Attendance Manual

Attendance Procedures and Programs

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Okeechobee County School District 700 S.W. 2nd Avenue Okeechobee, FL 34974

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OCSB Attendance Procedures

Table of Contents

Policy Statement	3
Attendance Terms & Definitions	3
School Attendance and Student Absences	4
Coding for Absences and Attendance Procedures for School Sites	8
Attendance Interventions Chart	9
SIT Meetings	12
Enforcement of School Attendance Guidelines	
Learnfare/Habitually Truant	14
Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles	15
Attachment A - Letter Requesting Parent Note (K-8)	17
Attachment B - 5 Day Letter	18
Attachment C - 10 Day Letter (Grades K-5)	19
Attachment D - 10 Day Letter (Grades 6-8)	20
Attachment E - 10 Day Letter (Grades 9-12)	21
Attachment F - 9 Day Letter (Grades K-8)	22
Attachment G - 9 Day Letter (Grades 9-12)	23
Attachment H - Compulsory School Attendance Law	24
Attachment I - Student's Intent to Withdraw from School Form	25
Attachment J - Student Information Team Meeting Form	26
Attachment K - Deferral for Nietrict Truancy Staffing Form	27

Policy Statement

It is the position of the Okeechobee County School Board that students must attend school on a regular and timely basis to maximize educational opportunities offered in Okeechobee County Schools. Recognizing this can be achieved successfully through combined efforts of parents and schools, this policy outlines strategies and interventions to maximize student attendance thereby creating more opportunities for student success.

This policy is applicable for all K-12 students in Okeechobee County. The superintendent may approve exceptions to this policy for special programs for enhancement purposes.

Attendance Terms and Definitions

<u>Absence</u>: Absence is the nonattendance of a student on days school is in session. Any student must be counted absent who is not physically present at school or at a school activity as defined under the compulsory attendance law.

<u>Attendance</u>: Attendance is the presence of a student on days school is in session. The student must be actually at the school to which he or she has been assigned or present at an educational activity (prior principal approval) which constitutes part of the approved school program for that student.

<u>Habitual Truant</u>: A student who has fifteen (15) unexcused absences within 90 calendar days, with or without the knowledge or justifiable consent of his or her parent or legal guardian, and who is subject to compulsory school attendance laws.

<u>Membership</u>: Membership is the assignment by a school district of a student to a grade or program in which regular attendance is taken.

I. School Attendance

Florida Statute 1003.21 requires that all students between the ages of six (6) and sixteen (16) attend school regularly. Students who have attained the age of sixteen (16) and who have not graduated are subject to compulsory school attendance until a formal declaration of intent to withdraw, signed by student and parent/guardian, is filed with the district school board. Students are obligated to attend one hundred eighty (180) days of school each year. It is the responsibility of the parent or guardian to see that this law is obeyed.

It is important to note that failure to attend school in a regular and timely fashion hinders the educational process. In addition, truancy and poor performance have a direct relationship to juvenile delinquency and destructive behavior, not to mention the disproportionate percentage of juvenile crime that occurs during school hours. Each parent or legal guardian of a child within the compulsory attendance age is responsible for the child's school attendance as required by law.

Notification of *Loco Parentis*

In cases in which a student is not residing with his/her parent(s) or guardian(s), the parent of the student must designate, in writing, the adult person(s) with whom the pupil resides who stands in *loco parentis*, so that the pupil may be admitted to or continue in school. This statement must be notarized and presented to the principal for acceptance.

II. Student Absences - Grades K-12

A. Excused Absences

- 1. Absences due to the following reasons will be excused:
 - Illness or injury of the student
 - Illness or injury to the student's immediate family necessitating the student's absence
 - Death to a member of the student's family necessitating the student's absence

- Recognized religious holidays of the specific faith of a student
- Doctor and dental appointments of the student
- Pre-arranged absences of educational value and with the principal's approval
- Subpoena or forced absence by any law enforcement agency
- Major disaster that would justify absence in the judgment of the administration
- Head lice, a maximum of two days per incident
- 2. It is the responsibility of the parent(s) or guardian to provide a written statement or oral notification, oral notifications are to be documented, indicating the reason for the absences within two (2) days of the student's return to school. Denial of an excused absence based on this time frame will require documentation of parental contact to inform the parent that the absence remains unexcused after the two day period (Refer to Section V). The written statement must include the following information for each absence:
 - Date the excuse is written
 - Date(s) of the absence(s)
 - · Full name of the student
 - Reason for the absence
 - Daytime telephone number of parent or guardian
 - Signature of parent or guardian
- 3. An excused absence should be coded as an "E" for reporting purposes.

Final determination on whether an absence is excused or unexcused is the responsibility of the principal. Any planned absences, other than medical appointments, must be approved in advance by the principal.

B. Unexcused Absences

- Any absence which is not justified by the parent or guardian according to allowable excuses (see above) or for which the reason is unknown
- Not attending class while on a school campus

- Final determination on whether an absence is excused or unexcused is the responsibility of the principal
- An unexcused absence should be coded as an "U" for reporting purposes

Accumulated Unexcused Tardies and Early Releases - Grades K-8

Punctuality is necessary for a student to take full advantage of available educational opportunities. If a student is not in the classroom when the tardy bell rings, he/she will be classified tardy. An early release is defined as any release prior to the regular dismissal time. Any student in grade K-8, who accumulates any combination of five unexcused tardies and/or unexcused early releases (not including documented medical/dental appointments or other authorized reasons that constitute an excused absence), shall be deemed absent (unexcused) for one school day. A parent/guardian request for early release or late arrival shall be considered excused with documentation in accordance with procedures for excused absences. Tardies and early releases that are deemed excused will not accumulate towards an absence. An unexcused tardy or early release will be coded as a "1" for reporting purposes.

C. Absences of Students Grade 9 - 12

 In order for a student to earn credit in a course, a student should not be absent more than nine days. A student who exceeds nine absences in a course may earn credit in that class by earning a passing grade in at least one of the two nine weeks grading periods, and pass a comprehensive semester exam for that course.

D. Suspensions

- 1. Out-of-School Suspension
 - When deemed necessary by the principal, a student may be prohibited from attending their home school.

- To maintain academic progress, students are encouraged to make up work even if full credit will not be awarded.
- All make-up work should be completed within one week following return from absence. This deadline may be extended with the approval of the teacher or principal.
- All students who are suspended from school may take nine week or semester exams for full credit following the period of suspension.
- Florida Law 984.13 provides authority for a law enforcement officer to take into custody a child who is suspended or expelled and not in the presence of the parent or guardian.
- An out-of-school suspension should be coded as an "O" for reporting purposes.

2. In-School Suspension

- Students in In-School Suspension will be allowed to make up work.
- Students will not be counted absent during In-School Suspension.
- An In-School Suspension should be coded as an "I" for reporting purposes.

E. Field Trips

- A student on a field trip will not be marked absent if approved by the principal prior to trip.
- A field trip should be coded as an "F" for reporting purposes.

F. Homebound

- Students who are on permanent Homebound need to be placed in Homebound homeroom with proper withdrawal (WO1) and re-entry (RO1) codes.
- Hospital/Homebound (H) student scheduled in a hospital program in another district pursuant to the rule regarding alternatelyassigned students, 6A-6.03020(6), FAC.
- Students who have been approved to come to school as they are able (intermittent homebound) code all absences once approved (M)

III. Coding for Absences/Tardies

Use the following codes for reporting purposes:

Туре	Code
Excused Absence	E
Excused - Headlice	E-H
Excused - Court	E-C
Excused - Medical Appointment	E-M
Excused - Illness	E-I
Excused - Death in Family	E-D
Excused - Bus Issue	E-B
Excused - Justified Disaster	E-J
Excused - Planned Absence	E-P
Excused - Religious Holiday	E-R
Unexcused Absence	U
Out of School Suspension	0
In-School Suspension	I
Field Trip (Not counted as an absence)	F
In School Activity	S
Hospital/Homebound	
Permanent	Н
Intermittent	M
Excused Tardy	Т
Excused Early Release (Checkout)	С
UnexcusedTardy/Early Release	1
Unexcused Absence due to accumulated	2
unexcused tardies/early checkouts	

IV. Attendance Procedures for School Sites

- A. As prescribed by DOE, the district will define a particular time of the day that daily attendance will be taken.
 - First Period at OFC, NEHS, YMS, and OMS
 - Second Period for OHS
 - Between 8:15 am and 8:45 am for elementary schools
- B. The school attendance clerk or data processor will record the dates and times of students arriving late or leaving early by following procedures set by the principal.
 - A parent or parent designee must sign for a student when checking out.
 - In grades PreK-8, a parent or parent designee must sign-in a child who is arriving tardy. Tardies will be determined excused or unexcused. Tardies will be excused according to reasons permitted for excused absences.
 - Parents should bring photo identification to sign out their child.
 - No student will be released to individuals other than who is designated in the school's database. Parents may edit in person those in the database.

V. Attendance Interventions

# Days	Action or Intervention	Person Responsible	Attachment(s)
Absent			
1 Day and 2	<u>All Grades</u>		
Days	 Teacher will ask the student 	Primary or Homeroom	Attachment A
	for a parent note. The	Teacher	Letter Requesting
	teacher will submit note to		Parent Note
	the office. If no note exists,		
	the teacher will staple		
	request letter in student's		
	agenda for Grades K-8 and		
	high school teachers will		
	continue to ask for a note.		
	Teachers are responsible to		
	check agendas for notes and		
	submit copies to office on a		

Formatted: Justified

OCSB Attendance Procedures

Three	daily basis. Contact will be made with the parent if documentation is not provided by the end of the second day of the student's return to school. Grades K-8	School-Based Attendance Person	
Unexcused Days	A SIT meeting may be scheduled immediately if prior history of truancy.	Guidance Counselor	See SIT Meeting, page 12
	d phone system meets the contract conversation between parent or gu		
Four Consecutive Days without school's knowledge of reason	All Grades • Parent/guardian contact will be made.	School-Based Attendance Person	
Five Consecutive Days during the first week of school	All Grades • Home Visit to inquire of reasons for absence	District Attendance Officer	
Five Unexcused Days	All Grades • A computer- generated letter is mailed to parent.	School-Based Attendance Person	Attachment B - 5 Day Letter
	The school may refer to Director of Student Services for a Truancy Staffing if student has previous history of excessive absences and SIT Meeting.	Guidance Counselor	
	 If a district level 		

OCSB Attendance Procedures

	Truancy Staffing has been held, once the point of a 5-day letter is reached during a new school year, the district may proceed with a truancy court referral.		
Nine Absences	All Grades A computer-generated letter is mailed to parent.	School-Based Attendance Person	Attachments F,G 9 day letter
Ten Unexcused Days	All Grades A computer- generated letter is mailed to parent. Contact is made with the parent via personal or telephone conference. A SIT meeting is scheduled if for the first time. Referral (mandatory) is made to Director of Student Services for a Truancy Staffing if student has previous history of excessive absences and SIT Meeting.	Attendance Person Principal or designee	Attachments C, D, E - 10 Day Letter Attachment J - Referral for Staffing
Fifteen Unexcused Days	All Grades • A District Truancy Staffing is conducted with representation from Law Enforcement, School District Personnel, parent, and student • A decision may be made	District Staff School-Site Staff	

to file a petition in truancy court		
 Procedures for notification to DCF of Learnfare recipients. Age 14-17 	School Principal	See Learnfare page 14
• Student information is sent to Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles		See DHSMV, page 15

Note: This chart is only a guide. The principal, guidance counselor, or district attendance officer, through communication with the student or parent, may schedule a SIT meeting or refer to staffing when current interventions are not improving attendance.

VI. Student Information Team (SIT) Meetings

As required by Florida Statute 232, a SIT meeting must be conducted if a student has five (5) unexcused absences within a calendar month or ten (10) unexcused absences within a 90 calendar day period. In addition a SIT meeting may be called at the principal's discretion.

A. Participants of a SIT Meeting

The meeting should include the student, parents and or guardians, student's counselor, teachers, and other program specialists if needed.

B. Purpose of a SIT Meeting

The meeting brings together parties that may offer assistance to help improve attendance. The purpose of a SIT meeting is to determine reasons/causes for unexcused absences and to begin interventions to address truancy. School Personnel initiate interventions with the student and the family at the time of the SIT meeting.

Educational interventions resulting from the SIT meeting may include:

- Academic Assessment or Review
- Modification/Change of Curriculum
- Modification/Change of Schedule
- Educational Counseling

• Referral to Service Agencies

C. Procedures for On-Going Attendance Problems

If a school-level SIT meeting has been held for truancy, once the point of a five day letter is reached during a new school year or new semester, the school may proceed to a referral for a district-level Truancy Staffing and will not need to repeat the school-based SIT meeting. In an attempt to correct the attendance problem, parent notification is required prior to this referral.

If a district-level Truancy Staffing has been held, once the point of a five day letter is reached during a new school year or new semester, the district may proceed with a truancy court referral. In an attempt to correct the attendance problem, parent notification is required prior to this referral.

Note: Form O-EX-39 should be completed at this meeting

From this point forward, there will be ongoing communication between the Student Services Office and staff at the student's school to review, implement, and revise strategies.

VII. Statute 1003.26 Enforcement of School Attendance Guidelines

It is the policy of the state that each district school superintendent be responsible for enforcing school attendance of all students subject to the compulsory school age in the school district.

If a student subject to compulsory school attendance will not comply with attempts to enforce school attendance, the parent or the district school superintendent or his/her designee shall refer the case to the case staffing committee pursuant to s.984.12. and the district school superintendent or his/her designee may file a truancy petition pursuant to the procedures in s. 984.151.

The judge may:

- 1. Order the parent to participate in parenting classes.
- 2. Order the parent to attend school with the child.
- 3. Order community service hours at the school for child or parent.
- 4. Refer the child/parent for counseling or other services as appropriate.
- 5. Impose fines for each day of school missed in accordance with 1003.27(7)(d).

The judge will continue to require the child to be present for hearings periodically until the case is resolved or the child becomes ineligible. Additional sanctions may be ordered for the child or parents if attendance does not improve.

VIII. Learnfare/Habitually Truant

The School Board of Okeechobee County and the Department of Children and Families have a cooperative agreement in place that addresses statutory responsibilities and implements procedures regarding the Learnfare Program. Learnfare allows the sanctioning of parents who receive cash assistance for children if those children are school age and are excessively absent from school.

Section 414.1251(1), Florida Statutes, requires DCF to reduce the temporary cash assistance for an eligible parent's dependent child or for an eligible teenage participant who is not exempt from school attendance requirements and who has been identified as a habitual truant or as a dropout.

Pursuant to section 1003.27 (2) (b), Florida Statutes, a habitual truant is defined as a student who has accumulated 15 unexcused absences within 90 calendar days with or without the knowledge or consent of the student's parent or legal guardian.

School districts will notify DCF when a Learnfare eligible child is either a habitual truant or a dropout. At that time, DCF staff will review the case record to determine if good cause exists for failure to participate. If good cause does not exist, the sanction will be imposed and the parent will receive a notice of case action to reflect that the child's needs have been removed from the benefit amount. If the parent does not agree, DCF procedures allow the parent or guardian of a habitually truant or dropout child to request a fair hearing. The child

may be reinstated or added back to the case under the following circumstances: (1) following the truant child's substantially improved attendance during a subsequent grading period; or (2) after the dropout child enrolls in a public school, receives a high school diploma or its equivalent, enrolls in preparation for General Educational Development Tests, or enrolls in other educational activities approved by the district school board.

IX. Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles Notification Procedures

Section 1003.27 (b) Florida Statutes - The district school superintendent must report to the DHSMV habitual truants and dropouts. A truant or dropout may have their driver's license privilege taken away. In addition, the DHSMV may withhold issuing a permit. The following procedures should be followed according to law in referring students to DHSMV for missing 15 unexcused days of school:

- 1. The Administrative Assistant of I.T. will forward the information on students 14 to 17 years old missing 15 unexcused days of school.
- 2. DHSMV will mail an Intent to Suspend letter to the student.
- 3. The student then has 15 calendar days to schedule a hearing to document hardship. The hearing, which will be heard and processed by the principal, must take place within 30 days. The school principal must immediately notify the district contact of a student's request for a waiver. This urgency stems from Florida law stating that the district contact must notify the DHSMV within 24 hours after a student's request for a hearing.
- 4. The hearing must be conducted within 30 days. The principal must notify the district contact of the outcome of the hearing as notification must be given to DHSMV within 24 hours.
- 5. If no response and/or no improvement in attendance have been made, the DHSMV will send an Order of Suspension letter to the truant student.

OCSB Attendance Procedures

Students must attend school for 30 consecutive days without an unexcused absence to have their license reinstated. The principal of the school will provide students with a paper document certifying no unexcused absences within the past 30 days. The signature on this document must be notarized or accompanied by the official school seal.

Attachment A Sample Letter Requesting Parent Note Grades K-8

Dear Parent:
Florida Statute 1003.26 states, "each parent or guardian must justify each absence and the school must evaluate each justification based upon policies that define an excused and unexcused absence."
According to our records your child, was absent, and no record of a phone call or note by you was received. Please complete the following and return it to school.
Student's Name :
Date of Absence:
Reason for Absence:
Parent/Guardian Signature:
To avoid this extra paperwork, we ask that you please call the school the day your child is absent. If a telephone is unavailable to you please write a note.
Sincerely,

Attachment B Sample 5-Day Letter All Grades

(Name) (Address) (Date)
Our records indicate that your son/daughter has been absent from school excessively. Five (5) or more of the absences are unexcused. Our records indicate that the school attendance clerk, and/or automated phone service has contacted your home.
Florida Statute 1003.21 mandates compulsory attendance between the ages of 6 and 16. Florida Statute 1003.24 mandates that parents are responsible for the attendance of their school-age children. The superintendent of schools is required by law, F S 1001.53, to enforce the compulsory school attendance laws.
Learnfare: Important notice for parents who are recipients of cash assistance from DCF. If your child is a habitual truant or dropout, DCF may reduce the cash assistance received for that child.
Please contactat (863-462-5) to justify these absences so that no further action is necessary.
Sincerely,
Principal

Attachment C Sample 10-Day Letter Grades K-5

(Name) (Address) (Date)
Our records indicate your son/daughter has ten (10) unexcused absences. Regular attendance is an essential factor in succeeding at school. Please be advised that your child's unexcused absences will impact his/her grades through a reduction in credit earned for missed assignments.
Florida Statute 1003.21 mandates compulsory attendance between the ages of 6 and 16. Florida statute 1003.24 mandates that parents are responsible for the attendance of their school-age children. The superintendent of schools is required by law, FS 1001.53, to enforce the compulsory school attendance laws.
Learnfare: Important notice for parents who are recipients of cash assistance from DCF. If your child is a habitual truant or dropout, DCF may reduce the cash assistance received for that child.
Please contact at (863-462-5) to justify these absences so that no further action is necessary.
Sincerely,
Principal

Attachment D Sample 10-Day Letter Grades 6-8

(Name) (Address) (Date)
Our records indicate your son/daughter has ten (10) unexcused absences. Regular attendance is an essential factor in succeeding at school. Please be advised that your child's unexcused absences will impact his/her grades through a reduction in credit earned for missed assignments.
Florida Statute 1003.21(c) requires a student who attains the age of sixteen (16) be subject to compulsory attendance unless he/she files a formal declaration of intent to terminate school enrollment with the district school board. This must be signed by the student's parent. In addition to impacting the student's future earning potential, the Department of Highway and Motor Vehicles may withhold the issuance of or suspend your child's driver's license for non-attendance.
Learnfare: Important notice for parents who are recipients of cash assistance from DCF. If your child is a habitual truant or dropout, DCF may reduce the cash assistance received for that child.
Please contact at (863-462-5) to justify these absences so that no further action is necessary.
Sincerely,
Principal

Attachment E Sample 10-Day Letter Grades 9-12

To the Parent or Guardian of:

(Name)

(Address) (Date)
Our records indicate your son/daughter has ten (10) unexcused absences. Regular attendance is an essential factor in succeeding at school. Please be advised that your child's unexcused absences will impact his/her grades through a reduction in credit earned for missed assignments and, therefore, may result in failure to earn credit for a course.
Florida Statute 1003.21 (C) requires a student who attains the age of sixteen (16) be subject to compulsory attendance unless he/she files a formal declaration of intent to terminate school enrollment with the district school board. This must be signed by the student's parent. In addition to impacting the student's future earning potential, the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles may withhold the issuance of or suspend your child's driver's license for non-attendance.
Learnfare: Important notice for parents who are recipients of cash assistance from DCF. If your child is a habitual truant or dropout, DCF may reduce the cash assistance received for that child.
Please contact at (863-462-5) to justify these absences so that no further action is necessary.
Sincerely,
Principal

Attachment F Sample 9-Day Letter Grades K-8

To the Parent or Guardian of: (Name) (Address) (Date)
School board policy states that more than nine absences in a school year are considered excessive, and medical verification of illness must be provided after that point. This policy is based upon the belief that we cannot provide the best education possible for children who are excessively absent from school.
Our records indicate that your child accumulated nine days of absences in this school year. Therefore, any further absences will require that you provide the school with verification of illness from a medical doctor or professional for each absence. Failure to provide medical verification will result in the absence being unexcused.
Please contact me at to schedule an appointment concerning your child's attendance or the attendance policy.
Sincerely,
Principal

Attachment G Sample 9-Day Letter Grades 9-12

(Name) (Address) (Date)
School board policy states that more than nine absences in a semester are considered excessive, and medical verification of illness must be provided after that point. This policy is based upon the belief that we cannot provide the best education possible for children who are excessively absent from school.
Our records indicate that your child accumulated nine days of absences in this semester. Therefore, any further absences will require that you provide the school with verification of illness from a medical doctor or professional for each absence. Failure to provide medical verification will result in the absence being unexcused.
Please contact me at to schedule an appointment concerning your child's attendance or the attendance policy.
Sincerely,
Principal

Attachment H Compulsory School Attendance Law

Compulsory School Attendance Law

Florida Statute Chapter 1003.27 (7) (1-2)

A parent who refuses or fails to have a child who is under his or her control attend school regularly, or who refuses or fails to comply with the requirements in subsection (3), is guilty of a misdemeanor of the second degree, punishable as provided by law. The continued or habitual absence of a child without the consent of the principal or teacher in charge of the school he or she attends or should attend, or of the tutor who instructs or should instruct him or her, is prima facie evidence of a violation of this chapter; however, the court of the appropriate jurisdiction, upon finding that the parent has made a bona fide and diligent effort to control and keep the child in school, shall excuse the parent from any criminal liability prescribed herein and shall refer the parent and child for counseling, guidance, or other needed services.

		Date:	
School Attendance	Officer		
	School Attendance	School Attendance Officer	School Attendance Officer

Attachment I

Student's Intent to Withdraw from School							
I,,	age						
(Student Name) file this as a formal intent to without							
I acknowledge that I have been provided information of the impact of this action: Terminating school enrollment prior to graduation will likely reduce my potential earnings and negatively affect my career options. Terminating school enrollment will result in the revocation/denial of my driving privileges until age 18.							
(Signature of Student)	(Date of Birth)						
(Signature of Parent)	-						
(Mailing Address)	-						
(Signature of School Official)	(Date)						

O-SO-27 09/10

Attachment J

Okeechobee County

Stu	dent Inform	natio	n TeamDate of Me	eting: _				
Stu	dent's Name	e:			Stud	ent ID#:		
DC	B/AGE:		Grac	le:		School:		
Pu	rpose:		Behavior Needs		Parent Request	Other		
			Truancy		Academic Needs			
Scl	nool Review	:						
	Has		Has not repeated gra List Grade(s):					
	Does	Does not have academic difficulties. List subjects with difficulties:						
	Does not have behavior difficulties. Summary of behavior concerns:							
	Does Does not take medication. List medications/amount:							
	Other (List	:):						
Tea	nm Outcome	(deteri	mine what will be trie	d, persoi	n responsible and time	e frame for trial):		
1.	Person Res	sponsil	ble:		Time Frame f	or Intervention:		
2. Person Responsible:			Time Frame f	or Intervention:				
3. Person Responsible:			Time Frame f	or Intervention:				
SIT	Team Assis	tance:						
Naı	me/Title			-	Name/Ti	itle		
Naı	ne/Title			_	Name/Ti	itle		
Naı	me/Title			_	Name/Ti	itle		
Naı	ne/Title			_	Name/Ti	tle		
O-I	EX-39							
			D - 6		ttachment k		K., _	
	Referral for District Truancy Staffing Okeechobee County School Board/Student Services Department							
ES	SE Progra	am					Regular Program	

Truancy Referral (Student Attendance Record Must Be Attached)

Student 1	ID #	School_	Grade_	Referral Date	
Student 1	Name		_Date of Birth	Race	_Sex
Parent/G	uardian		Phone#	Work #	
Address_					
Step 1: School Contact Telep		ohone	Conference	Mail	
Comments	s/Results:	Date(s)		Date(s)	Date(s)
	School Attendance A				
Step 3:	School Counselor Con	nference	Dates		
	m Changes s/Results:		If yes, has truar	icy been resolved?	
•	Educational Review s/Recommendations:_				
•	Joint Staffing s/Recommendation:			Date:	
Principal/	Designee Signature	Date	School Attend	ance Assistant	Date
Parent/G	uardian	Date	Counselor		Date