

A MESSAGE FROM OTTER TAIL COUNTY ATTORNEY MICHELLE M. ELDIEN

We all want our children to have the best education they can get to become successful, productive adults. Regular attendance at school is the best way to ensure that goal. That is why school attendance is mandatory in the state of Minnesota. Studies have shown that children who are truant from school are more likely to engage in delinquent or criminal activity and abuse alcohol or other drugs. We need to address today's school attendance issues to prevent long-term negative impacts.

The School Engagement Program supports parent/guardian(s) in becoming actively involved to ensure their children regularly attend school. This process has proven to be effective if everyone follows through on their obligations. If truancy continues, the matter will be petitioned into Juvenile Court to step up the level and intensity of intervention.

The School Engagement Program is focused on increasing attendance, getting truants in school, and keeping them out of Juvenile Court. This benefits our community and, most importantly, our children.

WHAT IS EDUCATIONAL NEGLECT?

Families with children 11 and under will only participate in **STEP ONE** and **TWO** of the SEP Program as they will be referred to Child Protection as it is presumed that the cause of attendance concerns at this age is due to custodian's failure to comply with compulsory attendance laws.

FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO TRUANCY

A number of issues can play a role in students' attendance. The School Engagement Program strives to address these concerns by working collaboratively with schools, community resources, county agencies, and the Judicial System.

- Chemical use
- Transportation
- Parental involvement
- Mental health
- Bullying
- School relationships
- Language barriers
- Physical health
- Family isolation
- Peer influence
- Learning disabilities
- Teen pregnancy
- Parent school history
- Cultural barriers

CONTACT US

If you have questions or concerns please contact:

Otter Tail County Attorney's Office

218-998-8400

Otter Tail County Human Services

218-998-8150

Please email referrals to:

cacivil@ottertailcounty.gov

otcvacp@ottertailcounty.gov

<https://ottertailcounty.gov/truancy>



SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM



OTTER TAIL
COUNTY - MINNESOTA

WHAT IS A TRUANT?

A child is considered a “habitual truant” if she or he is under the age of 17 years and is absent from attendance at school without lawful excuse for seven school days or for one or more class period on seven school days. Children age 17 will be considered truant if they have not lawfully withdrawn from school with their parents’ permission. [MN Statutes 260C.007, Subd.19.]

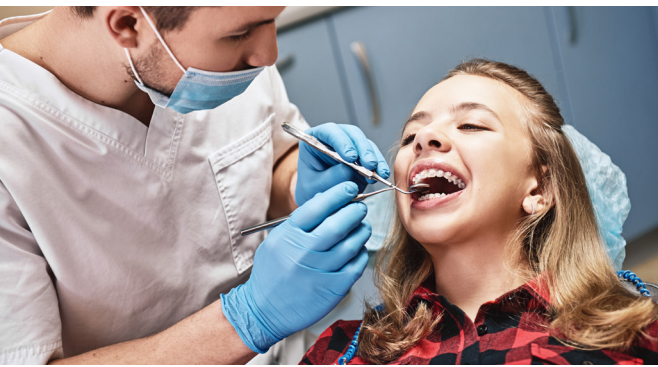
A parent or guardian may seek an excused absence from school for his/her child. A school has the right to accept or deny an application for an excused absence.

Acceptable excused absences include:

- › Sickness
- › Doctor’s visit
- › Religious holiday
- › Extreme family emergency

Unacceptable absences include:

- › Babysitting
- › Work or rest because of work
- › Travel (unless pre-approved by school)
- › Needed at home
- › Cold weather
- › Missed bus
- › Child not immunized



SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM

The School Engagement Program (SEP) is a process designed to improve a student’s attendance. By intervening early, the program can make a lasting impact on a student’s academic success as well as their future.

STEP ONE

Initially schools will contact students and their families that have been identified with attendance concerns. In this step the school and family shall discuss other intervention methods.

STEP TWO

An Assistant County Attorney, a Human Services Social Worker, and school representatives will meet with the parent/guardian(s) and the student with attendance issues at a School Engagement Program (SEP) meeting, to discuss the impact of chronic absenteeism, the necessity of education, and the legal consequences if attendance does not improve. Community based resources will be presented, and referrals can be completed as agreed upon.

STEP THREE

The school will monitor attendance of students in the program. If attendance is still an issue, the student and parent/guardian(s) are invited to participate in a County Attorney Mediation Program (CAMP) conference. The team will create an agreement addressing the causes of the student’s attendance problems and possible solutions.

If school attendance does not improve after the implementation of the CAMP agreement, Human Services will open a Child Protection Assessment and the County Attorney will take legal action against the student, parents/guardians, or both and the matter will be addressed by the Court.



LEGAL CONSEQUENCES IF TRUANCY IS NOT RESOLVED BY THE SEP PROCESS

- › Court could require the parents to deliver their child to school every morning.
- › Students can be fined up to \$100.
- › Students can lose their driving privileges.
- › A student can be placed under supervision.
- › A student can be removed from their home and placed in a foster home, group home, or shelter.
- › A student can be court-ordered to complete community work service.
- › A student can be court-ordered to participate in other programs.
- › A student could be ordered to undergo chemical dependency evaluations.

As a parent/guardian, it is your responsibility to make sure that your student attends school daily. Regular attendance improves academic success. It is essential that you are involved in the intervention program for the long-term academic success of your student. Collaboration with the school and County is key to solving a student’s attendance issues.

Education is the foundation for a successful future. In Minnesota, the law requires students to attend their classes and school daily. School attendance is essential for academic success. We encourage you to attend school regularly and take pride in your school.