

LAUDERDALE COUNTY
TRUANCY PREVENTION PROGRAM
HANDBOOK

THIS PROJECT IS FUNDED UNDER AN AGREEMENT WITH
THE DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES THROUGH
GRANT FUNDS RECEIVED.

INTRODUCTION

This handbook is to, hopefully, better inform parents/guardians of students in the Lauderdale County School System about the Lauderdale County Truancy Prevention Program. It is designed to explain all aspects of the program.

Please read the entire handbook. It contains valuable information that can affect the student and the parent/guardian of the student throughout the life of the child's education. If you have any questions, please contact the Lauderdale County Truancy Prevention Specialists' office at 731-221-3321 or the Lauderdale County Juvenile Court at 731-635-3505.

IT IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE PARENT/CUSTODIAN TO BE CERTAIN THAT THEIR CHILD ATTENDS SCHOOL EACH DAY.

ABOUT THE LAW

Tennessee State Law (T.C.A. 49-6-3001) requires any person six (6) years of age (on or before September 30) to be enrolled in and attending a school until the age of 18 years or until a high school diploma or GED certificate is obtained. The compulsory attendance law also applies to five (5) year old children once they have attended school for six weeks pursuant to T.C.A. 49-6-3007(g). The law states that a child is allowed to miss five (5) days per school year without legal documentation.

WHAT COUNTS AS TRUANCY

-A day of school missed without proper documentation of an excused absence counts as truancy.

-For purposes of the Truancy Prevention Program and at the discretion of the principal/designee, ten (10) late check-ins and/or early check-outs may be reported to the Truancy Prevention Specialists.

HOW THE PROGRAM WORKS

If a child misses five (5) unexcused absences, the school system will mail a letter to and/or contact the parent/custodian of the child at the address on file for the child notifying them of the truant issues arising with their child.

If a child reaches eight (8) unexcused absences, the school system will notify the Juvenile Court through the Truancy Prevention Specialists. The Truancy Prevention Specialists will make contact with the parent/guardian of the child and request that the child and family participate in a meeting to discuss the issues surrounding the reasons for the child's truancy issues. Efforts will be made to assist the family in remedying the problem. Documentation of this meeting will be kept by the Truancy Prevention Specialists for every Child and Family Team Meeting held. The Truancy Program will be explained to the child and family and it will be expected that the truant issues will be resolved and the child will have no further problems. The Truancy Prevention policy will be reviewed with the parent/custodian and a copy of this handbook will be issued again to the parent/custodian.

The school system will continue to monitor the child's attendance and **if the child reaches twelve (12) unexcused absences**, the school will make an official Truancy Referral to the Juvenile Court through the Truancy Prevention Specialists. Court action will occur at this point. The Truancy Prevention Specialists may issue warrants against parents/guardians for the Educational Neglect of the child. In addition to the warrant against the parent, a petition against a child may also be signed. A recommendation for a driver's license revocation will be made to the school on any child aged 15 or older who has ten (10) consecutive or fifteen (15) total absences during a semester.

At the discretion of the principal/designee, ten (10) late check-ins and/or early check-outs may be reported to the Truancy Prevention Specialists at Juvenile Court.

WHAT KIND OF ABSENCES CAN BE EXCUSED

Per the Lauderdale County Board of Education, excused absences shall include:

1. Doctor/dental visit or hospital stay (doctor's note required);
2. Death or serious illness/injury in the student's immediate family;
3. Emergencies beyond the student's control as determined by school officials;
4. Religious holidays/observances recognized by the student's faith;
5. Legal court summons, not as a result of the student's misconduct;
6. College visits- maximum of 2 days for 11th and 12th graders only

- (written documentation from institution required)
7. One day before and one day upon the return of a parent or custodian deployed for active military service with proper documentation;
 8. Other valid reasons for which prior approval has been received.

Personal illness, without a doctor's note, will be counted as an unexcused absence. Unexcused absences only become an issue once five (5) or more days are accumulated.

The Lauderdale County Truancy Prevention Program, Juvenile Court, and Board of Education have your child's best interest in mind. It is imperative that every child receive an education. We are all here to assist you in any way possible to assure the best outcome for your child. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the Juvenile Court.

VALUABLE PHONE NUMBERS:

Lauderdale County Truancy Prevention Program- (731) 221-3321

Lauderdale County Board of Education- (731) 635-2941

Lauderdale County Juvenile Court- (731) 635-3505

Please feel free to give any of us a call if we can be of further assistance.