

August 2009

MEMO TO: Superintendents and Building Administrators

FROM: Jerry Jansma
Kalamazoo RESA Attendance Officer

SUBJECT: **2009-2010 School Year Truancy**

Welcome to another school year and as always, we at Kalamazoo RESA are hoping to be of service to you and your school district.

Please find enclosed a packet of forms that are to be used by you and our office in dealing with the truancy process. If you are forwarding a referral, I would recommend that you **fax** it to (269) 388-9385. This will allow our office to contact the student and family in a timely manner.

I am more than happy to attend a district administrative meeting, or any other type of district or building meeting to discuss and review the enclosed materials and the process involved. I feel it would be of great value to have all of us on the same wave length as to the truancy process.

Please feel free to contact me at Kalamazoo RESA, (269) 385-1516, at any time in regards to any truancy or attendance questions or concerns.

Have a great school year!

enc

**Attendance Officer-Service Center
269.385-1516**

Kalamazoo Regional Educational Service Agency
Administrative Rules and Regulations

Attendance Officer

Statutory Authority: PA 451 of 1977 (amended by PA 43 of 1977)
380.1561 - 380.1599

Purpose:

To supplement the efforts of our local districts in enforcing the Compensatory School Attendance Act. Based on age of student, number of days absent, related problems and inability to resolve the problem locally, the local districts will refer students to the Kalamazoo Regional Educational Service Agency's Attendance Officer.

Before making a referral, a local school district shall:

1. Make initial contact with parent/guardian and child
2. Review days absent (total and patterns)
3. Attempt to meet with parent and child to:
 - determine cause of absences
 - review procedures if referred to Kalamazoo RESA
 - work cooperatively with parent/guardian for remedy
 - refer to appropriate counselor if available

Possible counseling resources:

- school counselor
- building principal
- teacher
- school social worker or psychologist, if necessary
- outside community agency

If all of above fails, the child should be referred to the Kalamazoo Regional Educational Service Agency (Kalamazoo RESA) using appropriate forms.

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WHEN TO REFER:

1. When a pattern of absenteeism is noticed by school personnel and the parent has been notified that a referral will be made if attendance does not improve. (Two or three days' absenteeism a week for four weeks might be considered a pattern.)
2. When school personnel feels the absence is excessive and/or interfering with the student's achievement and the parent has been contacted as above. (The parent may excuse the child; but if the parent does not present doctor's statements, the school may feel that the excuses are not legitimate. Even if the parent presents doctor's statements to the school, the statements may be so numerous that the school may feel some form of neglect is involved.)
3. When there is a special circumstance that a building administrator considers to be serious enough to warrant a truancy referral and the parent has been contacted.
4. When a student under 16 leaves the district and the school is unable to locate the student.
5. Prior to the student having lost credit.

6. When to refer is always a local decision and we are willing to review and discuss your referral. In our opinion, the worst thing a district can do about attendance problems is nothing.

First Official Letter

(Date)

Sal First name Last name
Address
Address

Dear Sal Last Name:

_____, (school) (title), has indicated that your (son/daughter's name), has not been in regular classroom attendance. The law states that parents send their children between the ages of six and 16 years of age to school, and that their school attendance remain continuous and consecutive for the entire school year. The parent's obligation includes physically bringing the children to school, or the school bus each and every day.

Enclosed with this letter is a legal notice which states that you must make certain that (student's name) is in school on a regular basis. If attendance does not improve, we will call for a parent conference which could lead to the filing of truancy or educational neglect charges as provided by the Michigan laws enclosed.

It is hereby requested that you have (student's name) in classroom attendance on the next regular school day after you have received this notice and each school day thereafter. Failure to do so may constitute a misdemeanor under Michigan laws. If you have any questions please call my office at (269) 385-1516.

Sincerely,

Jerry Jansma
Attendance Officer

Encl. (2)
cc (Principal)
file

Dear Parent:

The Kalamazoo Regional Educational Service Agency (Kalamazoo RESA) Attendance Officer has the ultimate responsibility for enforcing the Compulsory Attendance Act and to inform you of your responsibilities for the education of your child(ren). The state law is briefly explained below for your information:

P.A. 451 of 1977 (amended by P.A. 43 of 1977) MCL 380.1561 - 380.1599

Section 1561: (1)...Every parent, guardian, or other person in this state having control and charge of a child from the age of six to the child's sixteenth birthday, shall send that child to the public school during the entire school year (except if enrolled in an approved nonpublic school). The child's attendance shall be continuous and consecutive for the school year fixed by the school district in which the child is enrolled.

Section 2571: (2) The Kalamazoo RESA Board shall select one or more persons to act as Attendance Officers for RESA.

(3) An attendance officer of RESA or a local school district shall have the powers of a deputy sheriff within the district or RESA while performing official duties. A RESA Attendance Officer shall perform the duties of the office in each constituent district in which the local board does not employ an attendance officer.

Section 1586: Requires the RESA attendance officer to investigate each case of nonattendance as referred by a local school district.

Section 1587: If a parent/guardian fails to comply with the Compulsory School Attendance Act, the RESA Attendance Officer shall give written notice by registered mail to a parent/guardian requiring the child to appear in attendance on the next regular school day following receipt of the written notice. Failure to comply with this notice will be reported by appropriate local school official.

Section 1588: If the parent/guardian fails to comply with the above notice, the Attendance Officer shall make a complaint against the parent/guardian in District Court (educational neglect) of Probate Court/Juvenile Division (truancy) in the county of residence for refusal or neglect to send the child to school. Court action will follow the same manner as is provided for other cases under its jurisdiction.

Section 1599: A parent/guardian who fails to comply with the above is guilty of a misdemeanor, punishable by a fine not to exceed \$50 or imprisonment for not more than 90 days, or both.

Since your child has not been in regular attendance, the RESA attendance officer must determine if this is for legitimate reasons, truancy or educational neglect. We hope to work in cooperation with you in resolving this matter and encourage you to insure your child's attendance at school regularly. Please make every effort to work with your local school officials and avoid an unnecessary court case at the RESA level.

Thank you.

Jerry Jansma
Kalamazoo RESA Attendance Officer

Attendance Officer- Service Center
269.385-1516

Second Official Letter

(Date)

Sal First name Last name
Address
Address

Dear Sal Last Name:

_____, (school) (title), has again referred the attendance records of your (son/daughter's name). The records indicate that (student's name) is again not in regular classroom attendance.

As stated in a previous letter from Kalamazoo Regional Educational Service Agency (Kalamazoo RESA), Michigan Criminal Law requires that parents send their children between the ages of six and 16 years of age, to school and that their attendance remain continuous and consecutive for the entire school year. The parent's obligation includes physically bringing the children to school, or the school bus each and every day.

I am requesting, under the authority of Section 2586 (2) of the Compulsory School Attendance Law, that you and (student's name) meet with me as soon as possible to discuss this problem. Failure to do so is considered a misdemeanor under school laws and punishable by said school laws.

I would be willing to meet with you and (student's name) at (school) at your convenience. Please call me at 269-385-1516, to set up the date and time convenient for you.

Sincerely,

Jerry Jansma
Attendance Officer

cc (Principal)
file

Attendance Officer- Service Center
269.385-1516