

OFFICE OF DAKOTA COUNTY ATTORNEY
JAMES C. BACKSTROM
COUNTY ATTORNEY



Dakota County Judicial Center
1560 Highway 55
Hastings, Minnesota 55033-2392
Phillip D. Prokopowicz, Chief Deputy
Karen A. Schaffer, First Assistant
Monica Jensen, Community Relations Director

Telephone
(651) 438-4438
FAX: (651) 438-4479 (Civil Division)
FAX: (651) 438-4500 (Criminal Division)
FAX: (651) 438-4499 (Juvenile/Admin Division)
E-mail: attorney@co.dakota.mn.us

Dear Parent or Guardian:

Date sent: _____

We all know that a good education is extremely important to a child, and regular attendance is an important part of getting an education. Studies have shown that a child with regular school attendance is more likely to be successful in school and in adult life. These same studies have shown that children with poor school attendance are more likely to drop out of school, be unemployed, depend on public assistance, and engage in criminal activity. Truancy affects not only the child, but the community as well.

Under Minnesota law, school attendance is mandatory. A middle or high school student who is absent from one or more class periods for seven or more school days without a lawful excuse may be petitioned to court as a "habitual truant".

Dakota County government and the county's school districts have collaborated on a revised program to combat truancy. This effort seeks to identify those students who are considered continually truant, educate the student and parent as to the social and legal implications of poor school attendance, and provide the parent and student with information on school and community resources to improve school attendance. The program also seeks to develop timely and effective procedures for petitioning to court those students who are habitually truant. Enclosed is the Dakota County truancy brochure, which explains in more detail the truancy law and the program, and some consequences the court may impose if a child is found to be, "habitually truant". Also enclosed is the school attendance policy.

_____ School administration has determined that your child has missed at least 3 class periods or days, contrary to the law and school policy. Your child's continued failure to comply with the law and attendance policies may result in your child being petitioned into court. In order to prevent possible court action, an individual or group meeting has been scheduled on _____ at _____ at the _____. Please check in at the Administrative offices of the school your child attends. You need to attend this meeting with your child. This is a meeting that includes representatives from the school and Dakota County. They will review the enclosed brochure with your child, explain the program, possible consequences for continued truancy, how to access assistance if needed, and answer any other questions you may have. If it is a group meeting, time will be available following the group meeting for parents and students to meet with school and or county representatives individually if you have questions specific to your child's attendance. Follow-up individual meetings may also need to occur between your child and school and county workers to make sure that progress towards better attendance continues.

If you have questions that cannot wait until the scheduled meeting, please call _____ at _____.

Name of School Administrator or School Truancy Representative _____ School Phone Number _____ Working together, we can combat truancy, insure the future success of our children and build a healthy and safe community.

Very truly yours,

JAMES C. BACKSTROM
DAKOTA COUNTY ATTORNEY

Criminal Division
Scott A. Hersey, Head
Victim/Witness Coordinator
Kelly Nicholson

Juvenile and Protective Services Division
Donald E. Bruce, Head
Office Manager
Patricia Ronken

Civil Division
Jay R. Stassen, Head
Child Support Enforcement Division
Sandra M. Torgerson, Head