

## Northumberland County Truancy Prevention Initiative:

**MISSION:** To increase school attendance by coordinating with Families, Schools, Communities and Human Service Agencies.

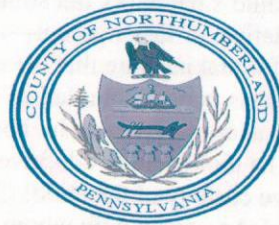
### PTAP Education and Awareness

- A community based attendance improvement program that families can attend in lieu of a fine from the Magistrate
- Parents and children meet separately to discuss truancy issues
- Parents are given the opportunity to share concerns and issues during open discussion
- Parents learn about community resources that are available.
- Information is shared between agencies and families
- Parents share ideas with each other
- Truancy Prevention Officers are available to meet privately with parents

### What a Truancy Prevention Officer will do:

- Participate in your Student Attendance Improvement Plan (SAIP) meetings
- Provide direct contact and support to families/students
- Monitor attendance daily
- Help Parents connect with child's school activities
- Offer voluntary services
- Make recommendations to school districts
- Attend Court hearings if your child's truancy leads to court proceedings

## CONTACT INFORMATION



### Children and Youth Services Truancy Department

(570) 988-4237

[Truancy@norrycopa.net](mailto:Truancy@norrycopa.net)

### Juvenile Court Services

(570) 495-2174

### Mental Health Services

(570) 495-2040

### Drug and Alcohol Services

(570) 495-2040

### Questions concerning Truancy

(570) 495-2195

[Truancy@norrycopa.net](mailto:Truancy@norrycopa.net)

# Parental Truancy Assistance Program

## Northumberland County Truancy Prevention Initiative:

A Joint Venture With Juvenile Court Services, Children and Youth Services, Local Magistrates and School Districts using Truancy Prevention Officers in an Effort to Prevent Further Truancy Issues by offering voluntary services and support for families

## ACT 138 of 2016

### Purpose of PA's Truancy Law

*To improve school attendance and deter truancy through a comprehensive approach to consistently identify and address issues as early as possible with credible intervention techniques in to to:*

- Preserve the unity of the family
- Avoid possible entry of children into foster care( and other unintended consequences of disruption to an intact family)
- Confine a parent or guardian for truancy-related offenses only as a last resort

## WHO MUST ATTEND SCHOOL IN PENNSYLVANIA?

In Pennsylvania, all children **must attend school beginning at age 8 or when the child first enrolls in kindergarten or first grade until the student turns seventeen (17) or graduates from high school.** This is called “compulsory school age.” *In Philadelphia, students must attend school beginning at age six (6) or when the child first enrolls in kindergarten.* Once you enroll your child in school, your child must attend school even if they have not yet reached age eight (8) (or 6 in Philadelphia). However, if you enroll your child in kindergarten and later decide that your child is not ready for school, you may formally withdraw your child from school, at which point your child is no longer required to attend school until they turn eight (8) (or 6 in Philadelphia). If your child has graduated from high school, they are no longer required to attend school.

“Attend school” means that the child must go to a regular public school, a charter school, a cyber charter school, a licensed private or religious school, or an approved homeschooling program. There are several exceptions, including an exception for *certain working students*: Students who are (1) sixteen (16) or older and (2) hold full-time jobs during school hours do not have to attend school. Local school districts determine the minimum number of required hours of work needed to meet this exception. The student must get an “employment certificate” (often called “working papers”) from their school district. There are several other limited exceptions.

## WHO MUST MAKE SURE A CHILD ATTENDS SCHOOL?

The person(s) “in parental relation to the child”—usually the child’s parent(s), but sometimes a guardian, relative, or foster parent—are legally responsible for making sure that the child attends school. “Persons in parental relation” may be: a biological or adoptive parent who has custody of the child; (2) a biological or adoptive parent who does not have custody of the child; (3) the child’s guardian; or (4) a person with whom the child lives and who is acting in a parental role for the child. Students are also responsible for attending school. Once a child turns fifteen (15), the school may take your child to court if they are not attending school. Students who are fifteen (15) or older may face consequences like fines, community service, and suspension of their driver’s license.

## WHAT IS TRUANCY?

Truancy means having three (3) or more unexcused absences in the *current* school year. These absences do *not* need to be in a row.

## WHAT IS HABITUAL TRUANCY?

Habitual truancy means having six (6) or more unexcused absences in the *current* school year. These absences do *not* need to be in a row.

## WHAT HAPPENS IF MY CHILD IS TRUANT?

Once your child has three (3) or more unexcused absences in the *current* school year—meaning your child is “truant”—your child’s school **must** send you written notice explaining that your child is truant. The school **must** send this notice within ten (10) days of your child’s third unexcused absence. The notice **must** be in the language of communication that you prefer, as you indicated on the Home Language Survey when you first enrolled your child in school.

The notice **must** include a description of the consequences if your child becomes “habitually truant.” The notice **may** also include an offer to meet to discuss the reasons for your child’s truancy and a plan to help your child overcome barriers to school attendance.

## WHAT HAPPENS IF MY CHILD IS HABITUALLY TRUANT?

Once your child has six (6) or more unexcused absences in the *current* school year—meaning your child is “habitually truant”—your child’s school **must hold a conference** to discuss the reasons for your child’s absences and **create a plan** to help your child overcome barriers to attendance. This meeting is called a “school attendance improvement conference.”

Before holding a conference, the school must let you know about the conference and try to get you to attend. The school **must** provide you with **advance written notice** of the time and date of the conference, and **must** also **make at least two attempts to reach you by phone**. Any attempts to contact or communicate with you **must** be in your preferred language.

Once your child becomes habitually truant, the school **must** take certain actions depending on whether your child is under fifteen (15) or is fifteen (15) or older. These actions include **referrals to attendance improvement programs, the county Children and Youth Services (CYS) agency, or court.**

## WHAT IS AN ATTENDANCE IMPROVEMENT CONFERENCE?

An attendance improvement conference is a meeting “where the child’s absences and reasons for the absences are examined to improve attendance, with or without additional services.” The purpose of the conference is to **identify** the barriers your child is facing to school attendance and **address** them by creating a plan to help your child attend school on a regular basis. At the end of the conference, the school **must create a plan** that will help your child attend school.