

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: *What is truancy?*

A: The act of being truant; *or* one who shirks duty; *especially*: one who stays out of school without permission (Source: Merriam-Webster Online). Also known as: skipping school, bunking off, skiving and ditching.

Q: *When is a student considered truant?*

A: A student is considered truant when there are five unexcused absences in a calendar month or 10 unexcused absences in any 90-day period.

Q: *If my child skips school am I going to be arrested?*

A: The State Attorney's Office only arrests parents who are contributing to the child's poor attendance.

Q: *What is the truancy process?*

A: Once a student has five unexcused absences in a calendar month or 10 in any 90-day period, then the child qualifies for an Attendance Intervention Team meeting at their school. If unexcused absences continue after this meeting then a referral can be made to the State Attorney's Office Truancy Arbitration Program or to the Youth Crisis Center. The Youth Crisis Center focuses on older students who are contributing to their unexcused absences, whereas the Truancy Arbitration Program focuses on parents who are contributing to students' unexcused absences.

Q: *What is considered an excused absence?*

A: An absence for which a parent or guardian has provided a written explanatory excuse stating the cause for the absence. For a complete listing of acceptable excuses for absences refer to student handbook.

Q: *Why is truancy such a big concern?*

A: Several studies have shown that children who are skipping school are more likely to become involved in criminal activities such as auto theft, burglary and vandalism. They are also more likely to be involved in substance abuse, teen pregnancy, and gang activity. In addition, children who do not attend school do not learn the lessons that allow them to become productive adults. Later in life, chronic truants have been found to have serious behavioral and health problems, lower paying jobs, and a propensity for violent activity.

Q: *What causes truancy?*

A: There is no single cause for truancy. Not surprisingly, students give a different answer than teachers, and teachers give a different answer than parents. Students complain of being bored with the subject matter being taught, a general loss of interest in school, and disagreement with disciplinary methods. Teachers believe that truancy is a direct effect of a student's problems with family and peer groups. Some parents seem to be unable to get their children out of bed in the morning, or if they manage to get their child to the bus stop, the child ends up skipping anyway. There is no single cause for truancy. Each student carries a different set of circumstances. In order to combat truancy, it is vital that the teacher and student come to an understanding and work together.

(Adapted from <http://eric.uoregon.edu/publications/digests/digest125.html>)

