



MOBILE COUNTY  
DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

KEITH BLACKWOOD  
DISTRICT ATTORNEY  
13TH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT

August 11, 2023

Dear Mobile County Public School System Parents,

I'd like to welcome you to the 2023-2024 school year. I hope you had an enjoyable summer and are ready to have a great school year.

Your child's success is extremely important to us at the Mobile County District Attorney's Office. We believe that success begins with school attendance. School attendance is not only a good habit, but state law requires it. The Alabama Mandatory School Attendance Act (*Ala. Code §16-28*) requires all children ages 6-17 attend school regularly and behave properly. The District Attorney's Office has the responsibility to enforce this law.

In partnership with MCPSS, the Mobile County District Attorney's Office has implemented a new program called the Helping Families Initiative (HFI) to encourage and improve school attendance. Students who accumulate 5 or more unexcused absences or excessive tardies will be referred to HFI. Once a referral has been made to us, one of our HFI Case Officers will contact the student and their parents to complete assessments and provide assistance with community resources. The goal of HFI is to connect families to resources in an effort to improve student behavior and academic engagement before they encounter the juvenile justice system.

Our Helping Families Initiative Team will be visiting schools over the next few weeks to deliver materials that detail our program. We look forward to sharing more with you as the year continues. If you have questions about the program, please reach out to your child's counselor and/or principal. Additionally, our Helping Families Team at the Mobile County District Attorney's Office can be reached at [hfi@mobileda.org](mailto:hfi@mobileda.org) or 251-574-3306.

Thank you for all you do to ensure your children have the best chance at success. We are looking forward to working with you this 2023-2024 school year.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "K. Blackwood".

Keith M. Blackwood  
Mobile County District Attorney  
13<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit



**Keith M. Blackwood**  
**Mobile County District Attorney**  
**13th Judicial Circuit**

## Overview of HFI

The Mobile County District Attorney's Office receives referrals from the school systems for students who are approaching the maximum number of tardies or absences allowed.

The case officers respond to the referrals to verify the information is correct then the case officer will reach out to the student's family.

Principals and school counselors may also refer student and families who may need assistance with community resources.

Case officers may complete an assessment with the student and family then refer them to the appropriate community agency for services such as housing or financial assistance, health or mental health services, or support services.

An Individual Intervention Plan may be developed to assist the family with multiple issues in order to help them get back on track.

## Attendance Matters

*Every Student  
Every Day*

The Alabama Compulsory School Attendance Law (16-28-12, Code of Alabama, 1975) states all children between the ages of six (6) and seventeen (17) must attend school regularly and behave properly.

Under the law, parents are responsible for their children's attendance and proper behavior, while the District Attorney is responsible for vigorously enforcing the law.

There is a substantial correlation among poor school attendance, student misconduct and delinquent behavior.

Chronic absences from school lead to a propensity for increased crime and victimization among juveniles, which negatively impacts our entire community.

The Helping Families Initiative (HFI) is a crime prevention program of the Mobile County District Attorney's Office designed to improve family functioning, child well-being and educational outcomes.

HFI connects families to resources in an effort to strengthen families, improve student behavior and academic engagement before families encounter the juvenile justice system.