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2002

Milwaukee County

TRUANCY

BOOKLET

"Final Report of the Milwaukee County Truancy
Committee"

February, 2002

In Compliance with Wisconsin
Statute 118.162



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MILWAUKEE COUNTY TRUANCY COMMITTEE

CO-CHAIRPERSONS

Dr. Aquine Jackson
Milwaukee Public Schools

Ms. Patricia Luebke
Wauwatosa School District

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

| <u>Name</u> | <u>Representing</u> |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Mr. Jim Andrus | Greendale School District |
| Mr. Andrew Blaha | South Milwaukee School District |
| Ms. Deborah Blanks | Social Development Commission |
| Mr. Robert Blazich | Fox Point School District |
| Ms. Catherine Braun | West Allis School District |
| Mr. Ned Collins | Milwaukee Public Schools |
| Mr. Lindsay Draper | Milwaukee County Children's Court Center |
| Ms. Anne Dunlop | Whitnall School District |
| Mr. Michael Fesenmaier | Nicolet School District |
| Mr. Gerald Freitag | Franklin School District |
| Thomas and Trina Frost | Suburban Parents |
| Mr. Anthony Frontier | Whitefish Bay School District |
| Eric and Laura Gottinger | Home School Parents |
| Mr. Jim Hecht | St. Francis School District |
| Mr. Jim Heiden | Cudahy School District |
| Dr. Aquine Jackson | Milwaukee Public Schools |
| Ms. Sue Jaskulski | Milwaukee County District Attorney's Office |
| Ms. Valerie Johnson | Private School Parent |
| Mr. Reginald Jungwirth | Brown Deer School District |
| Mr. Michael Kroeger | Glendale-River Hills/Maple Dale Indian Hill |
| Ms. Lisa Kujawa | Oak Creek School District |
| Ms. Patricia Luebke | Wauwatosa School District |
| Mr. Gary Mahkorn | Milwaukee County District Attorney's Office |
| Ms. Kathy Malone | Milwaukee County Human Services |
| Captain Diane Moore | Milwaukee County Sheriff's Dept. |
| Ms. Gloriastine Newton | Milwaukee Parent |
| Ms. Betty J. Nicholas-Braxton | Milwaukee Public Schools |
| Ms. Dana Nix | Truancy Abatement Director |
| Ms. Diane Patterson | Private School Parent |
| Mr. Manuel Phillip | Milwaukee Parent |
| Mr. Chris Protz | Boy's and Girl's Club |
| Ms. Denise R. Robinson, M.S.W. | Bureau of Milwaukee Child Welfare |
| Ms. Jodie Shine | Oak Creek-Franklin School District |
| Mr. Gregory Sipple | Home School Parent |
| Ms. Leticia M. Smith | Municipal Court |
| Ms. Jan Stenlund | Program Services Director |
| Captain Vincent J. Vitale | City of Milwaukee Police Dept. |
| Mr. Pete Vlaj | Greenfield School District |
| Ms. Brenda Ward | Milwaukee Public Schools |
| Mr. Kenneth Warren | Shorewood School District |

Milwaukee County Truancy Committee

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Milwaukee County Truancy Sub-Committees

Sub-Committee Challenges/Successes

Co-Chairs

Ms. Patricia Luebke
Ms. Brenda Ward

Mr. Jim Andrus
Mr. Lindsay Draper
Mr. Michael Fesenmaier
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Ms. Kristin Koepfer
Mr. Michael Kroeger
Mr. Chris Protz
Thomas and Trina Frost
Eric and Laura Gottinger
Ms. Valerie Johnson
Ms. Gloristine Newton
Ms. Diane Patterson
Mr. Manuel Phillip
Mr. Gregory Sipple

Wauwatosa School District
Milwaukee Public School District

Greendale School District
Milwaukee County Children's Court
Nicolet School District
Milwaukee County District Attorney's Office
Brown Deer School District
Maple Dale-Indian Hill
Glendale-River Hills School District
Boy's and Girl's Club
Suburban Parents
Home School Parents
Private School Parent
Milwaukee Parent
Private School Parent
Milwaukee School Parent
Home School Parent

Sub Committee- Core Items

Chair Person

Mr. Ken Warren

Ms. Deborah Blanks
Mr. Ned Collins
Dr. Aquine Jackson
Mr. Gary Mahkom
Captain Diane Moore
Ms. Leticia M. Smith
Ms. Jan Stenlund
Thomas and Trina Frost
Eric and Laura Gottinger
Ms. Valerie Johnson
Ms. Gloristine Newton
Ms. Diane Patterson
Mr. Manuel Phillip
Mr. Gregory Sipple

Shorewood School District

Social Development Commission
Dist. Atty./Court Liaison
Milwaukee Public Schools
Milwaukee County District Attorney's Office
Milwaukee County Sheriff's Department
Milwaukee County Court House
Program Services Director
Suburban Parents
Home School Parents
Private School Parent
Milwaukee Parent
Private School Parent
Milwaukee School Parent
Home School Parent

Sub Committee- Contributing Factors

Chair Person

Ms. Lisa Kujawa

Mr. Andrew Blaha
Mr. Robert Blazich
Ms. Catherine Braun
Ms. Anne Dunlop
Mr. Anthony Frontier
Mr. Gerald Freitag
Mr. Jim Hecht
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Ms. Kathy Malone
Ms. Betty J. Nicholas-Braxton
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Mr. Vincent J. Vitale
Thomas and Trina Frost
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Ms. Diane Patterson
Mr. Manuel Phillip
Mr. Gregory Sipple

Oak Creek School District

South Milwaukee School District
Fox Point J2 School Worker
West Allis School District
Whitnall School District
Whitefish Bay School District
Franklin Public School District
Saint Francis School District
West Allis School District
Milwaukee County Human Serv.
Milwaukee Public Schools
Truancy Abatement Director
Oak Creek-Franklin School Dist
Greenfield School District
City of Milwaukee Police Dept.
Suburban Parents
Home School Parents
Private School Parent
Milwaukee Parent
Private School Parent
Milwaukee School Parent
Home School Parent

About This Report

On July 1, 1998, Wisconsin Act 285, Revised Wisconsin Truancy Statute, went into effect. The statute required the Superintendent of the school district which contains the county seat (Milwaukee) convene a committee consisting of:

- A Representative of Each School District in the County
- A Representative of the Office of the District Attorney
- A Representative of the Sheriff's Department
- A Representative of the Milwaukee Police Department
- A Representative of the Circuit Court Designated by the Chief Judge
- A Representative of the County Department of Social Services
- A Representative of the Juvenile Court Intake Unit
- A Representative of the County Department of Human Services
- Milwaukee County parents of students enrolled in private school
- Milwaukee County parents of students enrolled in public school
- Milwaukee County parents of students enrolled in home-based program

The committee is required to make recommendations to the school boards of all districts in the county on items to be included in the district's truancy plans every four years. The September, 1999 committee developed specific items to be included in the school board's truancy plan. The committee identified any state statutes, municipal ordinances, school or social services' policies that inhibited the response to truancy and developed specific recommendations to deal with the items.

The entire committee reached consensus and supports the findings and recommendations in the main body of the report. The report describes the factors that contribute to truancy in the county. It also contains recommendations for legislation or social services' policies that the committee felt should be enacted or developed to assist in dealing with truancy. Other supporting information which was the result of subcommittee efforts can be found in the subcommittees reports. Data include:

- A review of existing problems and breakdowns occurring under existing local truancy plans
- A description of state statutes, ordinances and policies that contribute to or inhibit the response to truancy
- Core items to be included in each district's truancy plans.

February 2002

Significant Findings

The 1999 Milwaukee County Truancy Committee has examined available statistical information and discussed the various issues regarding truancy in Milwaukee County. The committee felt it was critical to agree upon a common definition of legal absence for all schools in Milwaukee County to provide a consistent policy for students throughout the county. The committee focused on the need for a broad network of educational alternatives to support students and encourage their regular attendance at school. It recognized that in order for students to be successful in school, they must attend regularly. Truancy is one manifestation of some of the deep-seated problems facing our young people today that must be dealt with vigorously and in a spirit of cooperation by all interested parties and agencies in Milwaukee County. Committee reports and discussion highlighted the following:

- A. Primary contributing factors to truancy differ between city and suburbs.
- B. Responsible parenting has the greatest impact on truancy reduction.
- C. The impact truancy has on the community is great in terms of both loss of human potential and economic effect.
- D. Administrative procedures within and between agencies inhibit the current ineffective laws from working very well to help solve truancy problems.
- E. The major responsibility for solving the truancy problem lies with in each school district and it's community.
- F. Some parents and some students are helped by existing laws and practices. As ineffectual as some these practices and procedures are, they should not be disregarded; they should continue to be used and improved by each agency.
- G. Some parents and students will never be helped by truancy laws.
- H. While future actions will need to be taken by the legislature, social service agencies, the judicial system, and boards of education, the most meaningful and productive actions will need to be taken by school staff members if progress on truancy is to be made.

Recommendations to School Boards in Milwaukee County

THESE ITEMS SHOULD BE INCLUDED IN THE SCHOOL DISTRICTS' TRUANCY PLANS IN ACCORDANCE WITH 118.162 (4). SOME OF THESE ITEMS MAY REQUIRE THAT BOARD POLICIES AND OTHER BY WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE BE ENACTED TO ASSIST IN DEALING WITH TRUANCY..

- A. Truancy manifests itself primarily at the secondary level but its tendencies are often conceived at the elementary level. Therefore, increasing resources should be devoted to prevention and intervention programs at the earliest possible age and continue through the middle grades. Focus at these early grades should be on the improvement of self-image and development of family support of the child and his/her education efforts. All prolonged or frequent absences need to be carefully evaluated and followed up. Additionally, alternative programs should be implemented, if appropriate, at these grade levels.
- B. At the secondary grade levels, school districts should create alternative programs first within the schools, and then outside of the schools, that will help keep students interested in school and attending school. For the same group of students it is important to enforce the truancy laws quickly to impress on them that there are, in fact, truancy laws with which they must comply.
- C. Each Milwaukee County school district superintendent should appoint a staff member to a "continuation committee" to work with the factors contributing to truancy and possible in-school solutions for truancy that have proven to be effective. The committee should be charged with the responsibility to examine effective in-school solutions and to share the result with their district school board.
- D. Each school board needs to become increasingly aware of and give increased attention to the present laws which allow them to create modified programs for students. The board should encourage the use of these laws to prevent truancy and encourage school attendance.
- E. All school boards in Milwaukee County should adopt the following list as legal absences:
 - 1. Personal illness
 - 2. Funerals
 - 3. Required legal appearances
 - 4. Designated religious holidays
 - 5. Medical or dental appointments
 - 6. Family emergencies
 - 7. Driver's examinations
 - 8. Approved school district sponsored activities
 - 9. Prior approved absences which have been deemed educationally beneficial for the student by the school principal
 - 10. Parent-Excused Absence(up to ten days per year)

All other absences, except those listed above, Should be regarded as truancy.

- F. School boards should define the time limits and methods required for the documentation of legal absences as defined above.

- G. All school districts should continue to work with their municipal officials to create municipal truancy ordinances as recommended in 118.163. These ordinances need to be established in order to provide quick response and therefore more effective and timely enforcement for truancy violations.
- H. A "contributing to truancy" citation should be provided for as part of the municipal truancy ordinance violation. These truancy fines would be for any person who would be found guilty of contributing to the truancy of a student. The consequences for failure to pay the fine for violation of this part of the municipal ordinance would be the revocation of vehicle registration or a five day jail term.
- I. In order to improve services to truant students, Truancy Abatement Burglary Suppression (TABS) Center should be created within Milwaukee County serving the entire county. Personnel from various agencies, as well as school personnel at the center would provide appropriate professional services to help facilitate student's return to his/her school. The use of a TABS center should be considered by each board of education as an option based on the needs of individual districts.
- J. In order to provide these truancy services quickly and effectively for truant students, all police officers should be allowed to transport truant students found in public places and transport them to school or the truancy center for professional services and counseling. Since truancy by itself is not a delinquent act, all police officers should be given the proper training related to police intervention with truant students.
- K. School boards should be encouraged to continue to work with the options available through the district attorney's office for the enforcement of truancy laws with parents.
- L. The legislature should make state financial aid available to school districts to assist the districts for the following purposes related to dealing with truancy:
1. The creation of alternative school program designed to keep students enrolled in school K-12.
 2. The hiring of school personnel who would assist in the management of local school district truancy plans as required by 118.162.
 3. The creation and operation of countywide truancy centers.
- M. The Milwaukee County government private sector enterprise should discourage the use of public facilities for activities that may lure youth out of school during school time.

The Factors Contributing to Truancy in Milwaukee County

While contributing factors to truancy vary from district to district, sixteen common factors have been identified for Milwaukee County.

- A. Administrators representing 15 Milwaukee area school districts rated the following sixteen factors as contributing most to school truancy in Milwaukee County.
1. Low self esteem/lack of success in school
 2. Lack of family support/involvement
 3. Failure to recognize the relevance of an education or high school diploma
 4. Alcoholism
 5. Drugs
 6. Lack of availability of alternative educational programs
 7. Ineffectiveness of truancy laws
 8. Juvenile delinquency
 9. Reaching the age of majority
 10. Low educational expectations of the child
 11. Adolescent pregnancy/parenthood
 12. Violence in the home
 13. Parent unemployment/underemployment
 14. Poverty
 15. Gang problems
 16. Other factors such as: Negative peer involvement, apathy, student focus on present dead-end jobs, general lack of interest, single parent families, jobs held by both parents, failure to assimilate, excessive pressure from peers, disorganized parenting, overprotective parenting, illness (malingering).
- B. It must be noted that the seemingly low ranked factors of parent unemployment/underemployment and poverty were rated significantly higher by MPS and must be considered extremely important factors contributing to truancy for students attending Milwaukee Public Schools.

Recommendation of Milwaukee County Truancy Committee

While truancy is a societal problem, it is the belief of the committee members that the solutions to the problem of truancy should be a collaborative effort to include home school and the community at large. The schools can be assisted by changes in the truancy laws as well as by changes in agency operating procedures that would support school and the school systems effort to reduce truancy. This report addressed those needed changes. However, a close examination of the causes of truancy and a determination of what the school districts can effectively do about these causes may be the keys to solving the problem. School boards, the legislature, and various agencies should acknowledge that regardless of the many efforts of the schools, there will remain some students for whom preventative programs, educational programs, alternative programs and truancy laws simply are not effective.

THE COMMITTEE URGES THE LEGISLATURE, ALL SCHOOL BOARDS IN MILWAUKEE COUNTY, AND APPROPRIATE STATE AND LOCAL AGENCIES TO REVIEW THIS REPORT AND ACT ON THE RECOMMENDATIONS. FINALLY, THE COMMITTEE MEMBERS UNANIMOUSLY AGREE THAT ALL SCHOOL BOARDS SHOULD ADOPT THIS REPORT AS A WHOLE AND WORK AGGRESSIVELY TOWARD THE FULFILLMENT OF EACH RECOMMENDATION IN A TIMELY MANNER.

**Sub-Committee Report: Challenges/Successes
For Truancy In Milwaukee County**

Milwaukee County Truancy Committee

Challenges/Successes for Truancy in Milwaukee County

Committee's Charge: To review existing problems and breakdowns occurring under existing local truancy plans.

A. Challenges to Combating Truancy

- ◆ Lack of emphasis from parents regarding school attendance

Challenge: How to educate adults regarding the importance of school attendance, especially at an early age when attendance is not yet compulsory.

- ◆ Some misuse of the state's home schooling option

Challenge: How to address oversight of the problem where misuse is an issue.

Challenge: Determine if this is an area in which a change of statute is needed or if there should be a way to legally address misuse.

- ◆ Family mobility and resulting changes of school

Challenge: How to assist mobile families in maintaining school attendance for their children.

- ◆ Pregnancy/child care issues for teen parents

Caring for children becomes an excuse for not attending school.
W-2 misinformation being conveyed to students affects this issue.
Major issues for School Age Parent programs—day care.

Challenge: How to address the ongoing relationship of W-2 requirements with teen parents.

Challenge: How to assist teen parents in continuing their education while caring for their children.

- ◆ Related issue: Homelessness, nutrition, care of children with families/parents working two or more jobs to stay afloat

Challenge: How to work across systems to assist parents in meeting their work requirements while establishing/maintaining connection with their children's school requirements

- ◆ Accessibility of parents for conferences/school meetings due to inability to leave their jobs

Challenge: Same as above

- ◆ Need to have meaningful interaction/communication between systems, i.e. schools and DAs, schools and courts and vice versa.

Challenge: How to set systems of communication across and between the various units of government that work on behalf of children.

- ◆ Starting the truancy count over every semester

Challenge: Determine if this is an area that requires a change of statute.

- ◆ Lack of prosecution/action by police, court system with many 16 to 17 years old (especially in larger municipalities)

Challenge: How to help students and families take the attendance requirement seriously if there is not follow up from the system designated to address the issue when the school has done all it can.

- ◆ Lack of support/supportive environment within the school when students return from long absences or have a history of non-attendance

Challenges: How to help students successfully return to the school environment after prolonged/chronic absences while assisting teachers in working with the disruption this may cause for both the teacher and students(s).

- ◆ Reintegration of Students

Challenges: Some school administrators are reluctant to accept students that were incarcerated or habitually truant. There needs to be a better way of accommodating this population. It is difficult to receive students in the middle of the semester. Consider creative methods such as independent study programs, and alternative programs. These non-traditional programs may require additional funding.

B. SUCCESSFUL APPROACHES IN COMBATING TRUANCY

- ◆ Night court truancy programs in some suburban municipal courts (Greenfield, Oak Creek, Shorewood) where there is a school administrator present to address each case
- ◆ Truancy Abatement/Burglary Suppression Program

Some new sanctions available – such as, municipal ordinance
Successful in preventing crime, less successful in combating truancy
Social worker at centers to address the needs of 6-12 year olds
- ◆ Development/implementation of police liaison programs within schools
- ◆ Creation of Safe Places and Community Learning Center in Milwaukee
- ◆ The return of students to their neighborhood schools and the accompanying proximity of parents to the school
- ◆ Alternative Schools

C. RECOMMENDATION FOR SUCCESSES AND CONTINUING CHALLENGES

- ◆ Cooperation between municipalities
- ◆ Cooperation between school districts and social agencies
- ◆ Development of additional alternative school options by many school districts
- ◆ Consider/explore the possibility of a county-wide “reintegration center” for students who are chronically truant
- ◆ Possible expansion of the TABS program to include suburban students
- ◆ Linkages to technical schools via 118.15 programs
- ◆ Distance learning via Internet
- ◆ Cooperation between school districts and social agencies

**Sub-Committee Report: Contributing Factors
And Existing Truancy Laws**

Milwaukee County Truancy Committee

FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO TRUANCY

Committee's Charge: To develop a written description of the factors that contribute to truancy in the county. Also offer options to decrease truancy in schools.

Based on its work, the subcommittee has identified several factors contributing to truancy in Milwaukee County. Represented districts and agencies reviewed the information. The significant factors related to truancy were divided into three categories. The categories are: contributing factors for truancy for students at the kindergarten through sixth grade level, factors for students from seventh through twelfth grade and a broad based group that are factors which are applicable to all students. These areas include home/society issues that cause children to be truant and also contributing school environment issues.

A. Contributing factors for truancy at the kindergarten through sixth grade level

Home/Society

- Lack of family structure/routine
- Excessive tardiness
- Statute school age mandates
- Lack of sleep
- No breakfast
- Transportation
- Inappropriate clothing for weather

B. Factors for students from seventh through twelfth grade

Home/Society

- Substance abuse
- Adjudicated youth
- Failure to recognize relevance of an education and of high school diploma
- School age parent
- Reaching the age of majority
- Peer pressure
- Gang involvement
- Jobs held by students
- Need to contribute to the economics of the family
- Delinquency
- Harassment (Student to Student)

C. Broad Based Group

1. Home/Society

- Mental and physical health issues of student or parents
- Role reversals and enabling parents
- Mobility of students and families

Home schooling issues
Lack of physical and emotional supervision
Inappropriate and ineffective parenting
Alcoholism/Drug dependency
Family violence

2. School Climate

Negative school response to student upon return from excessive absences
Lack of motivating and engaging curriculum
Lack of availability of alternative educational resources
Lack of tolerance for behavioral problems with students
Schools inability to meet student's diverse needs
Inability to modify curriculum to meet various performances levels
Insufficient truancy intervention efforts (inconsistent or "selective")
Inconsistent attendance enforcement
Safety issues

D. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FACTORS TO DECREASE TRUANCY

1. Alternative high school programs
2. Community night court for truant students only
3. School resource officers housed in the school
4. Use of guidance counselors, school social workers and school psychologists or outside counseling
5. Student or parent fines, community services
6. Target students at the elementary/middle school level
7. Increase communication with parents regarding truancy issues
Use non traditional ways of contacting parents, such as: E-mail, voice messages left at job, cell phones, pagers (mandate). Have parents of habitually truant children call in/check in. Instead use of automated calling have a person from the school call the parent(s).

**Sub-Committee Report: Proposed Core Items to Be
Included In Each District's Truancy Plan**

Milwaukee County Truancy Committee

Core Items

Committee's Charge: To identify the core items that are to be used by each school district in Milwaukee County in developing local school truancy plan.

The core items should be subdivided into two areas, School Interventions/Prevention, and School Referrals to District Attorney. The core items shall address all provisions found in State Statute 118.162 (4) (a-g). In developing specific items to be included in the truancy plan, any state statutes, municipal ordinances or school or social services' policies that inhibit the response to truancy should be identified and a specific recommendation developed to deal with the item.

A. School Interventions/Prevention

1. Principal Responsibility

- ◆ It shall be the responsibility of all principals to implement school attendance procedures that will be in keeping with the intent of the 1987 Wisconsin Act 285 and 1997 Wisconsin Act 239, as well as the rules adopted by the local school boards. Implementation procedures should include:
 - Requiring written excuses from parents/guardians for all daily absences.
 - Keeping accurate local school records of pupil absences by taking daily attendance.
 - Keeping accurate record of pupil absences, excuses, and parents/guardians contacts.
 - Reporting absences by classroom teachers to the school office
 - Notifying parent (s) or guardian (s) daily regarding absences of his/her child

2. District Information to parents

- ◆ At the beginning of each school year, all parents in the district should receive a brochure or pamphlet explaining the district's attendance procedures, including what constitutes an excused absence, the definition of truancy and habitual truancy, and penalties. "Truant" means a pupil who is absent from school without an acceptable excuse for part or all of any day on which school is held during a school semester. [s.118.163 (1) (d), Stats., as created by 1997 Wisconsin Act 239.]
- "Habitual truant" means a pupil who is absent from school without an acceptable excuse for part or all five or more days on which school is held during a school semester. [s. 118.16 (1) (a), Stats., as affected by 1997 Wisconsin Act 239.]

3. Notification of parent/guardian regarding trancies/habitual trancies

- ◆ Schools shall notify the parent/guardian of a child who has been truant and direct the

parent/guardian to return the child to school no later than the next day on which school is in session or to provide an excuse under s. 118 . 15. The notice under this paragraph shall be given before the end of the second school day after receiving a report of a truancy. The notice may be made by personal contact, mail, or telephone call of which written record is kept, except that notice by personal contact or telephone call shall be attempted before notice by mail may be given.

- Attendance procedures must be accurate. A record should be kept of those students who have been sent a 5-day (habitual truancy) letter for a routine follow up. Schools should continue to communicate with parents by letter and/or telephone when the need arises.
- The habitual truancy letter must be certified or registered and must include the following:
 - A statement of the parent's or guardian's responsibility under the Wisconsin Compulsory School Attendance Law.
 - A statement that the parent/guardian/child may request program modifications and a statement that the child may be eligible for enrollment in a program for children "at risk."
 - A request that the parent or guardian meet with appropriate school personnel to discuss the child's truancy. The notice must include the name of the school personnel with whom the parent or guardian should meet, a date, time and place for meeting and the name, address and telephone number of a person to contact to arrange a different date, time and place. The date for the meeting must be within five school days after the date that the notice is sent, except that, with the consent of the child's parent or guardian, the date for the meeting may, be extended for an additional five school days.
 - A statement of the penalties under s. 118.15 (5). that may be imposed on the parent or guardian if he or she fails to cause the child to attend school regularly as required under s. 118.15 (1) (a).
 - If the parent or guardian does not respond to the letter, the student's attendance should be carefully monitored and continued effort should be made by school personnel to contact the home and to provide support services to the student. Detailed written records are to be maintained relative to the school's attempts to contact the parent and the type of guidance services provided to the student.
 - If the parent fails to acknowledge phone call or letters, a referral should be made to the designated school attendance officer of the school district for a home visit/contact.

- Each school should identify personnel who will be responsible for meeting with returned "truants."

4. School District Mandatory Interventions

- ◆ Prior to any legal proceeding being brought against a child for habitual truancy or against the child's parent or guardian for failing to cause the child to attend school regularly, the school attendance officer must provide evidence that appropriate school personnel in the school or school district in which the child is enrolled have, within the school year during which the truancy occurred, done all of the following:
 - Met with the child's parent or guardian to discuss the child's truancy or attempted to meet with the child's parent or guardian and received no response or been refused. This meeting is not required if it is not held within 10 days of the school district's initial notice to the parent or guardian that the child is a habitual truant.
 - Provided an opportunity for educational counseling to the child to determine whether a change in the child's curriculum would resolve the child's truancy and considered curriculum modifications.
 - Evaluated the child to determine whether learning problems may be the cause of the child's truancy and, if so, taken steps to overcome the learning problems. Except that the child need not be evaluated if tests administered within the previous year indicate that the child is performing at his or her grade level.
 - Conducted an evaluation to determine whether social problems may be the cause of the child's truancy and, if so, taken appropriate action or made appropriate referrals.

The activities in items 2., 3. and 4., above, need not be carried out if the school attendance officer provides evidence that appropriate school personnel were unable to carry out the activity due to the child's absences from school.

5. Interventions/Prevention Options

- ◆ Referral to guidance counselor, school social worker, school psychologist, or student services process.
- ◆ Written contract among the student, parent, and school regarding school attendance which may require teacher signatures for attendance in each class.
- ◆ Change of student's school academic program.
- ◆ Enrollment in the school district's alternative programs as available.

- ◆ When applicable a support group for parents or truants in connection with the PTA/PTO, PTSA, etc.,
- ◆ Enrollment in a school/work study program, if available.
- ◆ Referral to the Milwaukee County District Attorney's office , and /or to the respective municipality for violation of truancy ordinance.
- ◆ Other approved procedures/programs for resolving the problem.
- ◆ Enrollment in a non-public school or program in the County of Milwaukee.
- ◆ Homebound study correspondence courses approved by the school board or tutoring provided by the assigned school.
- ◆ Home based instruction through DPI.

Based on the documented need of the students, a non-traditional education program may be the best alternative to meet the educational needs of the student, such as homebase instruction, correspondence courses, and distance learning (homebase computer lessons). These non-traditional programs can only be used as a last option, when students cannot benefit from traditional education.

6. Steps for Increasing Public Awareness.

- ◆ Communication throughout the community is essential to community involvement in combating the problem of truancy. Specific communication components must be included in each district's plan. These components are:
 - Development of a flyer (notice) which contains information on the school district's attendance policies, procedures and philosophy. This notice must be sent out prior to each school year to the parents and other community agencies that serve youth.
 - Utilization of media (e.g., cable, school newspaper, parent newsletters, local newspaper, radio, television) to communicate the importance of school attendance and the community's stance against truancy.
 - Consideration of a coordinated countywide effort that makes the public aware of the community-wide efforts in combating truancy and reinforcing good attendance.
- ◆ Coordinating efforts with the business community and law enforcement in the district to deter students from truancy in the community. This may include:
 - Working with business and police to identify "hangouts" for truant students.
 - Working cooperatively with these agencies to develop incentives to keep students in

school.

- Increasing the level of communication between school district, business, and law enforcement to identify students who may be truant during the day.
- Sensitizing the business community to the issue of students working hours that are inconsistent with school achievement.

7. Guidelines for Returning Habitual Truants

a) Local School Educational Response

All returning habitual truants and their parents or guardians should report to the attendance officer of the school. It will be the responsibility of the school to make certain the student is properly programmed for re-entry. This may include:

- referral to at-risk program
- referral to guidance counselor
- referral to school social worker, school psychologist or other appropriate personnel or special programs
- referral to school tutorial programs
- provisions for supervised study
- provisions for regular program

It is expected that the school will maintain ongoing contact with the home while closely monitoring the returning student's adjustment. It will be necessary for the school to monitor the following indicators to determine the student's readjustment to school:

- attendance records
- report cards/progress reports
- school performance
- social interaction
- discipline referrals

b) Off-Campus Educational Response

Should the prescribed educational program require enrollment in an off-campus setting, school personnel in conjunction with the parent/guardian and representatives from other involved agencies should take the responsibility of providing off-campus attendance requirements. The student may apply for readmittance to the school at any time; however, the school may determine the appropriate time for the student to return. Attendance requirements and procedures will be specified in the off-campus agreements.

B. SCHOOL REFERRALS TO THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY

1. Each district should adopt an identifiable number of absences at which time the school social worker or appropriate school official will begin to assemble the necessary evidence for referral to the District Attorney's Office.
2. There should be included in each plan a method whereby the school assembles information showing compliance with s.118.165. This would include evidence that:
 - School authorities have met with the child's parent or guardian to discuss the child's truancy or have attempted to have such a meeting.
 - The school system has provided an opportunity for educational counseling to determine whether a change in the child's curriculum would resolve the child's truancy and to consider what curriculum modifications would be effective.
 - The school district has evaluated the child to determine whether learning problems may be a cause of the child's truancy, and if so has taken steps to overcome the learning problems.
 - School district has conducted an evaluation to determine whether social problems may be a cause of the child's truancy, and if so has taken appropriate action or made appropriate referrals.
3. The District Attorney's office should respond to the district's referral in a timely fashion after receipt of the referral and should schedule the initial review conference within three weeks.