



## Preventing Truancy

Student safety and academic success are important to parents, educators and community members.

### Tips for preventing truancy:

#### Communicate with your student often:

1. Talk about family expectations regarding school attendance.
2. Talk about family expectations for earning a high school diploma and beyond.
3. Recognize good choices, positive behaviors and academic accomplishments.
4. Be aware of the warning signs; look for changes in attitude, peer groups, drop in grades and other signs of unhappiness or disconnect with school.

#### Communicate with your school often:

1. Read the Student Rights and Responsibilities handbook regarding the school district's policy on attendance.
2. Respond quickly to the school when it notifies you of unexcused absences.
3. Learn how to check absences, either online or with the school office.
4. If you have issues and concerns, contact the school. Start with the teacher or counselor.
5. Know who the resources within your school and ask for help.
6. Be involved. Develop positive relationships with your school. It is a coordinated effort to help all students to succeed.

## Resources

If you have questions about your student's attendance record or are in need of a report on your student's educational progress, please call your student's school.

If you are in need of any additional information in regard to truancy issues, or if you have received a copy of a truancy petition and have questions about either the petition or the court process, contact the BECCA Bill Coordinator for your student's school. Each school in the Mukilteo School District has a BECCA Bill Coordinator.

Your student's school administrator or other staff may also be able to provide you with additional information or assist you if you are having issues and concerns with your student that go beyond typical school attendance issues.

#### On-line Resources

1. Mukilteo School District Website—[www.mukilteo.wednet.edu](http://www.mukilteo.wednet.edu) (Student Services Department—Attendance/BECCA link; Student Rights and Responsibility link).
2. Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) Website—[www.k12.wa.us](http://www.k12.wa.us) (School Safety Center link; Family Engagement link).
3. Washington State Legislature Website—[apps.leg.wa.gov](http://apps.leg.wa.gov) (RCW 28A.225).
4. Snohomish County Juvenile Court Website—[www1.co.snohomish.wa.us](http://www1.co.snohomish.wa.us).

Mukilteo School District complies with federal and state rules and regulations and does not discriminate in any programs or activities on the basis of sex, race, creed, religion, color, national origin, age, veteran or military status, sexual orientation, gender expression or identity, disability, or the use of a trained dog guide or service animal and provides equal access to the Boy Scouts and other designated youth groups. The following individuals have been designated to handle questions or complaints of alleged discrimination: Title IX Officer - Bruce Hobert (425-356-1325), Section 504 Coordinator - Ruth Peckarsky (425-356-1277), and the ADA/Access Coordinator - Debra Fulton (425-356-1330), all located at 9401 Sharon Drive in Everett, WA 98204. Inquiries regarding ADA/Access issues at Sno-Isle TECH Skills Center should be directed to Dave Rudy, Director (425-348-2220) at 9001 Airport Road in Everett, WA 98204.

## Understanding the "BECCA Bill" Washington State's Compulsory Attendance Law (RCW28A.225)

### School Board Members

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# Understanding the “BECCA Bill” RCW 28A.225

In May 1995, the Governor signed new provisions to the Compulsory Attendance Law with clear expectations for students, parents and school districts for returning truant students to school. Through a coordinated effort, regular school attendance can be achieved and issues contributing to truant behavior can be addressed.

The Mukilteo School District has a clear, district-wide attendance policy, outlined in the Student Rights and Responsibilities Handbook. Students, parents and schools must work together to correct any truancy problems a student may be experiencing so that he/she can be successful in school.

Attendance is important for academic success and unexcused absences may be an early warning sign for unaddressed problems with school and potential for dropout. Students enrolled in the Mukilteo School District are expected to attend all regularly scheduled classes to which they are assigned, unless excused by the administration, the class teacher, or designee. In the Mukilteo School District the following are valid excuses for absences from school:

- \* Participation in a district or school-approved activity or instructional program
- \* Illness, health condition or medical appointment;
- \* Family emergency
- \* Religious or cultural purpose including observance of a religious or cultural holiday or participation in religious or cultural instruction
- \* Court, judicial proceeding or serving on a jury;
- \* Post-secondary, technical school or apprenticeship program visitation, or scholarship interview
- \* State-recognized search and rescue activities consistent with RCW 28A.225.055
- \* Absence directly related to the student's homeless status
- \* Absence resulting from a disciplinary/corrective action. (e.g., short-term or long-term suspension, emergency expulsion)
- \* Principal (or designee) and parent, guardian, or emancipated youth mutually agreed upon approved activity

## Compulsory Attendance Law (28A.225.025)

Washington law requires children from ages 8 to 17 to attend a public or private school, or to receive home-based instruction. Children who are 6-7 years old are not required to be enrolled in school. However, if parents enroll their 6-7 year old, the student must attend full-time. Youth who are 16 or older may be excused from attending public school if they meet certain requirements.

**TRUANCY**—The law requires that children ages 6-17 who are enrolled in public schools, attend school Monday-Friday, unless there is a good reason for being absent. Parents/guardians must excuse the absence by notifying the school (see MSD Student Rights and Responsibilities handbook for excusing an absence). When a student misses school and their parent has not excused the absence, he/she can be considered truant. Truancy is defined as being absent from school or from the majority of classes without an excuse.

**BECCA Bill**—is Washington State’s Truancy Law—it is designed to help stop truancy before it becomes a problem. The law requires the following from schools/districts:

1. **One (1) unexcused absence**—the school must inform the parent when there is one unexcused absence. This is often done by a phone call home.
2. **Two (2) unexcused absences**—the school is required to schedule a meeting with the parent/guardian and student to discuss the causes of the unexcused absences and find solutions to prevent further absences.
3. **Five (5) unexcused absences within 30 days**—the school must enter into a written truancy agreement with the family, outlining steps for resolving the attendance problems.
4. **Seven (7) unexcused absences during a month or ten (10) unexcused absences in a school year**—the school will file a petition in juvenile court to order the student to attend school. If the court order is violated, the court will call for an Contempt Hearing.

## Compulsory Attendance Law, cont.

**The law requires parents/guardians** to have their school-aged children enrolled in an educational program and take steps to insure their regular attendance to school.

**The law requires the Juvenile Court** to meet the following requirements:

1. Process petitions filed by the school.
2. Schedule hearings alleging truancy and notify parents and student of the hearing, their options and rights, and that their attendance may be required.
3. Grant petitions and assume jurisdiction for any period of time deemed necessary.
4. Schedule hearings alleging non-compliance with court orders, requiring access to legal representation for the student. Parents may also request legal representation.

Local juvenile courts address the petition process in a manner consistent with local juvenile justice priorities and resources. There may be differences as to how each community approaches and resolves truancy problems.

The court may order attendance at the current school, alternative school, another school, skills center, drop-out prevention program, etc. The court may refer to a Community Truancy Board. The court may order community service, detention time or other alternatives as a means to help resolve the problem.

Parents may also be ordered community service or a fine of up to \$25 per day for each unexcused absence.