

District Complaint or Referral

Against Student

If a student fails to attend school without excuse on ten or more days or parts of days within a six-month period in the same school year, a district shall within ten school days of the student's tenth absence refer the student to a truancy court for truant conduct under Family Code 65.003(a). [See FEA]

Against Parent

The district may file a complaint against the student's parent in a county, justice, or municipal court for an offense under Education Code 25.093 if the district provides evidence of the parent's criminal negligence.

A court shall dismiss a complaint made by a district against a parent that does not comply with Education Code 25.0951; does not allege the elements required for the offense; is not timely filed, unless the district delayed the referral as provided below; or is otherwise substantively defective.

Delaying a Referral

A district may delay a referral of a student for truant conduct, or may choose to not refer a student for truant conduct, if the district:

1. Is applying truancy prevention measures to the student under Education Code 25.0915; and
2. Determines that the truancy prevention measures are succeeding and it is in the best interest of the student that a referral be delayed or not be made.

Education Code 25.0951

Referral Prohibited

A district may not refer a student to truancy court if the school determines that the student's truancy is the result of pregnancy, being in the state foster program, homelessness, or being the principal income earner for the student's family. [See Truancy Prevention Measures, below] *Education Code 25.0915(a-3)*

Filing Requirements

Each referral to truancy court for conduct described by Family Code 65.003(a) must:

1. Be accompanied by a statement from the student's school certifying that the school applied the truancy prevention measures to the student, and the measures failed to meaningfully address the student's school attendance; and
2. Specify whether the student is eligible for or receives special education services under Education Code Chapter 29, Subchapter A.

A truancy court shall dismiss a petition filed by a truant conduct prosecutor under Family Code 65.054, if the court determines that the district's referral:

1. Does not comply with the requirement above;
2. Does not satisfy the elements required for truant conduct;
3. Is not timely filed, unless the school district delayed the referral as provided above [see Delaying a Referral, above]; or
4. Is otherwise substantively defective.

Education Code 25.0915(b), (c)

Expunction of Records

An individual who was convicted of a truancy offense under former Education Code 25.094 or has had a complaint for a truancy offense dismissed is entitled to have the conviction or complaint and records relating to the conviction or complaint expunged.

Regardless of whether the individual has filed a petition for expunction, the court in which the individual was convicted or a complaint for a truancy offense was filed shall order the conviction, complaints, verdicts, sentences, and other documents relating to the offense, including any documents in the possession of a district or law enforcement agency, to be expunged from the individual's record. After entry of the order, the individual is released from all disabilities resulting from the conviction or complaint, and the conviction or complaint may not be shown or made known for any purpose.

Code of Crim. Proc. 45.0541

Attendance Officer

A board may select a school attendance officer. A school attendance officer also may be selected by two or more boards to serve their districts jointly. *Education Code 25.088*

In districts where no attendance officer has been selected, the superintendent and the peace officers in a district shall perform the duties of attendance officer, but no additional compensation shall be paid for the services. *Education Code 25.090* [See Peace Officers, below]

Powers and Duties

An attendance officer employed by a district who is not commissioned as a peace officer has the following powers and duties with respect to enforcement of compulsory school attendance requirements:

1. To investigate each case of a violation of the compulsory school attendance requirements referred to the attendance officer;
2. To enforce compulsory school attendance requirements by applying truancy prevention measures adopted under Education Code 25.0915 to the student and if the measures fail to meaningfully address the student's conduct:

- a. Referring the student to a truancy court if the student has unexcused absences for the amount of time specified under Family Code 65.003(a); and
- b. Filing a complaint in a county, justice, or municipal court against a parent who violates Education Code 25.093;
3. To monitor school attendance compliance by each student investigated by the officer;
4. To maintain an investigative record on each compulsory school attendance requirement violation and related court action and, at the request of a court, the board, or the Commissioner, to provide a record to the individual or entity requesting the record;
5. To make a home visit or otherwise contact the parent of a student who is in violation of compulsory school attendance requirements, except that the attendance officer may not enter a residence without permission of the parent or of the owner or tenant of the residence; and
6. At the request of a parent, to escort a student from any location to a school campus to ensure the student's compliance with compulsory school attendance requirements.

Education Code 25.091(b)

Peace Officers

A peace officer serving as an attendance officer has the following powers and duties concerning enforcement of compulsory school attendance requirements:

1. To investigate each case of a violation of compulsory school attendance requirements referred to the peace officer;
2. To enforce compulsory school attendance requirements by applying truancy prevention measures adopted under Education Code 25.0915 to the student and if the measures fail to meaningfully address the student's conduct:
 - a. Referring the student to a truancy court if the student has unexcused absences for the amount of time specified under Family Code 65.003(a); or
 - b. Filing a complaint in a county, justice, or municipal court against a parent who violates Education Code 25.093;
3. To serve court-ordered legal process;
4. To review school attendance records for compliance by each student investigated by the officer;

5. To maintain an investigative record on each compulsory school attendance requirement violation and related court action and, at the request of a court, the board, or the Commissioner, to provide a record to the individual or entity requesting the record; and
6. To make a home visit or otherwise contact the parent of a student who is in violation of compulsory school attendance requirements, except that a peace officer may not enter a residence without the permission of the parent of a student required to attend school or of the tenant or owner of the residence except to lawfully serve court-ordered legal process on the parent.

A peace officer who has probable cause to believe that a child is in violation of the compulsory attendance law may take the child into custody for the purpose of returning the child to the school campus of the child to ensure the child's compliance with compulsory attendance requirements.

Education Code 25.091(a), (b-1)

Truancy Prevention Measures

A district shall adopt truancy prevention measures designed to address student conduct related to truancy in the school setting before the student engages in conduct described by Family Code 65.003 and minimize the need for referrals to truancy court for conduct described by Family Code 65.003(a). *Education Code 25.0915(a)*

A district shall take one or more of the following actions as a truancy prevention measure:

1. Impose:
 - a. A behavior improvement plan on the student that must be signed by an employee of the school, that the district has made a good faith effort to have signed by the student and the student's parent or guardian, and that includes:
 - (1) A specific description of the behavior that is required or prohibited for the student;
 - (2) The period for which the plan will be effective, not to exceed 45 school days after the date the contract becomes effective; or
 - (3) The penalties for additional absences, including additional disciplinary action or the referral of the student to a truancy court; or

- b. School-based community service; or
2. Refer the student to counseling, mediation, mentoring, a teen court program, community-based services, or other in-school or out-of-school services aimed at addressing the student's truancy. A referral may include participation by the child's parent or guardian if necessary.

A school district shall offer additional counseling to a student and may not refer the student to truancy court if the school determines that the student's truancy is the result of:

1. Pregnancy;
2. Being in the state foster program;
3. Homelessness; or
4. Being the principal income earner for the student's family.

If a student fails to attend school without excuse on three or more days or parts of days within a four-week period but does not fail to attend school for the time described by Education Code 25.0951(a), the district shall initiate truancy prevention measures on the student.

Education Code 25.0915

Minimum Standards

The minimum standards for the truancy prevention measures implemented by a district under Education Code 25.0915 include:

1. Identifying the root cause of the student's unexcused absences and actions to address each cause;
2. Maintaining ongoing communication with students and parents on the actions to be taken to improve attendance;
3. Establishing reasonable timelines for completion of the truancy prevention measure; and
4. Establishing procedures to notify the admission, review, and dismissal committee or the Section 504 committee of attendance issues relating to a student with a disability and ensure that the committee considers whether the student's attendance issues warrant an evaluation, a reevaluation, and/or modifications to the student's individualized education program or Section 504 plan, as appropriate.

19 TAC 129.1043

Best Practices

A district shall consider the following best practices for truancy prevention measures:

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1. Develop an attendance policy that clearly outlines requirements related to truancy in accordance with Education Code, Chapter 25, Subchapter C, and communicate this information to parents at the beginning of the year.
2. Create a culture of attendance that includes training staff to talk with students and parents about the attendance policy and the root causes of unexcused absences.
3. Create incentives for perfect attendance and improved attendance.
4. Educate students and their families on the positive impact of school attendance on performance.
5. Provide opportunities for students and parents to address causes of absence and/or truancy with district staff and link families to relevant community programs and support.
6. Develop collaborative partnerships, including planning, referral and cross-training opportunities, between appropriate school staff, attendance officers, program-related liaisons, and external partners, such as court representatives, community and faith-based organizations, state or locally funded community programs for truancy intervention or prevention, and law enforcement to assist students.
7. Determine root causes of unexcused absences and review campus- and district-level data on unexcused absences to identify systemic issues that affect attendance.
8. Use existing school programs such as Communities in Schools, 21st Century Community Learning Centers, restorative discipline, and positive behavior interventions and supports (PBIS) to provide students and their parents with services.
9. At the beginning of each school year, conduct a needs assessment and identify and list, or map, services and programs available within the district and the community that a school, a student, or a student's parent or guardian may access to address the student's barriers to attendance and make the information available to staff, students, and parents. The information must include, but is not limited to:
 - a. Services for pregnant and parenting students;
 - b. Services for students experiencing homelessness;
 - c. Services for students in foster care;

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- d. Federal programs including, but not limited to, Title 1, Part A, of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act;
 - e. State programs including, but not limited to, state compensatory education programs;
 - f. Dropout prevention programs and programs for “at risk” youth;
 - g. Programs that occur outside of school time;
 - h. Counseling services;
 - i. Tutoring programs and services available at no or low cost;
 - j. Mental health services;
 - k. Alcohol and substance abuse prevention and treatment programs;
 - l. Mentoring programs and services;
 - m. Juvenile justice services and programs;
 - n. Child welfare services and programs;
 - o. Other state or locally funded programs for truancy prevention and intervention; and
 - p. Other supportive services that are locally available for students and families through faith-based organizations, local governments, and community-based organizations.
10. After identifying and listing, or mapping, services available in the district and community, school districts should target any new resources, programs, or services to gaps in services identified during the needs assessment.
11. School districts should ensure that personnel, including truancy prevention facilitators or juvenile case managers, attendance officers, McKinney-Vento (homeless) liaisons, foster care liaisons, Title IX coordinators, 504 coordinators, pregnancy and parenting coordinators, dropout prevention coordinators, special education staff, and other appropriate student services personnel, meet to contribute to the needs assessment, discuss opportunities to work together, and identify strategies to coordinate both internally and externally to address students’ attendance barriers.

In determining services offered to students identified in Education Code 25.091(a-3), a district shall consider:

1. Offering an optional flexible school day program and evening and online alternatives;
2. Working with businesses that employ students to help students coordinate job and school responsibilities; and
3. Offering before school, after school, and/or Saturday prevention or intervention programs or services that implement best and promising practices.

19 TAC 129.1045

Sanctions

An aggrieved party may file a written complaint with the Texas Education Agency (TEA) regarding an allegation that a district has failed to comply with Education Code 25.0915 or 19 Administrative Code Chapter 129, Subchapter BB related to truancy prevention measures. TEA may request that a district provide documentation regarding its compliance in response to a complaint. If, after a review of this documentation or a district's failure to provide this documentation, TEA determines that the district is not in compliance with required truancy prevention measure provisions, TEA may issue a preliminary report of its findings to the district in accordance with 19 Administrative Code 157.1122 (Notice). A district may request in writing an informal review of TEA's preliminary report in accordance with 19 Administrative Code 157.1123 (Informal Review). Following the informal review, or if no informal review is requested by the deadline, a final report will be issued. The commissioner of education may implement any sanction listed in Education Code 39.102(a) against a district found to be out of compliance with Education Code 25.0915 or 19 Administrative Code Chapter 129, Subchapter BB. *19 TAC 129.1047*

**Truancy Prevention
Facilitator or
Juvenile Case
Manager**

A district shall employ a truancy prevention facilitator or juvenile case manager to implement the truancy prevention measures required by Education Code 25.0915 and any other effective truancy prevention measures as determined by the district or campus. At least annually, the truancy prevention facilitator shall meet to discuss effective truancy prevention measures with a case manager or other individual designated by a truancy court to provide services to students of the district in truancy cases.

Instead of employing a truancy prevention facilitator, a school district may designate an existing district employee or juvenile case manager to implement the truancy prevention measures and any other effective truancy prevention measures as determined by the district or campus.

Education Code 25.0915(d), (e)

On approval of the board, a district may employ or agree in accordance with Government Code Chapter 791, with any appropriate governmental entity to jointly employ or to jointly contribute to the costs of another entity employing:

1. A case manager to provide services in cases involving juvenile offenders who are before a court consistent with the court's statutory powers or referred to a court by a school administrator or designee for misconduct that would otherwise be within the court's statutory powers prior to a case being filed, with the consent of the juvenile and the juvenile's parents or guardians; or
2. One or more juvenile case managers who shall assist the court in administering the court's juvenile docket and in supervising the court's orders in juvenile cases, and may provide prevention services to a child considered at risk of entering the juvenile justice system, and intervention services to juveniles engaged in misconduct before cases are filed, excluding traffic offenses.

A district that jointly employs a case manager in accordance with Government Code Chapter 791 employs a juvenile case manager for purposes of Code of Criminal Procedure Chapter 102 and Government Code Chapter 102.

Code of Criminal Procedure 45.056(a), (c)

Funding

A district may apply to the criminal justice division of the governor's office for reimbursements of the costs of employing a juvenile case manager. The district may pay the salary and benefits of a juvenile case manager and the costs of training, travel, office supplies, and other necessary expenses relating to the position of the juvenile case manager from the local truancy prevention and diversion fund established under Local Government Code 134.156. *Code of Criminal Procedure 45.056(b)*

Priority

A juvenile case manager employed jointly under Government Code Chapter 791 shall give priority to cases brought under Education Codes 25.093 (parent contributing to nonattendance). *Code of Criminal Procedure 45.056(e)*

Rules

The board of a district that employs a juvenile case manager shall adopt and implement reasonable rules for juvenile case managers that provide a code of ethics, and for the enforcement of the code of ethics; appropriate educational preservice and in-service training standards for juvenile case managers; and training in:

1. The role of the juvenile case manager;

2. Case planning and management;
3. Applicable procedural and substantive law;
4. Courtroom proceedings and presentation;
5. Services to at-risk youth under Family Code Chapter 264, Subchapter D;
6. Local programs and services for juveniles and methods by which juveniles may access those programs and services; and
7. Detecting and preventing abuse, exploitation, and neglect of juveniles.
8. The juvenile case manager shall timely report to the judge who signed the order or judgment and, on request, to the judge assigned to the case or the presiding judge any information or recommendations relevant to assisting the judge in making decisions that are in the best interest of the child.

Code of Criminal Procedure 45.056(f)–(i)