

"Lack of commitment to school has been established by several studies as a risk factor for substance abuse, delinquency, teen pregnancy and school dropout" -U.S. Department of Health and Human Services



Truancy Laws



What Exactly is Truancy?

Truancy is when a child misses any portion of a school day and does not have a valid, legal, written excuse to give to the school.

In Pennsylvania a child is considered to be truant if he or she is between the ages of 8 and 16 (or until graduation of high school) and has more than three unlawful absences.

In Maryland a child must attend school from age 5 until 16. A child is considered to be truant once they have missed 20% of the school year, semester or marking period. In total this ends up to be 9 days during a marking period, 18 days during a semester and 36 days during a school year.

YORK COUNTY
TRUANCY PREVENTION
INITIATIVE



The mission of the York County Truancy Prevention Initiative is to reduce the truant population in York County by establishing a protocol for improved communication, instituting a consistent response to this issue, and initiating interventions.

The York County Truancy Prevention Initiative is an initiative of United Way of York County in partnership with the York County Bar Foundation

YORK COUNTY TRUANCY PREVENTION INITIATIVE

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The Difference between Maryland's and Pennsylvania's Truancy Laws

Responses to Truant Behavior

Maryland's Response to Truant Behavior

When a child is truant in a Maryland school, there are a series of events that take place.

- First, the parent/guardian will receive notice that the child missed school without a legal excuse. This notice may be given via a phone call and/or a letter, but a certified letter is not required. If no excuse note is submitted to the school, the parent/guardian will have to attend a parent/teacher conference.
- Second, a home visit.
- Third, a referral to counselors and/or tutors.
- Fourth, referral to the State Attorney's office. In some counties, the parent may be asked to attend a Parent Hearing at the school district headquarters to assist parents in making sure their children attend school, before referral to State Attorney's office is made.

Pennsylvania's Response to Truant Behavior

In Pennsylvania when a child is truant there are also a series of events that take place.

- First, parent/guardian will receive a letter, call, visit about the truant behavior
- Second, a parent will receive a letter stating that it is their final notice, that their child has had unlawful absences, and the next step is Magisterial District Court.
- Finally, the next time a child misses school the parents/guardians must go to Magisterial District Court.

Consequences for Parents/Students

For both Maryland and Pennsylvania students and parents there are consequences that result from a child being truant from school.

For students, their driver's license can be taken away, they may have to wait to receive their driving permits, or they may have to attend some type of program, such as drug and alcohol classes or a Strengthening Families Program.

Parents/guardians can be fined, required to spend time in jail, mandated to complete community service or directed to attend a certain type of program, such as a parenting class.

The Reality of Going to Court - MD v. PA

The reality is that Pennsylvania is much more likely than Maryland to send a parent/guardian or a student to court for being truant from school.

- In Maryland there were approximately 19,000 habitually truant students in 2009-2010. Of those students only 6% were referred to court. In other words, only about 1,140 truancy cases for THAT YEAR went to court.
- In Pennsylvania, the Magisterial District Courts receive an average of 949 cases PER MONTH

So when living in Pennsylvania KNOW THAT when schools say courts will fine you if your child is truant, it is very likely it will happen



Effects of Truant Behavior

TRUANCY:

- Increases the likelihood of deviant behavior greatly
- Hinders the learning of other students
- Increases the monetary cost to the community

TRUANT YOUTH ARE:

- More likely to end up on welfare
- More likely to become involved in gang behavior
- Less likely to attend a college or university
- More likely to drop out of school before high school graduation