

A MESSAGE TO STUDENTS AND PARENTS
FROM THE VENTURA COUNTY
DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

The Youth of Ventura County are our most precious resource. One of the earliest indicators that something may be wrong in a young person's life is chronic truancy. It is imperative that we, as a community, collaborate and share our resources to do all that we can to help these children become outstanding young adults. My office is pleased to join with the Ventura County SARB, school district SARBs countywide, and the Ventura County Probation Agency in a partnership that seeks to reduce the problem of truancy in our community. I strongly support early intervention because it prevents juvenile crime and encourages the learning that is so critical to succeeding in life.

Greg Totten
Ventura County District Attorney

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**Ventura County
Truancy Referral
and
Prosecution
Program**

THE OBJECTIVES OF THE TRUANCY
REFERRAL AND PROSECUTION
PROGRAM :

- To stress the importance of regular school attendance
- To resolve student school attendance problems



Ventura County SARB Contact Information

Chair: Dr. George Williams
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<http://www.vcoe.org/sarb>

Legal Definitions for Absenteeism

Chronic Absentee:

A student who is absent for any reason, whether excused or unexcused, on 10 percent or more of the school days in the school year (Education Code 60901).

Tuant:

A student who is absent from school without a valid excuse three full days in one school year and/or is tardy or absent for any 30-minute period during the school day without a valid excuse on three occasions in one school year (Education Code 48260).

Habitual Truant:

A student who has been reported as a truant three or more times within the same school year (Education Code 48262 and 48264.5).

Chronic Truant:

A student who has been absent from school without a valid excuse for 10 percent or more of the school days in one year, from the date of enrollment to the current date (Education Code 48263.6).

Absenteeism and the Link to Learning

It is important to address chronic absenteeism because research studies link it to an increased likelihood of poor academic performance, disengagement from school and behavior problems. Early absenteeism negatively impacts academic achievement in reading, math, and general knowledge in the early school years. An average of one in 10 students younger than grade 3 nationwide is considered chronically absent defined as missing 10 percent or more of school. The greater the number of absences in kindergarten, the greater the number of absences in first grade.

Over one-half of chronic absences in kindergarten also were chronic absentees in first grade. Low-income and Latino children are especially at a disadvantage in first grade, particularly when they were chronic absentees in kindergarten: they score, on average, 10 points less in first grade reading achievement than white children with the best kindergarten attendance.

A common pattern is for chronic absence to be high in kindergarten, decrease by grade 3, but then start to increase substantially, especially during the transition to middle and high school. By grade 6, chronic absence can be associated with dropping out of school. By grade 9, missing 20 percent of school can be a better predictor of dropping out than grade 8 test scores.

The Goals of the Truancy Referral and Prosecution Program are to:

- Increase daily school attendance and reduce absences.
- Hold parents accountable for their child's regular school attendance.
- Reduce juvenile daytime crime.

What can the parent and student do to prevent truancy prosecution?

- Attend school regularly and on time.
- Do assigned homework and turn it in on time.
- Cooperate with school staff to assist in resolving any attendance problems.
- Attend conferences requested by school.

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More than ever before, consistent school attendance is critical to school success. With increasingly difficult academic standards to meet for graduation, every minute of class instructional time is essential for students to reach their goals and achieve their dreams. Nothing can sabotage a student's school success quicker than poor attendance. Truancies result in enormous costs to students, parents, schools and the community. When students are not in school, they are more likely to become victims of crime, to use drugs, and alcohol, and to drop out of school. Today our prisons are filled with people whose first contact with the law was for truancy. The school districts in Ventura County are committed to ensuring that students attend school every day on time. By forging a vital partnership with the Ventura County District Attorney's Office, we assist students and their families to attain that most treasured goal — a good education.

Dr. George Williams
Ventura County SARB President

Frequently Asked Questions

What must the school do about Chronic Absenteeism?

- Seek to identify and address issues affecting school attendance.

What charges may be filed against the parent(s) or guardian?

- An infraction under Education Code section 48200 may be filed against the parent/guardian of a student truant from a full-time public school.
- A misdemeanor complaint under Education Code section 48450 may be filed against the parent/guardian of a student attending a continuation school.
- A misdemeanor complaint under Penal Code section 272 may be filed against a parent/guardian in cases of enabling or promoting truancy contributing to the delinquency of a minor.

What charges may be filed against the student?

- An infraction under Education Code sections 48262 may be filed against the truant student.
- Penalties against the student may include: a fine, community service hours, revocation of work permit, and suspension or revocation of driving privileges (ages 13 to 18).

What penalties may be applied to the parent(s) or guardian?

- Penalties may include a fine of \$100 to \$500, parenting classes, community service, or other court orders. (Education Code 48293)
- Penalties for a misdemeanor against the parent may include a fine up to \$2,500, up to one year in jail, up to 3 years of probation, parenting classes, community service, or other court orders. (Penal Code section 272)
- Welfare and Institutions Code section 11253.5 authorizes the County CalWORKs office to reduce a family welfare grant if it is determined that the child is not "regularly attending school as required."
- A court can order a parent or guardian to deliver a child to school at the beginning of each school day for the remainder of a school term under Education Code section 48268.