

## Attendance Review Board

The family, school and community are all partners in working toward the goal of school attendance and educational success.

Minnesota law requiring school attendance is “designed to provide a continuum of intervention and services to support families and children in school and combating truancy and educational neglect.”

At **three unexcused absences**, the school is legally required to notify the parent or guardian that the child is a “continuing truant.” At a total of **five unexcused absences**, the school will send out a notice that the parent or guardian and the student are expected to attend the **Attendance Review Board** led by the Steele County Attorney’s Office. This meeting will include school officials, school and county social workers, and other service provider representatives as needed. At the meeting, the participants will review the laws regarding school attendance and the diversion process. A contract with the student and family will be established and the student will be placed under supervision to attend school.

If the student continues to have unexcused absences or tardies, the school is required to notify law enforcement and Steele County Human Services. The Steele County Attorney’s Office will determine what action should be taken.

## Consequences for Violating School Attendance Laws

Failure to attend and participate in the Attendance Review Board or follow through with the requirements of the contract may result in a Child in Need of Protection or Services (CHIPS) petition being filed in District Court.

The Court will intervene and order parents to follow its recommendations to address the causes of the educational neglect, including:

- Counseling or evaluation of the parent and child
- Participation in educational programs
- Cooperation with Steele County Human Services in developing a case plan

The parent or guardian may also be prosecuted for failure to provide an education. Conviction for this crime carries a penalty of up to 90 days in jail and/or a fine of up to \$1,000.

**The Attendance Review Board process is designed to avoid court involvement.**

Your child’s education is our community’s future.

## STEELE COUNTY Attorney



303 South Cedar  
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## SCHOOL ATTENDANCE & ATTENDANCE REVIEW BOARD

### From the Steele County Attorney’s Office:

The Steele County Attorney’s Office works in partnership with Steele County area schools (Owatonna Public Schools, St. Mary’s School, Medford Public Schools, and Blooming Prairie Public Schools) and Steele County Human Services (Minnesota Prairie County Alliance) to ensure our school-aged children are attending school, and to assist families and students in obtaining the help they may need to be successful in school.

## A Message from the County Attorney

We all want our children to become successful adults. Regular attendance at school is the best way to achieve that goal. Children who attend school daily and on time are more successful in school and in their everyday lives, and are also less likely to act in a self-destructive way or to get into trouble with the community.

The Steele County Attorney's Office, Steele County Human Services and Steele County area schools have partnered to address the issue of educational neglect of students K-12. The school will refer students who have attendance problems to the Attendance Review Board, which is a diversionary process designed to help the student and family address the underlying factors contributing to excessive absences. The goal of the Attendance Review Board is to avoid further court action, and to get the student and family "back on track" in school.

If excessive absences or tardies continue, then the student and family will be referred to our office for a Child in Need of Protection or Services (CHIPS) petition. In such a CHIPS action, the District Court will mandate services and actions that the family and student must take.

Our hope is that the Attendance Review Board process will permit families and students to improve their lives without court involvement. We all benefit when our children get the education they need and deserve.

*Daniel A. McIntosh*  
Steele County Attorney

When a child has seven or more unexcused absences, state law requires that the school notify Steele County. **Educational neglect** occurs when a child is without the necessary education because the child's parent or guardian is unable or unwilling to provide that care. Minn. Stat. 260C.007, subd. 6.

**Children are required as of August 1, 2014 to attend school through age 17** unless the child has graduated. Minn. Stat. 120A.22, subd. 5.

### What does it mean to be "absent" from school?

A parent or guardian may ask for an excused absence from school for his or her child. The school has the right to accept or deny a request for an excused absence as set forth in the schools' attendance policies.

#### Acceptable excuses may include:

- ✓ Sickness (a note from a doctor or school nurse may be required)
- ✓ Doctor appointment (including mental health, dentist, orthodontist)
- ✓ Religious holiday
- ✓ Extreme family emergency (determined on case-by-case basis)

#### Invalid excuses may include:

- ✗ Needed to stay home (babysitting, etc.)
- ✗ Child overslept or was sleepy
- ✗ Travel or vacation
- ✗ Cold weather
- ✗ Missed the bus
- ✗ Child not immunized
- ✗ Parent not aware of school schedule

## Responsibility of the School

- Address problems identified as barriers to the student's ability to attend and learn
- Maintain accurate attendance records and document communication with the student and family about attendance
- Refer the student to Steele County when there is reason to believe the child's education is being neglected
- Participate in the Attendance Review Board and notify Steele County if the contract is not being followed
- Inform the student and family of the legal requirement to attend school and the consequences if they fail to meet that requirement.

## Responsibility of the Family

- Send your child to school
- Ensure your child has completed required homework
- Monitor your child's attendance and progress in school
- Inform the school when your child may need to miss school for an acceptable reason
- Attend and participate in the Attendance Review Board and follow all recommendations of the contract

## Responsibility of the Student

- Attend school on time, each and every hour of every school day
- Complete required school work
- Ask for help when you need it
- Attend and participate in the Attendance Review Board and follow all recommendations of the contract