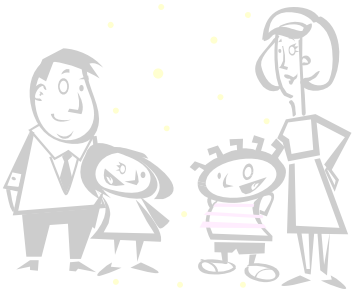


Five Strategies to Encourage School Attendance

1. Let your child(ren) know that you value education. Insist they go to school every day.
2. Talk with your child(ren) about school. Is your child struggling with schoolwork, classmates, or other problems? Ask how you can help.
3. Discuss your concerns with your child's teachers. Ask them to help you to help your child succeed.
4. Does your child(ren) need a tutor or assessment for special services? Ask for referrals to community program or counseling services.
5. Get to know your child's friends and their families.



What can Parents Do?

You are not alone. Many families are concerned about their child(ren)'s school attendance and help is available.

Talk to the staff at your child(ren)'s school.

Teachers, principals, counselors, and social workers at your child(ren)'s school may be able to help you understand why your child(ren) is truant. Visit the school if possible to understand what's going on in your child(ren)'s day.

Ask the school staff how they can help you.

The district may offer extra programs and services that would help your student with attendance.

Reach out to other family members and friends. They may have information or ideas that can help.

Connect with professionals for advice.

Community programs, family counselors, therapists and clergy can all offer insight and support.

Monitor your child(ren)'s attendance:

- ✚ Request your child(ren)'s attendance records from school
- ✚ Ask the school to contact you immediately if your child(ren) is absent without a valid excuse

- ✚ Periodically check in with your child(ren)'s teachers to find out how things are going for your child(ren).

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AND THE LAW

Information on truancy and consequences for skipping school

Red Lake County Central Schools
High School: Oklee, MN # 627
(218) 796-5136
Elementary School: Plummer, MN #628
(218) 465-4222

Red Lake Falls School District #
J.A. Hughes Elementary School
(218) 253-2161
Lafayette High School
(218) 253-2163

Red Lake County Social Services
(218) 253-4131

Red Lake County Attorney's Office
(218) 253-2780

Tri-County Community Corrections
(218) 281- 6622



SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

IT IS THE LAW

Minnesota State Statute requires that children attend school. For students *under the age of 12*, it is presumed that it is a **parental responsibility** to ensure the child's attendance. Between the age of *12 and through the 17th year*, it is primarily the **student's responsibility** to get to school on a daily basis. Children who are *age 16 and age 17* must be lawfully withdrawn from school by their parent or guardian. Children cannot independently "drop out" of school.

A student is required to attend school **each and every day, each and every class period**. If a student should miss any part of the school day for legitimate reasons, a parent or guardian must notify the school. Examples of excused absences include:

- ✚ Sickness
- ✚ Medical or mental health appointments
- ✚ Religious holidays
- ✚ Family emergency

Examples of unexcused absences include:

- ✚ Missing the bus
- ✚ Employment
- ✚ Need for sleep or rest
- ✚ Babysitting

If a student is absent without lawful excuse on three or more days or *any part of the school day*, that student is considered as continuing truant. *Truancy is violation of Minnesota State Law.*

The law also mandates that parents compel their children to attend school. There are potential criminal penalties if a parent fails to do so. This **can include up to a \$1000.00 fine and/or 90 days in jail, or both.**

Truancy Intervention Services

The parents, school and community are all partners in working toward the goal of school attendance and educational success. The law is "designed to provide a continuum of intervention and services to support families and children in school and in combating truancy and educational neglect".

When a child has had *one or two unexcused absences*, the school will begin the initial interventions. This may include a contact with the parent, and in-school detention.

At *three unexcused absences*, the school is legally required to notify the parent/guardian that the child is a "*continuing truant*". A letter is usually sent outlining potential legal consequences as well as recommended action for the parent. At this point, parents are strongly encouraged to attend school with their son or daughter if the truant behavior continues.

If the child has *seven unexcused absences*, they are then considered "*habitually truant*". The school is required to report that the student is in violation of the compulsory attendance laws. At this level, one final intervention is attempted. A county social worker arranges a formal meeting between the school, parents and child. This meeting occurs in lieu of court, in final efforts to compel the child to attend school. A contract is established with the child and he or she is placed under supervision to attend class. Significant consequences can occur at this level and appropriate service referrals are made.

Consequences and Court Action

If a student continues to be truant after all less restrictive interventions have been tried, the matter will be referred to the Red Lake County Attorney's Office to determine what action should occur. At this point, the parent or guardian can be criminally charged if they **have neglected** their child's attendance. The student can be petitioned as a child in need of protection or services based on truancy. The judge has the authority to administer a variety of consequences or dispositions, which can include the following:

- ✚ A child can be placed on probation while remaining in their own home and school
- ✚ A child can be assigned community work service hours
- ✚ A child can be removed from their home and placed in a shelter, in foster care, or in a short term residential facility
- ✚ A child may lose their driving privileges until he or she is 18 years old
- ✚ The court can order the child or family to complete any necessary evaluations, treatment and counseling services

The most far-reaching consequences for truancy are not the court sanctions. Children who do not attend school are more likely to become involved in delinquent and ultimately criminal behaviors. These young people are severely limiting their opportunities and truancy can be the beginning of a lifetime of problems.