

RECOMMENDED PRE-REFERRAL PROCEDURES – TRUANCY/ATTENDANCE BOARD

Background

1. At the first indication of serious non-attendance:
 - 1.1 Attempt to meet with the student and parents/guardians to explain expectations.
 - 1.2 Try to identify the reasons why the student is not attending. Truancy may be a visible sign of other problems.
 - 1.3 Provide support, encouragement, and/or incentives as appropriate.
 - 1.4 Suspensions or expulsion are not deemed appropriate solutions for attendance problems. If suspensions are considered, only in-school suspensions are supported by Alberta Education.
 - 1.5 Continue to document all absences and related interventions (meetings, phone calls, counselling, class changes, etc.).
 - 1.6 Send a letter to the parent/guardian expressing concern regarding non-attendance and indicate how this is effecting the student’s achievement.

2. If no improvement is noted:
 - 2.1 Send a letter to parents/guardians including:
 - 2.1.1 a comparison of the number of days to the percentage of instructional time missed;
 - 2.1.2 interventions that have been tried;
 - 2.1.3 related concerns specific to current achievement, where appropriate;
 - 2.1.4 information advising the parents of the legal requirement for the student to attend school: e.g. *School Act*, Section 13(1) Compulsory Education which states,
“An individual who (a) is eligible to be enrolled in a school, (b) at September 1 in a year is 6 years of age or older, and (c) is younger than 16 years of age, shall attend school.”
 - 2.1.5 information advising the parent of the Principal’s intention to involve the Division’s Attendance Officer and possible referral to the Attendance Board if attendance does not improve;
 - 2.1.6 a request for a meeting including the student/parent; and
 - 2.1.7 a copy of the letter to the Division Attendance Officer (Associate Superintendent of Supports for Students).

3. Conduct a meeting with the student and parent and consider the following as interventions:

- 3.1 Suggest that health issues be ruled out through a medical examination.
 - 3.2 Consider a referral to the school counsellor, FSLW, or other outside agency (mental health agencies, Alberta Health Services - Addictions and Mental Health, or Child and Family Services) depending on the student/parent needs.
 - 3.3 Establish an attendance contract with the student.
 - 3.4 Invite the Division Attendance Officer to attend the meeting (this is usually most effective with younger children).
 - 3.5 Consider alternative programming options, class or schedule changes, etc.
 - 3.6 Explain the authority of the Attendance Board and possible outcomes should there be a referral and hearing
 - 3.7 Set a review date.
4. Review attendance at/prior to the review date set. If there still are major concerns:
 - 4.1 Contact the Division Attendance Officer (Associate Superintendent of Supports for Students) to initiate a Notice of Referral to the provincial Attendance Board.
 - 4.2 Include all relevant information, reports, statements, and correspondence.
 - 4.3 Inform the student and parent that the referral has been initiated.

Notes

The Attendance Board, as a provision of the *School Act*, offers school authorities a fair and comprehensive method by which to:

- determine the underlying and often complex issues surrounding non-attendance;
- seek a resolution; or
- apply sanctions, where warranted.

According to the *School Act*, section 126(2)

“Before referring a matter respecting the attendance of a student to the Attendance Board a board shall ensure: (a) that the student has been advised by the board or the attendance officer of the student’s duty to attend school in accordance with section 13, and (b) that all reasonable efforts have been made by the board or the attendance officer to enforce the student’s attendance at school.”

The Attendance Board has discretionary authority on whether to hear a matter referred to it by a school authority.

The Attendance Board will not accept referrals for students over the age of 16 years.

Information included in the Notice of Referral may include past history.

Referrals are NOT limited to the current school year and past patterns of non-attendance and interventions are important to consider in referral documentation.

References: Section 1, 12, 13, 14, 15, 18, 20, 22, 60, 61, 113, 126 *School Act*