

Combating Truancy: Magisterial District Courts

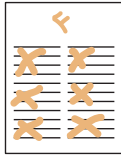
Truancy occurs when a school-age student accrues unexcused absences, regardless of whether they occur separately or happen all at one time.

Truant - a student having **three** or more unexcused absences during the current school year

Habitually Truant - a student having **six** or more unexcused absences during the current school year

Truancy has been linked to:

- Poor academic performance and school dropout



- Fighting, theft and more serious delinquency
- Greater chance of incarceration

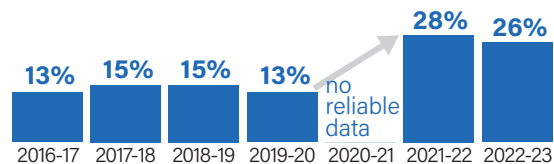


- Drug and alcohol use
- Poorer health outcomes
- Lower paying jobs



(Source: U.S. Department of Justice)

Nationally, an estimated **26 percent of public school students** were considered chronically absent last school year, up from 15 percent before the pandemic, according to the American Enterprise Institute.



Why attendance matters:

If children don't show up for school regularly, they miss out on fundamental reading and math skills – and the chance to build a habit of good attendance that will carry them into college and careers.

Early Grades

Chronically absent students are **less likely to read on grade level** by third grade

Middle School

Students who are not proficient readers are **four times more likely to drop out of school.**

High School

Students who are chronically absent any year between grades 8 - 12 are **7 times more likely to drop out.**

After Graduation

Students who drop out of high school **live 9 years less** than a college graduate.

(Source: U.S. Department of Education)

School isn't optional

1. Students are obligated to attend school and can also be held accountable under the compulsory school attendance law.
2. Students can't learn if they aren't in school.
3. Building relationships with adults at school and other students is crucial for attendance, development and minimizing behavior issues.

What's the role of the judge?

Magisterial district judges (MDJs) are responsible for handling truancy matters under the law while helping students get on the right track.

The goal of any truancy case is to deter further attendance issues, address the root cause of the problem and ultimately help the student create a habit of showing up for school.

In extreme cases, MDJs can impose **fines up to \$750 and order jail time for a parent, and a student's driver's license may be suspended.**