

## Educational Neglect vs. Truancy

**Educational Neglect** – A parent or guardian’s failure to ensure the child attends school as required by Minnesota law.

- For a child under the age of 12, the absence from school is presumed to be educational neglect, due to the parent’s failure to comply with school attendance laws.

**Truancy** – A child’s willful absence without lawful excuse from one or more class periods on seven different school days.

- For a child ages 12-17, the absence from school is presumed to be truancy, due to the child’s willful intent to absent themselves from school.

## Excused vs. Unexcused Absences

**Excused Absences** – Absences with a lawful excuse

- ✓ Medical Appointments that cannot be scheduled outside school hours.
- ✓ Extreme Family emergencies
- ✓ Religious Observances
- ✓ Illness – school may require medical verification or a visit to the school nurse
- ✓ Pre-planned vacations
- ✓ Hospitalization/Treatment

**Unexcused Absences** – Absences without a lawful excuse

- ✓ Oversleeping/Missed bus
- ✓ Babysitting siblings
- ✓ Working
- ✓ Car trouble
- ✓ Illness without a doctor’s note or nurse visit, if required
- ✓ Providing care of translation for a parent
- ✓ Failure to return to school following a medical appointment

## Truancy: A Symptom

Truancy is often a symptom of a larger problem that a child or the child’s family is facing. Through identification of the problems causing the truancy, we can more effectively prevent further absences, thus ensuring a child’s educational success.

## Common Problems Faced by the Truant Child

- ❖ Child or Parent Mental Illness
- ❖ Feeling Disconnected from Peers
- ❖ Bullying
- ❖ Child or Parent Chemical Dependency
- ❖ Anxiety
- ❖ Family Disturbances
- ❖ Homelessness
- ❖ Parental Illness
- ❖ Neglect
- ❖ Depression
- ❖ Parents Rely on Student for Help at Home
- ❖ Lack of Transportation
- ❖ Difficulty with School Content
- ❖ Language Barriers
- ❖ Witnessing Violence at Home

TREAT THE PROBLEM – NOT THE SYMPTOM

## Working Together to Combat Truancy

Through collaboration, schools, medical and mental health providers, social services, advocacy programs, and the courts can work together to address the underlying risk factors that contribute to truancy.

### Schools

- Increase student engagement
- Create clear and manageable policies surrounding attendance
- Engage parents in their child's schooling
- Provide incentives for improved attendance
- Implement peer mentoring
- Implement programs to eliminate bullying
- Use a trauma-informed lens when assessing absences
- Develop Individualized Education Plans

### Medical/Mental Health Professionals

- Only excuse absences for hours the medical treatment was received
- Do not automatically provide retroactive excuses for absences without school contact
- Evaluate, diagnose and treat mental and physical illness
- Work with schools to differentiate avoidant behavior versus mental health concerns
- Get releases and communicate with schools when excuses are sought
- Recommend and/or provide individual and family therapy to address issues
- Thoroughly evaluate home dynamics, including domestic violence exposure

## Social Services

- Coordinate availability of resources for students
- Provide a context for maladaptive behaviors
- Refer for psychological evaluations
- Refer for chemical dependency evaluations
- Provide resources for students to be engaged in extracurricular activities
- Provide services to decrease the need for the student to help parents at home

## Courts

- Impose rules for the child's and/or the parent's conduct
- Order a psychological evaluation
- Order a chemical dependency evaluation and treatment
- Order the child and/or parents to attend counseling or therapy
- Order house arrest or electronic home monitoring
- Order a student to attend summer school
- Order community work service
- Take a child's phone/electronic devices
- Order parents to deliver the child to school
- Suspend the child's driver's license until 18
- Transfer legal custody to social services for placement in shelter care

## Attendance Specific Resources

Nicollet County Human Services  
622 S. Front Street  
St. Peter, MN 56082  
(507) 934-8559

Blue Earth County Human Services  
410 S. 5<sup>th</sup> Street  
Mankato, MN 56001  
(507) 304-4319

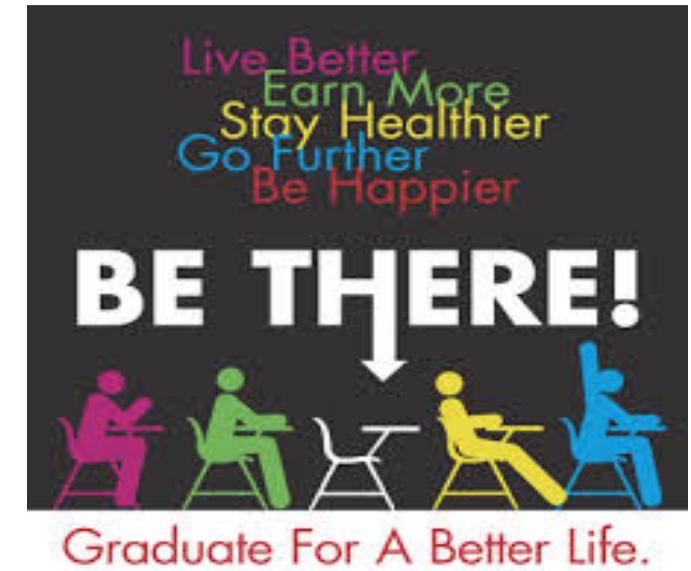
Le Sueur County Human Services  
88 S. Park Avenue  
Le Center, MN 56057  
(507) 357-8288

ISD 77  
Molly Fox  
[Mnorri1@isd77.k12.mn.us](mailto:Mnorri1@isd77.k12.mn.us)  
10 Civic Center Plaza # 1  
Mankato, MN 56001  
(507) 514-0793

St. Peter Public Schools  
ISD 508  
100 Lincoln Drive # 229  
Saint Peter, MN 56082  
(507) 934-5703



## A Collaborative Approach to Addressing Truancy



*Presented by*  
**Stakeholders for Education Success**

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