



Inspiring Excellence

Upper Merion Area School District

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August 23, 2017

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Effective Thursday, November 4, 2016, Governor Tom Wolfe signed a new Truancy Legislation under House Bill 1907 into law. House Bill 1907, now referred to as Act 138 of 2016, rewrites a substantial portion of the Public School Code, specifically the provision that address truancy. These new provisions will go into effect beginning in the 2017-2018 school year.

This act added definitions and authorizes and directs schools to do the following:

1. Define a "Truant" student as having incurred three (3) unexcused absences during the current school year.
2. Define a "Habitually Truant" student as having incurred six (6) unexcused absences during the current school year.
3. Provide a proactive approach by offering "school attendance improvement conferences" for any student who reaches three (3) day unexcused absences within a school year and thus attempting to identify the cause(s) of the student's absences with the parents/guardians.
4. Mandate that the school districts schedule a face-to-face meeting or phone conference with the student and person in parental relation to discuss the child's absences before a citation is filed with the district magistrate so the district may develop a written School Attendance Improvement Plan. (Formerly known as Truancy Elimination Plan or TEP).
5. Provide schools with discretion to refer children to a school or community based program, (Example: Crime Victims Center, Connections to Classroom, Justice Youth Program, etc.).
6. Make referrals to Children and Youth Services (CYS), and/or file citations within the District Magistrate depending on the age of the child.
7. Amend the financial penalties for the truancy proceedings in an amount not exceeding \$300 together with court costs, \$500 together with court costs for a second violation, and \$750 together with court costs for a third and subsequent violations.
8. Enable the courts to suspend sentences for truancy convictions and waive fines, if the child is attending school in compliance with the court's plan.
9. Clarify the fines, community service, and attendance at a course or program designed to improve school attendance shall be the first penalty imposed for a violation of the compulsory attendance law.
10. Permit a child with a summary offense conviction for violations of the compulsory school attendance requirements to have their records expunged and have their driver's license restored if they meet specific requirements.

We are in the process of revising our Attendance Policy to reflect these mandated changes. The revised policy outlines the enforcement of compulsory attendance requirements and creates a comprehensive approach, including the creation of School Attendance Improvement Plans. Collaboration with families to address truancy issues is a critical component of the truancy elimination process.

Thank you for your cooperation and support in this very important matter.

Sincerely,

John Moody
Director of Student Services
Upper Merion Area School District
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