

Update on Statewide Truancy Regulations

State Board of Education
Public Meeting
Wednesday, September 17, 2008



Background

- **The District of Columbia Compulsory School Attendance law requires that parents and legal guardians ensure that children in their care, between the ages of 5 and 18, are regularly attending school (or receiving private/home instruction) (s. 2100 of the *District of Columbia Municipal Regulations (DCMR)*)**
 - It is the responsibility of each child's parent or guardian to ensure the child's attendance in school
- **Any student between the ages of five (5) and eighteen (18) who is absent without a valid reason for a school day or a portion of it is considered "truant."**
- **The District of Columbia is challenged by high levels of truancy. For example, between the start of the 2007-2008 school year and April 25, 2008, the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) reported 6,231 truants.**
- **Research indicates that students who attend school regularly are more successful academically and in their careers. Truancy is often associated with poor academic performance and is sometimes associated with delinquency, criminal behavior, and dropping out of school.**

Districtwide Response to Truancy

- Since 2005, a Citywide Truancy Taskforce, including members of the public, staff and representatives of OSSE, DCPS and the public charter schools, staff from various District agencies (CFSA, MPD, District Court officials), DC Criminal Justice Coordinating Council, educational advocates, and others have met to discuss strategies for implementing truancy abatement measures
- While we have realized some success in reducing truancy numbers at the elementary school level, truancy rates are significantly higher at the secondary school level and in certain neighborhoods in the city.
- The Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education has drafted a framework for combating truancy in a plan unique to the District. The administration's plan reflects a multi-agency commitment to high-quality, meaningful and locally-relevant service delivery for children and families. The implementation of this framework is designed to reduce citywide truancy rates over the next 5 years.

Response to Truancy: OSSE's role

- **New Proposed Truancy Regulations.** OSSE has drafted a set of proposed truancy regulations which will apply to all DCPS and public charter schools in the District of Columbia.
 - Define valid excused absences implement reporting requirements.
 - Based on a set of school-based reporting protocols which were developed over several years with support from the Truancy Taskforce and have been successfully implemented in DCPS elementary schools.
- The proposed regulations require each LEA to establish in each of its schools a specific framework or process “that focuses on academic and behavioral intervention.”
 - LEAs/schools may implement a variety of truancy intervention strategies or models within the framework; however every framework/process must include progressive interventions for specific absence milestones
 - 1 day of absence – personal contact with parent/guardian
 - 5 days of absence – referral to a school-based student support team
 - 10 days of absence (ages 5-13, Special needs) – referral to CFSA
 - 15 days of absence (ages 13+) – referral to Office of the Attorney General, the Family Branch/CSS of D.C. Superior Court

Response to Truancy: OSSE's role

■ Training and Accountability

- The OSSE will develop attendance and truancy reporting procedures to assist LEAs/schools with compliance.
- The OSSE will monitor attendance reporting
- The OSSE will implement outreach initiatives to enhance schools with regard to compulsory school attendance requirements and consequences.



Other components of LEA truancy reduction frameworks

- A procedure for collecting and reviewing attendance data from schools
- Develop procedures for monitoring, recording, reporting and addressing attendance and absences.
 - Important for OSSE and referrals to child-serving agencies
- Notification and engagement of parents/guardians.

Attendance Enforcement

- The Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) conducts daily truancy sweeps, working in partnership with the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education, the OSSE, and District of Columbia public schools. Between the hours of 9:30am and 2:00pm, MPD's truancy officers pick up children of compulsory school age, who are not in school and lack a valid excuse.
- Students picked up by MPD are transported directly back to the public, public charter, independent, private or parochial school in which they are enrolled. Each local school has designated a staff person to receive students brought in by MPD mid-day, who is responsible for calling the child's parent or legal guardian, and referring the child for services and/or disciplinary action.

MPD truancy officers pick up truants everyday in focus areas throughout the city

MPD officers complete a Washington Area Law Enforcement System check, obtain basic information from the child, including name, DOB and school, and call the local school to verify enrollment

MPD transports child back to school, where designated staff person receives child, calls parent, and refers for services, and/ or disciplinary action