



CIRCUIT COURT
ESCAMBIA COUNTY, FLORIDA

THOMAS H. WILLIAMS
CIRCUIT JUDGE

LISA GRIER
JUDICIAL ASSISTANT

THEODORE BRUNO JUVENILE JUSTICE CENTER
1800 ST. MARY AVENUE
PENSACOLA, FLORIDA 32501
TELEPHONE (850) 595-3715
FAX (850) 595-0451

Dear Parent/Guardian:

You are receiving this letter because the Escambia County School District has identified a problem with your child's school attendance. You need to know that Florida has a compulsory school attendance law which basically provides that children between the ages of 6 and 16 must be in school. If the child is not going to school, the child is a truant, and the PARENTS are subject to various sanctions including the possibility of jail. Further, children who have been found truant by a court must attend school until their 18th birthday.

If your child misses 1 day of school without a valid excuse, your child is truant. If your child misses 15 days of school in any 90-calendar days, he/she is at a risk of being adjudicated Truant and brought under the Court's jurisdiction.

I am the Circuit Judge responsible for hearing truancy cases in Escambia County. As such, I want you to be aware how serious the issue of truancy is viewed and the potential consequences TO YOU if your child's attendance problem is not fixed. When a child is adjudicated Truant, THE PARENTS (that means BOTH parents) are subject to sanctions. *Consequences to parents* may include a range of penalties from imposition of community service hours to loss of some State benefits to being sentenced to time in the county jail.

Let me advise you on how the process works. By receiving this letter, the school has determined that a Child Study Team Meeting is necessary. **YOU MUST ATTEND THIS MEETING WITH YOUR CHILD.** A plan will be developed at this meeting and, if the terms of the plan are followed, nothing further will occur.

However, if you do not attend this meeting, or if you do not follow the plan, you will be sent a court order that you appear before me. We will try to arrive at a plan to end your child's truancy. If you do not follow the plan, or if you disobey the Order, you will then be sent a court order to appear before me for a trial called an "Order To Show Cause Hearing." If your child is still a truant, appropriate sanctions will be imposed.

By the time the case gets to a "Show Cause" hearing, it is too late to claim that the bus did not pick up your child or that unexcused absences should have been excused because of a death, an illness, or some other problem. If there are any problems with the school's records, YOU are responsible for providing the school with the proper documentation to excuse the absences. If there is a problem with the bus, this will be resolved at the Child Safety Team Meeting. Once the case is in front of me, it is too late to claim the school is at fault if you have not taken appropriate steps to correct the school's records or seek a remedy to an outstanding problem.

I trust you will take this matter seriously, and that you and the School District can resolve this problem without the need for judicial sanctions.

Sincerely yours,

Thomas H. Williams
Circuit Judge

By signing the below, I certify that I have read and understood the above letter, and I am aware of the potential consequences to me if my child's school attendance is not corrected.

Mother or Guardian

Date

Father or Guardian

Date