

Truancy Mediation Program

Talking to Parents about Truancy Mediation

On the phone, be very clear about:

- What needs to happen
- What is negotiable and what is not
- The definition of Truancy
- The choices that are available for absences due to illness
- The choices that are being offered to the family (mediation or court referral)

If the choice is referral to Juvenile Court, you *must* be prepared to follow through on sending the truancy referral. This is tough love for parents!

Setting the Meeting:

"I would like to spend a few minutes talking with you about your student's attendance at school. So far, he/she has been absent _____ days this school year. Utah law requires students to attend school and requires school to make significant efforts in regards to student attendance. I would like to meet to see if we can come up with a plan that will decrease your student's absences and provide him/her an excellent education. Would you be willing to work together to achieve that? Our school is part of a mediation program that helps schools and families develop plans to address problems of truancy. Would you be interested?"

Confusion about excused absences and truancy:

Excessive absences, whether or not it is for illness, may be considered truancy. Ultimately, it is up to the judge or prosecutor to decide what are legitimate and valid excuses for absences. (Refer to a copy of the truancy laws.)

Schools are accountable for providing education for all students. We are also responsible for making concerted attempts to resolve attendance problems. The Jordan School District policy about school attendance says...(read from policy).

When students are sick a lot, we have some choices we can offer to families so the student can continue to receive their education. Would you like to hear about those options? (Discuss the option if they are willing to hear them, including how they can access these special programs.)

Choices:

Right now, your student has missed so many days that I will soon be required to make a referral to the juvenile court for truancy. I would like your family to be able to avoid that because the court process is very time consuming and can be costly. Recently, our school has become part of a mediation program that provides families with an alternative to appearing in court. I would like to give you the option of attending a mediation. Would you be interested in that?

No Time:

I am very sympathetic with your time constraints. However, if you choose not to participate in the mediation, I will be obligated to send a truancy referral to the court. It could end up that you would have to spend even more time for a court process. (Pause and let them think.) What shall we do?"