

Franklin County (IL) State Attorney's Office

To: Students, Parents, and School Administration

From: Franklin County State's Attorney

Date: 08-01-2022

RE: TRUANCY, CRIMINAL ACTIVITY, AND VIOLENCE IN OUR SCHOOLS

I am writing this letter regarding two serious issues that need to be addressed in our schools, truancy, and criminal activity and/or violence.

TRUANCY — Truancy is when a student stays away from school without permission. Truancy continues to be a serious problem in our County as well as the rest of the nation. Truancy issues affect not only the future of our schools but the future of our children. The law is clear; a child must attend school every day that school is in session unless the school has approved a valid excuse.

A parent or legal guardian has the legal responsibility to assure that their child complies with all attendance requirements. If a child is found to be a chronic truant, a juvenile court case could be filed against the student and a criminal case against the parent/guardian. If criminal charges are filed against a parent, that parent could be fined up to \$500.00, plus court costs, and could be sentenced to 30 days in the county jail (Class C Misdemeanor). Although it is my sincere hope that such drastic actions do not become necessary, truancy WILL NOT be tolerated by my office. Regular attendance in school is the first step towards a child's future and is required by the state of Illinois.

CRIMINAL ACTIVITY AND VIOLENCE IN SCHOOLS — Criminal Activity and Violence, especially among juveniles, in and around Franklin County Schools is an ongoing issue. The school administrators and I have agreed to work together to make sure that incidents of criminal activity and violence that affect the education and/or safety of our children be dealt with swiftly and effectively. Our schools should be a safe haven for our children, not a battle zone or a place to be feared.

In the event that you have any concerns about the issues outlined in this memo, please do not hesitate to contact my office or your local principal and/or superintendent.

Sincerely,

Franklin State's Attorney

STUDENT ATTENDANCE POLICY

The Akin Community Consolidated School District #91 Board of Education has established the following rules and regulations regarding attendance, absences and excuses for students. These rules and regulations are intended to comply with Illinois School Code and District Policy.

Illinois Law requires that whoever has custody or control of any child between six (by September 1st) and seventeen years of age shall assure that the child attends school in the district in which he or she resides, during the entire time school is in session (unless the child has already graduated from high school).

Students are expected to attend every class. The school has an obligation to inform both students and parents/guardians of the student's progress and attendance in all classes.

When you make school attendance a priority, you help your child get better grades, develop healthy life habits, avoid dangerous behavior and have a better chance of graduating from high school. When students are here 95% or more of the school year, their grades, reading levels, and math skills will improve—even among those students who are struggling in school. Students who attend school regularly also feel more connected to their community, develop important social skills and friendships, and are significantly more likely to graduate from high school, setting them up for a strong future. But when kids are absent for an average of just two days of school per month—even when the absences are excused— it can have a negative impact.

By figuring out the reasons for your child's absences—whether they're physical or emotional—and taking advantage of support services—such as free tutoring, student mentoring and after school activities—you can help set your child on the path to success.

In case of any absence, it is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to notify the school and provide a reason for the absence(s).

- If the parent/guardian does not contact the school to report the absence, the school will attempt to contact by phone to inform the parent of the absence.
- The parent/guardian will be made aware of the student's attendance and school district policy/regulations.

Mental Health Excused Absence: [PA 102-321](#) (effective August 6, 2021) permits students to have up to 5 excused absences for the mental or behavioral health of the child for which the child need not provide a medical note. The child shall be given the opportunity to make up any school work missed during the mental or behavioral health absence and, after the second mental health day used, may be referred to the appropriate school support personnel.

Excusable absences include:

- Illness of the student (a physician's statement will be requested for 3 consecutive absences or overall absences in excess of nine for the year)
- Days of religious observance (a written note from the parent must be submitted at least 5 days in advance of the absence)
- Death in the family
- Doctor and dental appointments (notes will be required for them to be marked as excused--parents are encouraged to make appointments outside of school hours)

- Court appearances (a note from the court is required upon return)
- A student will be excused for up to 5 days in cases where the student's parent/guardian is an active duty member of the uniformed services and has been called to duty for, is on leave from, or has immediately returned from deployment to a combat zone or combat-support postings. The Board of Education, in its discretion, may excuse a student for additional days relative to such leave or deployment.
- A student and the student's parent/guardian are responsible for obtaining assignments from the student's teachers prior to any excused absences and for ensuring that such assignments are completed by the student prior to his or her return to school.
- Other absences to be considered at discretion of administration on an individual basis.
- If a student's absence is excused or if a student is suspended from school, he/she will be permitted to make up all missed work, including homework and tests, for equivalent academic credit.

In the case of **pre-planned absences**, the principal has the authority to grant excused absences for the following types of pre-planned requests. Please notify the school prior to scheduling a pre-planned absence.

- College visit (documentation required)
- Career education visit (documentation required)
- Although not recommended, Family trips/Vacation (approval form must be submitted two weeks in advance)
- Participation in regional and/or national contests or special awards not endorsed by the IESA or IHSA.

All work from a pre-planned absence must be requested in advance and must be completed the day of the return to school. The administration has the authority to deny a student's request for a pre-planned absence. The student's attendance pattern, academic performance, and/or behavior history as documented by referrals to the principal's office will provide the basis for the decision.

No student will be eligible for an excused absence if the request for a pre-planned absence covers the final week of the semester.

All other absences not listed above, or pre-approved by the building administrator, will be considered unexcused.

Attendance patterns for all students will be monitored. The principal and/or staff will take appropriate action to investigate absences that are not excusable. The following procedures will be implemented once a student is absent.

For any student absence:

- If the school is not notified in advance or on the day of absence, a note from the parent/guardian will be required on the first day of the student's return to school.
- If a note or call is not received within **48 hours** of the absence, the absence will be marked unexcused and will remain as unexcused.
- The school will require documentation (i.e., physician, counselor, dentist, obituary, etc.) explaining the reason for the student's absence after 3 consecutive days of absence. All

assignments missed due to excused absences are expected to be made up unless noted otherwise.

After Five (5) days of absences:

- The school will send a letter of concern, which will include the attendance policy/regulations and information regarding the student's absences.
- Possible conference call between school administration and parent/guardian regarding students attendance.
- Referral to appropriate school-based teams may be made.
- The student's attendance patterns will be identified and discussed.
- Develop or revise plans to improve attendance.
- If absences continue, parents will be informed of possible referrals to outside agencies.

The school will maintain the following documentation and/or data.

- Document the dates of letters, policies, and regulations that are sent to parent
- Document phone calls and parental responses
- Document conference dates and parental responses
- Document attendance plans and any revisions
- Maintain student attendance records

The district's inadvertent failure to comply with any procedure set forth in this regulation, including but not limited to the notice provisions, will not protect the student from the consequences for excessive absence as provided in this policy.

Student attendance is critical to the learning process. **Truancy** is therefore a serious issue and will be dealt with in a serious manner by the school and district.

Students who miss 5% or more (9 or more days) of the prior 180 regular school days without valid cause (unexcused absences) are considered chronic truants. Students who are chronic truants will be offered support services and resources aimed at correcting the truancy issue.

If truancy persists after support services and other resources are made available, the school and district will take further action, including:

- Step 1- Referral to the Regional Office of Education #21 Partners Against Chronic Truancy Intervention Team
- Step 2- Meeting with School Personnel and Truancy Interventionist at the School
- Step 3- A Truancy Review Board meeting with School Personnel, Truancy Interventionist and States Attorney's Office.
- Step 4- Petition will be filed with the States Attorney's Office and Parent/Student will have to appear in Court.

A parent or guardian who knowingly and willfully permits a child to be truant is in violation of State law and may be convicted of a Class C misdemeanor, which carries a maximum penalty of thirty days in jail and/or a monetary fine. **Students in grades 7th-12th are subject to juvenile action.**

Late Arrival:

- If the student will be arriving late to school, it is the parent's/guardian's responsibility to notify the School Attendance Office. The call must be made prior to the student's arrival. If the reason for the late arrival is not a valid reason the student will receive an unexcused tardy on their record.