

**A Message from Chisago
County Attorney
JANET REITER**

Dear Parents, Guardians, and Students:

The County Attorney's Office fully supports all teachers, counselors, and administrators in their quest to keep students in school in Chisago County. It is my belief that by addressing attendance concerns early, we are helping our youth become productive members of society and we are saving taxpayer dollars by doing so.

There is more to learning than taking tests and doing homework. The actual physical presence of children at school provides a valuable educational experience not taught in books.

To ensure compliance with Minnesota laws, Chisago County has implemented a comprehensive county-wide Truancy Protocol. It is our goal to keep children in school and to build a more educated populace. We are dedicated to the future of the youth in Chisago County and we hope that you will be just as committed to that goal.

Sincerely,



CONTACT INFORMATION

Chisago County Attorney's Office

313 North Main Street, Room 373 • Center City, MN
Phone: (651) 213-8400

Chisago Lakes High School

29400 Olinda Trail • Lindstrom, MN 55045
Phone: (651) 213-2500

Chisago Lakes Middle School

13750 Lake Boulevard • Lindstrom, MN 55045
Phone: (651) 213-2400

TRIO Wolf Creek

13750 Lake Boulevard • Lindstrom, MN 55045
10363 Liberty Lane • Chisago City, MN 55013
Phone: (651) 257-0576

North Branch Middle School

38431 Lincoln Trail • North Branch, MN 55056
Phone: (651) 674-1300

North Branch Area High School

38175 Grand Avenue • North Branch, MN 55056
Phone: (651) 674-1500

North Branch Alternative Programs

6644 Main Street • North Branch, MN 55056
Phone: (651) 674-1050

Rush City High School

51001 Fairfield Avenue • Rush City, MN 55069
Phone: (320) 358-4795

Forest Lake Area Schools

www.forestlake.k12.mn.us

**School Attendance:
It's the Law**

~

**Information on Truancy
and the
Consequences of
Skipping School**



**Janet Reiter,
Chisago County Attorney
313 North Main Street
Center City, MN 55012
(651) 213-8400**

School Attendance, It's the Law

Minnesota laws require that children attend school. *Truancy is a violation of state law.*

For students under 12, it is the parent's responsibility to ensure a child attends school. From age 12-18, it is presumed to be the responsibility of the child to get to school on a daily basis as required by law. Children aged 17-18 may be lawfully withdrawn from school, but only with parental permission. Otherwise, they are required to attend everyday. Students cannot independently "drop out" of school.

If a student is absent without lawful excuse 3 or more days or any part of the school day, the student is considered truant. The law also mandates that parents ensure that children attend school. There are potential criminal penalties if a parent fails to do so, including up to a jail sentence of 90 days and a fine of \$1,000.

Excused Absences:

- Illness
- Medical, dental, or mental health appointments
- Religious holidays as approved by the district
- Family emergencies or a death in the immediate family

Unexcused Absences:

- Oversleeping or missing the bus
- Employment
- Shopping (or appointments that can be scheduled outside of school hours.
- Babysitting for siblings or other children

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 future opportunities and truancy can be the beginning of a lifetime of problems.

Truancy Intervention Services

Educational success of each and every student in Chisago County is important to the entire community. Parents, schools, and the community are all partners in working toward increased school attendance. 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 3 unexcused absences, the school will begin the initial interventions. The school is legally required to notify the parent or guardian that the child is a "continuing truant" at three unexcused absences. A letter outlining the potential legal consequences as well as recommended actions for the parents, is sent to the child's home. The school may also refer the child to the County Attorney's Office for an Attendance Intervention Meeting (AIM).

If a child has **7 unexcused absences**, they are considered "habitually truant." The school is required to report that the student is in violation of the compulsory attendance laws.

Definition of truant

A **Habitual Truant** is a child under the age of 16 years who is absent from attendance at school without lawful excuse for seven school days or for one or more class periods

Consequences and Court Action

If a student continues to be truant after less restrictive interventions have failed, the matter will be referred to the Chisago County Attorney's Office for a petition to the juvenile court.

If the child is petitioned to court, the judge has the authority to administer a variety of consequences/dispositions that are binding on both the child and his/her parent, including the following:

- A child can be put on house arrest and cannot leave the residence unless at school or with a parent
- A child can be assigned community work service with additional hours assigned for future absences
- A child can be removed from his/her home and placed in a shelter or foster care (at the parent's expense)
- A child can lose his/her driving privileges until 18 years of age
- The Court can order that any necessary evaluations, treatment, and counseling services be completed
- In extreme cases, parents may be referred for possible criminal charges.