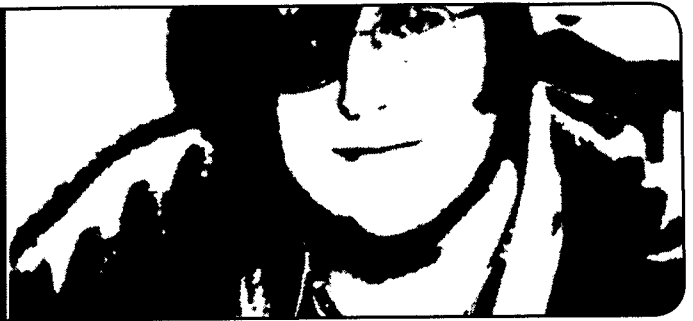


CLARK COUNTY Community Truancy Project



What is the BECCA Law?

The BECCA Bill became a law in Washington State in 1995. The law is named after a Washington youth named Rebecca "Becca" Hedman. Rebecca was a student in a Washington state school. Rebecca began skipping school, dropped out and fell into an unhealthy lifestyle. Her parents had no idea she was not attending school and communication was very poor between the school and the parents of Rebecca. Subsequently, Rebecca ran away and was murdered. The BECCA law was developed at the urging of Rebecca's parents in an effort to prevent other students from becoming truant without adequate parental notification. Now, there are specific steps schools must take from interaction with parents to court sanctions. All of these steps are designed to keep youth attending school until age 18 or until they have completed their education.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the process of the Clark County Truancy Project?

The Clark County Truancy Project began operation at the beginning of the 1996-97 school year. Clark County School Districts, the Clark County Juvenile Court and Educational Service District 112 came together, with initial funding also from Governors Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee (GJJAC), to help students solve truancy issues, rather than serve time in juvenile detention. Once a school's attendance officer files a petition for court intervention - when a student receives seven unexcused absences in a month, or ten unexcused absences during the school year- the school then may request that the student be referred to the Truancy Project upon their next unexcused absence. The Truancy Project aims to reduce truancy by providing a countywide system of intervention and prevention services for school aged students designed to reinforce individual responsibility and personal growth. The project currently receives funding support from The Clark County Juvenile Court and the Clark County School Districts.

How does a student get involved with the Clark County Truancy Project?

Once students have been court-petitioned and referred to the Truancy Project, they are sent a letter inviting the student and their parents to an orientation. It is mandatory that both the student and the parent/guardian are in attendance for orientation. Orientation is often the first contact the families have with the Truancy Project and its group of Truancy Specialists. Families and students learn about the truancy process, how the Truancy Project works, what they can expect from the Truancy Specialists and how the Project can help them reduce truancy. After orientation, the Specialists will track attendance, meet with the students and school administrators, conduct home visits and may refer students to other community agencies - all in an effort to reconnect the student to a positive experience in school. The Truancy Project Specialist may monitor a student for up to a year. A successful student will receive a positive exit sooner and a struggling or non-compliant student may be referred back to court with a negative exit and risk being in contempt of court.

What are some objectives the Truancy Project pursues?

Using a comprehensive computerized tracking system that accurately provides statistical information regarding the attendance progress of students; it is easy to work toward setting achievable goals with the student. The Truancy Project Specialists coordinate resources of schools, community agencies and juvenile courts to provide appropriate intervention and assistance programs for youth and their families. The main objective is to keep youth in school and assist them in receiving their education.

How does a student obtain a positive release from the Truancy Project?

A student can be released from the Truancy Project if they have successfully completed the Clark County Truancy Project by no longer being in violation of the BECCA law, and the student has made significant progress towards appropriate attendance and educational progress. If this is met, then the student will be released with a positive exit.

So what are ways to be discharged with a negative exit?

A student can earn a negative exit by refusing to participate in the Truancy Project, not fulfill his or her contractual agreement with the Clark County Truancy Board or not improve his or her attendance pattern over a period of time as determined by the Truancy Project Specialist. When there is a negative exit, the student is referred back to juvenile court and may serve time in juvenile detention and the parent/guardian can be fined \$25 for each day the student was absent in the school year.

Will a student go straight to court if they are non-compliant?

No. Once it is determined by the Project Specialist that a student is not making, or attempting to make progress, the student is invited to appear in front of a Community Truancy Board. The Truancy Board consists of volunteers from throughout Clark County, a school district representative and Truancy Project staff. The student will have a chance to explain his or her continued attendance issues and will then work with the Board to develop an attendance agreement (contract). The

student may be scheduled for a review Board at that time. Truancy Project Specialists follow up on the students' progress and present the Board with updated information at the next meeting. The attendance agreement also is part of the filings if the student is returned to court.

What can the Truancy Project Specialist offer students outside the project?

Truancy Project Specialists can offer numerous resources and referrals to each student. Tutoring, academic credit recovery, mentoring, mental health services, drug and alcohol assessment/treatment, volunteer programs and work experience are just a few options.

How do I contact the Clark County Truancy Project?

Students are referred to the Truancy Project by their school or school district representatives. To find out about how attendance is tracked and monitored for students, contact the students' school attendance office. To find out more about the Clark County Truancy Project, such as how to volunteer to serve on a Community Truancy Board, contact ESD112 at (360) 750-7500 ext. 290.

CLARK COMMUNITY TRUANCY PROJECT
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