

YOU AREN'T ALONE

Parents will experience the best results, with the least frustration, when they use their family, as well as resources in the school and community to work on attendance problems.

Outside resources (both school and community) can assist parents to better understand their child's attendance problem. Resources can support parents in making a positive difference. Parents may have memories of their own difficulties in school, and hesitate to contact school staff or come to school. However, the majority of school staff are caring, committed individuals who are pleased to have parents involved. Some school staff are even able to meet with parents outside the school setting. Parents are also encouraged to recruit the involvement and support of their extended family and friends.

SCHOOL RESOURCES:

School staff vary some in their roles from school to school. However, the following provides a basic guideline for tasks of certain staff positions. Parents may contact any of the following school staff to assist them and their child with attendance concerns.

Teachers - Sharing information and concerns, consult about student's class performance and problem solve.

Administrators - Share information and concerns, explain student rights, responsibilities, school policies and procedures, school and legal consequences.

Attendance Staff - Obtain attendance information, develop plans regarding reporting and excusing absences. (Although all schools have procedures for informing parents of attendance concerns, students can sometimes sabotage these. Thus, a parent's personal contact with attendance staff can assure accurate monitoring and information.)

Counselors - Consult, problem solve, review/change/shorten school schedule, share class and credit options and requirements, communicate with school team, share information about community resources.

School Social Workers - Consult, problem solve, assess school, home and individual issues, mediate, assist in locating appropriate school and community resources, network with family, school and community, provide support.

Psychologists - Consult regarding academic abilities and performance, test, problem solve, and develop behavior plans.

School Nurses - Consult and work together with your child's physician and school staff.

SCIP Team Leader - Consults, gathers information from teachers' observations of student, refers for free drug/alcohol or mental health evaluation.

SAT - Student Assistance Team - Team of school staff meets with parent to share information and concerns, problem solve and develop strategies.

IEP Manager for special education students - Shares information and concerns, problem solves, develops strategies and works with students.

School Resource Officer - Consults, provides information regarding law violations/concerns.

At Risk Programs - Vary within each school.

COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Your child's physician - Explores physical and mental health concerns.

Mental health providers/counseling agencies - Evaluate individual or family problems, and mental health concerns, provide therapy. (See Lincoln telephone book Human Services Directory blue pages under "Counseling/Mental Health" and yellow pages under "Counselors".)

Treatment facilities - Evaluate and treat alcohol and drug use/abuse. (See Lincoln telephone book Human Services Directory blue pages under "Alcohol and Other Drugs" and yellow pages under "Alcohol Abuse and Addiction Information and Treatment".)

Emergency short term residential care - (Freeway Station, Cedars Youth Services, 437-8888).

Juvenile Probation - Probation officers work with, and monitor a court-adjudicated child, consult with their family, and the court. (441-7364).

County Attorney's Office - Will review parental and school requests for court intervention for school attendance problems. Will review parental petitions to have an adolescent declared "ungovernable." (441-7321)

Family Crimes Unit - Consult with parents about their child's behavior/law violations. (441-7220)

Parent Support - Cedars Youth Services (437-8888), Families Inspiring Families (441-4369, Family Resource Center (441-3803)

Lincoln/Lancaster Mediation Center - Mediate conflict within families or with schools on a sliding fee scale. (441-5740)

Your pastor

PARENTS: TAKE CARE OF YOU!

While parents are encouraged to do all within their power to resolve an attendance problem, it is also important that parents take care of themselves, and their own needs. Children are sensitive to their parents' struggles. Be willing to get help for your own physical emotional, substance, mental health issues. Parents will be much better equipped to work on the challenge of good school attendance when they are physically and emotionally healthy.

*A resource provided by
LPS School Social Workers...
because families matter.*

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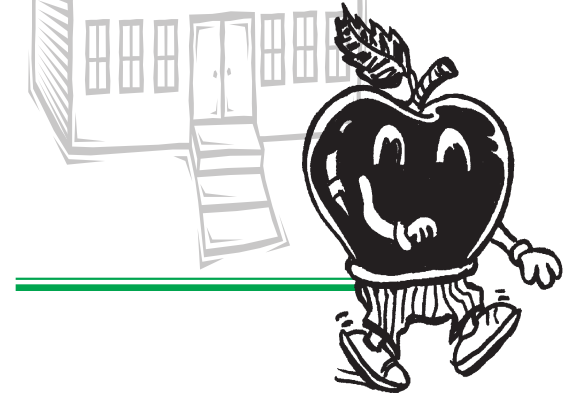
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SCHOOL ATTENDANCE &

YOUR ADOLESCENT



School is a normal and significant part of life for most adolescents. However, for some adolescents attending school regularly can be a big issue. This is frustrating for parents and school staff, who share a responsibility to expect and support good school attendance.

Regular attendance is vital for students to succeed in school and is an important habit for students to develop. Nebraska law requires parents/guardians to assure their child attends school until the age of 18.

POOR SCHOOL ATTENDANCE can be the result of changes or problems at school or home, OR a symptom of a physical or mental health problem.

CONTRIBUTORS TO POOR SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

SCHOOL PROBLEMS:

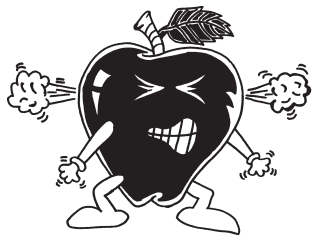
- learning
- motivation
- friendship
- bullying
- conflicts

FAMILY PROBLEMS:

- changes - moves, divorce, remarriage
- financial stress
- conflict
- transportation
- domestic violence
- alcohol and drug abuse
- child care

INDIVIDUAL PROBLEMS:

- stress
- depression
- anxiety
- phobias
- identity questions
- adjustment issues
- alcohol and drug use
- peer pressures
- rebellion
- gang affiliation
- finances
- transportation
- chronic or acute health conditions
- pregnancy/parenting



PARENTS CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Research is clear that children are much more likely to succeed in school when their parents are actively involved. Parents can not “make their adolescent attend school” or “make them learn”. Parents CAN communicate their expectations to their child, build a relationship with him/her, and apply consequences which will influence his/her behavior choices. Teaming with school and community resources can help resolve this challenging problem.

Your child needs you. The sooner, the better. Consider the following activities.

With your child:

- Listen to, and observe your child.
- Let your child know you expect him/her to attend school.
- Share your honest feelings and concern, (in a non-threatening way).
- Consider all possible contributors to the problem (school, family and individual).
- Problem solve possible solutions of any contributors to poor school attendance.
- Set (in advance) and follow through with negative consequences for your child for school absences (loss of driving privileges, evenings out, phone and TV use).
- Set (in advance) and follow through rewards for your child for good attendance. (video rental, friend over, dinner choice).
- Avoid physical punishment, force, verbal threats, name calling or yelling. (These strategies will not resolve the problem on an ongoing basis, will wear you out and result in further rebellion and relationship problems with your teen.)
- Limit TV, video games and computer time (especially at night).
- Support your child in going to bed at a regular time every night and getting up at the same time every morning (at least on school nights).
- Know where your child is, call other parents, and require adult supervision at activities.
- Set and enforce a curfew for your child.

With school staff

- Avoid excusing your child's absence unless he/she is vomiting or has a fever.
- Keep well informed of your child's attendance by contacting school regularly, or develop a plan to be kept informed.
- Be aware of the variety of school staff available to help you and your child.
- Share your concerns, observations, and perspectives of your child.
- Ask school staff for information about their observations of your child.
- Attend parent-teacher conferences.
- Consider possible contributors to the problems (school, family and individual)
- Request a SAT (Student Assistance team) from your school to discuss concerns, gather information and problem solve.
- Keep informed about dates of mid quarter and quarter report cards, school activities, etc.
- Attend your child's school activities.

With community

- Keep probation/parole officer aware of attendance problems.
- Consider all possible contributors to the problem and contact resources available through the community.
- Attend your child's activities.

POSSIBLE TRAPS:

Parents with good intentions can unintentionally take on behaviors that support or “enable” their children not to live up to expectations of school attendance.

Children sometimes use illness as an excuse to stay home. This can place parents in the difficult position of not wanting to send a sick child to school. Parents, however, must be careful to determine when a child's symptoms are not significant enough to miss school. Certain children can easily develop patterns of school avoidance when allowed to stay home. Some children suffer from chronic health problems or struggle with not feeling well in the mornings. Parents can acknowledge their child's bad feelings, while still expecting them to at-

tend with mild symptoms. Parents are encouraged to consult with their child's physician when illness is contributing to poor school attendance.

Concern for their child failing, being removed from a class, or falling short of graduation requirements, can persuade parents to excuse their child when they don't want to attend class. These good intentions rob the child of learning from the negative consequences of the child's behavior and choices. These children are then more likely to continue the same problem behaviors.

Children can attempt to discourage parents from contacting school staff and monitoring their attendance by arguing that parents don't trust them. Communication with school staff allows for accountability and best assures your child's success.

Teenagers can be quite convincing to their parents when they question the status quo and the need for regular school attendance. Some teens argue that they are bright enough to pass without regular attendance, while other teens argue that school's not important or relevant to their lives or their futures. The truth is we all answer to some authority. No matter how bright and unique our child is, he/she will have to know how to comply with rules and problem solve difficulties to succeed in life. School provides an environment for this kind of learning.

Children can, intentionally or unintentionally, set parents against the school, thus convincing parents not to trust or work together with school staff. Children who have been successful in persuading their parents to see only the negative side of school policies and staff are unlikely to feel the need to comply with school expectations. Communication between parents and school staff is essential to avoid this trap. Contact school staff to gain more information when your child shares situations which seem unfair or negative. Children who are aware their parents are in communication with school staff are more committed to being accountable for their behavior.
