reduction program; however, all dispositions of these cases remain within the discretion of the Juvenile Court.

If it is determined that enough evidence exists to prosecute the parents for violations of Georgia's Compulsory Attendance Law, or the facts of the case show that the parents second offense shall be placed under formal supervision with the Juvenile Court with another valid court order. These valid court orders shall be good for a period of twelve (12) months. A juvenile who violates the terms and conditions of their valid court order because of another truancy violation shall receive forty-eight (48) hours at the Regional are the responsible parties for the truancy problems of the children, then a request will be made by the ADA for assistance by local law enforcement to secure a Superior Court arrest warrant for the parents for violation of Georgia's Compulsory Attendance Law. The request shall be made for local law enforcement to arrest the parents and interview them regarding the violation. It will be the policy of this office to request that the parents be released without bond on their own recognizance. A formal indictment will be sought from the next available grand jury to show community support for the project and for further prosecution of the parents.

Conclusion

The goal of the program is to insure compliance with Georgia's Compulsory Attendance Law and provide the opportunity for all children to obtain the best possible education available.

³ These guidelines would also apply to juveniles who have new truancy offenses and have been released from supervision with the exception that a new valid court order would be necessary.

ATTENDANCE SUPPORT COMMITTEE
Referral Form for Truancy Intervention

Date: _____ School: _____
(of referral to DA's Office)

Student: _____ Age: _____

Parent(s): _____ Grade: _____

Address: _____

Phone (H): _____

Phone (W): _____

Absences Unexcused: _____ Excused: _____ Total: _____ Tardies: _____

Teacher Contact: Postcard _____ Phone _____ Conference _____

Social Worker Contact: Postcard _____ Phone _____ Conference _____

*** Any additional comments concerning situation ***

Those who will attend Truancy Intervention meeting are:

Principal/Asst Principal _____ Social Worker _____ School Nurse _____

School Counselor _____ DFCS Worker _____ DJJ _____ ADA _____

Other Agency: _____ (specify) _____

I have contacted the above-specified people. The family has been notified of the meeting set for _____ (time/date).

School Social Worker

Date

Principal

Date

<date>

<Name>

<Address>

RE: **Student:** <Name>
Truancy Issue

Dear <Name>:

A mandatory parent conference has been scheduled for <time> PM on <date>, at the <County> County Board of Education office. Please make arrangements to attend that meeting.

The purpose of the meeting will be to discuss the unexcused absences of <student> from school. It is the hope of the Board of Education and the District Attorney=s Office that we can discuss your child=s excessive number of absences from school. The State of Georgia requires that you, as a parent/guardian of a child, ensure the mandatory attendance of your child in an approved education program. See O.C.G.A. ' 20-2-690.1. The maximum penalty that may be imposed on you under this statute is a fine of \$100.00 and 30 days imprisonment per unexcused absence of your child. At present, your child has accumulated _____ total absences of which _____ are listed as unexcused.

It is the desire of all involved to work out this issue in a manner that will guarantee your child=s attendance in school. Please contact your child=s school social worker (_____) or _____ at the Board of Education (<telephone number>) or myself (<DA phone number>) if you will not be able to attend the scheduled meeting. Failure on your part to appear at the meeting could result in a warrant being taken for your arrest.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely yours,

Dick Perryman

ATTENDANCE NOTICE AND AGREEMENT

As the Parent/Guardian of _____, I/we am/are hereby notified that my/our child is not meeting the compulsory student attendance requirements of Georgia law. If I/we do not take action to ensure my/our child's attendance at school, the school will be required to notify the Cook County Juvenile and/or Superior Courts.

State law requires minor children to be enrolled in and to attend school. Pursuant to O.C.G.A. §20-2-690, a parent and/or guardian may be held responsible for the child's failure to report to school. A fine of up to \$100.00 per day may be assessed and imprisonment for up to thirty (30) days may be imposed.

To avoid further legal action, I/we will take the following steps to correct my/our child's attendance problems:

1. _____ I/we will see that the child attends school daily, unless a written doctor's excuse is provided to the school immediately following the absence.
2. _____ I/we will personally contact the school by 10:00 AM if the child is too sick to attend school.
3. _____ I/we will contact the child's school to set up a parent - teacher conference within three (3) days.
4. _____ I/we will cooperate with the school to help resolve problems or conflicts involving my child, including signing all necessary paperwork and releases and attending all scheduled parent - teacher conferences.
5. _____ If the child must be absent, I/we will obtain all necessary make-up work from their teacher(s).
6. _____ Other:

This the _____ day of _____, 20_____.

Parent/Guardian: _____

Student (when appropriate): _____

School Social Worker: _____

Assistant District Attorney _____

Dept of Juvenile Justice _____

ATTENDANCE SUPPORT COMMITTEE MEETING

Good Morning:

Please allow me this opportunity to welcome everyone and tell you how pleased we are to have you with us.

At this time I would like for everyone to introduce yourself and the agency you represent.

The purpose of this meeting is to discuss concerns regarding attendance of your child in school. We all know and believe that attendance is a key ingredient to learning. It stands to reason that if students are not present in the classroom every day, learning cannot take place thus graduation from high school becomes much more difficult to accomplish.

We are here to discuss the attendance issues regarding _____ (student name) who is a student at _____ (school name).

The people present here today want to offer their help in trying to come up with a plan of action to solve these issues. We also want to present information on what choices are available if our plan does not work and school attendance does not improve.

At this time I will recognize _____ (school official) from _____ (school) to give us an account of the concerns of the school. After _____ (school official) concludes, we will hear from _____ (parents and/or guardians).

We will now hear from _____ (parents/guardians). Please keep in mind that everyone present is here to help in any way they can.

Are there any questions or concerns from anyone on the panel regarding this situation?

I would like to thank everyone for their valuable input. At this time we have an attendance contract that we will review and ask everyone to sign. This contract will give the school and the family a guide to follow regarding the improved attendance of _____ (student name) at school.

Please be reminded that if attendance does not improve, action from the court system will follow.

If there are no further questions, we will adjourn this meeting.

2014 Cook County Student Attendance Protocol Signature Sheet

Signatures

In signing this protocol, we, the undersigned, commit our agencies/departments to the procedures outlined above.

Cook County Superior Court Date

Cook County Juvenile Court Date

Cook County District Attorney's Office Date

Cook County District Attorney's Office Date

Georgia Dept. of Juvenile Justice Date

Cook County Sheriff's Office Date

Cook County Board of Education Date

Cook County Board of Education Date

Cook County Board of Education Date

Cook County Board of Education Date

Cook County Board of Education Date

Cook County Board of Education Attorney Date

Cook Co. Dept. of Family & Children Services Date

Cook Co. Dept. of Family & Children Services Date

Cook County Health Department Date

Cook County Family Connection

Date

Adel Police Department

Date

Lenox Police Department

Date

Sparks Police Department

Date

Mental Health

Date