

# **School Truancy**

**Lorain County  
Domestic Relations Court  
Juvenile Division**





# Best Practice





# Myths of Poor Attendance

- “These parents don’t care. These are bad parents.”
- “These kids don’t care. These kids are lazy.”
- “It doesn’t matter if you show up if you’re not ready to learn.”
- “Absences in early grades are no big deal. It’s just first grade.”
- “Students don’t really start missing school until they’re older.”

# Myths of Poor Attendance

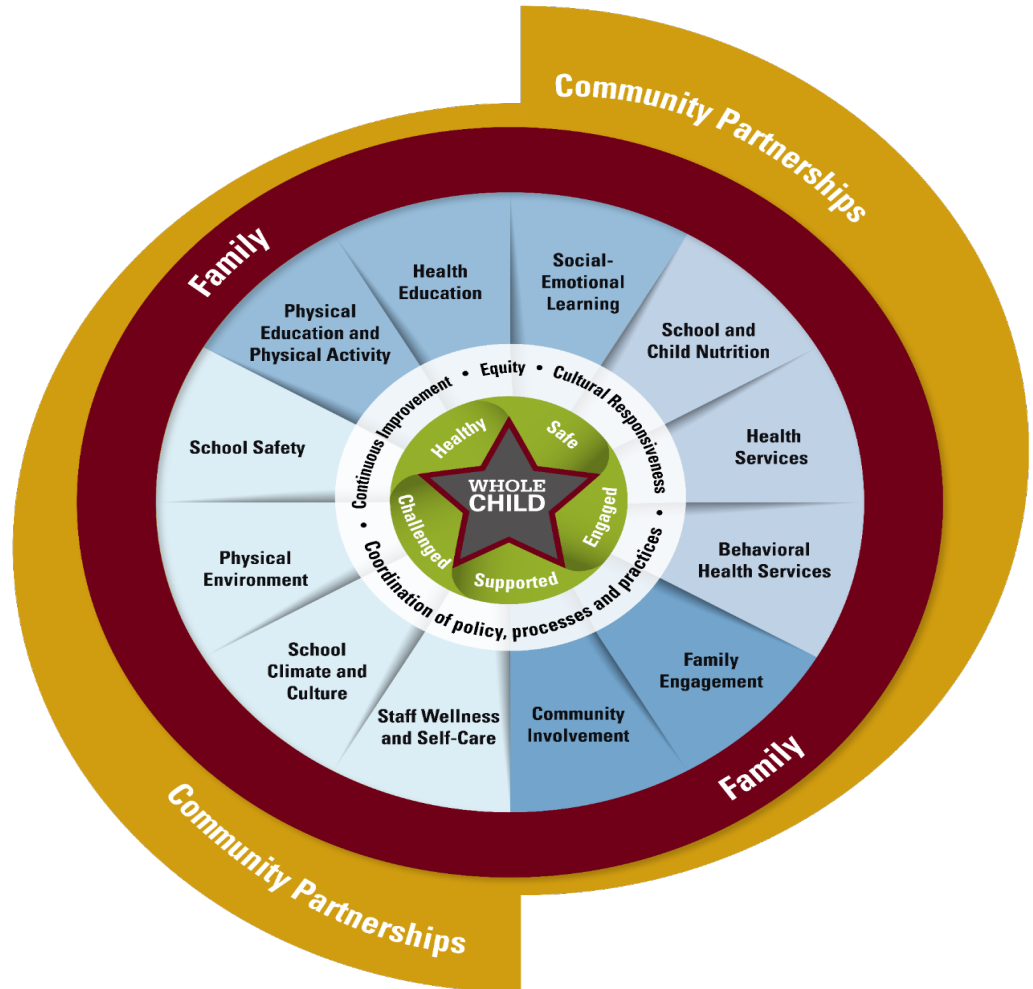
- “There’s nothing schools can do to improve attendance—it’s up the parents.”
- “These kids also have disciplinary issues. They’re just trouble.”
- “These kids are from “that” part of town” or “What can you expect from a kid from that background?”



# The Realities and Challenges of Attendance

- Mental Health
- Dealing with trauma (reported/unreported)
- Managing social media behaviors
- Homelessness/Displacement
- Changes in graduation requirements
- Increase in substance abuse

# Ohio's Whole Child Framework



# Why Focus on Attendance Data?

- Student interventions are strengthened when the student attends school regularly.
- By ninth grade, good attendance can predict graduation rates better than eighth grade test scores.
- Students in grades K-3 who were never chronically absent were 6.7x more likely to pass the 3rd Grade Reading Guarantee.
- High school students who were never chronically absent were 9x more likely to graduate on time
- Chronic Absenteeism is an indicator on the state report card.
- Attendance affects everything at the school, and everything at the school affects attendance.





## Reducing chronic absence requires addressing a variety of challenges

### Barriers

- Chronic and acute illness
- Family responsibilities or home situation
- Trauma
- Poor transportation
- Housing and food insecurity
- Inequitable access to needed services
- System involvement
- Lack of predictable schedules for learning
- Lack of access to tech
- Community violence
- Etc. and many more!

### Aversion

- Struggling academically and/or behaviorally
- Unwelcoming school climate
- Social and peer challenges
- Anxiety
- Biased disciplinary and suspension practices
- Undiagnosed disability and/or disability accommodations
- Parents had negative educational experiences

### Disengagement

- Lack of challenging, culturally responsive instruction
- Bored
- No meaningful relationships to adults in the school (especially given staff shortages)
- Lack of enrichment opportunities
- Lack of academic and behavioral support
- Failure to earn credits
- Drawn to low-wage job vs. being in high school

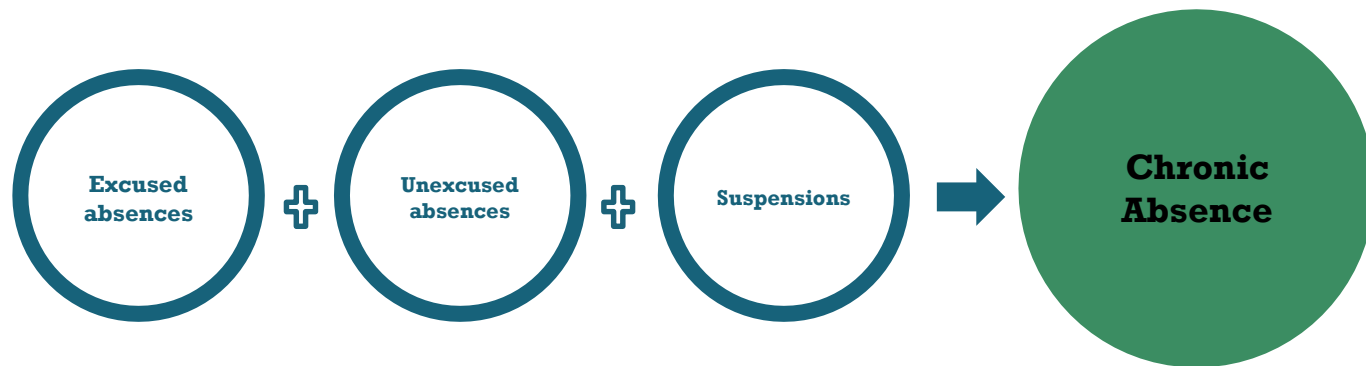
### Misconceptions

- Absences are only a problem if they are unexcused
- Missing 2 days per month doesn't affect learning
- Lose track and underestimate TOTAL absences
- Sporadic absences aren't a problem
- Attendance only matters in the older grades
- Suspensions don't count as absence



## What is chronic absence?

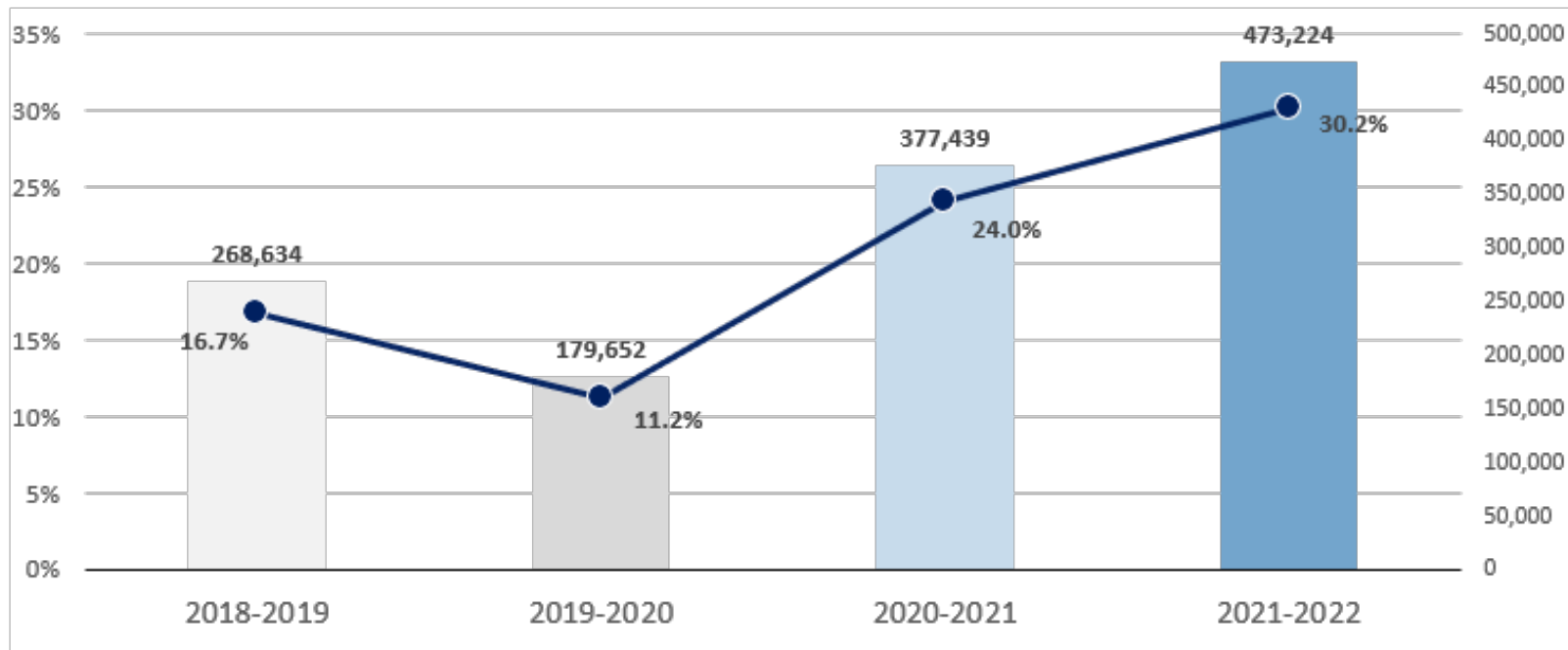
Chronic absence is missing so much school for any reason that a student is academically at risk. Chronic absence is defined as **missing 10 percent or more of school for any reason.**



Chronic absence is different from **truancy** (unexcused absences only) or **average daily attendance** (how many students show up to school each day).

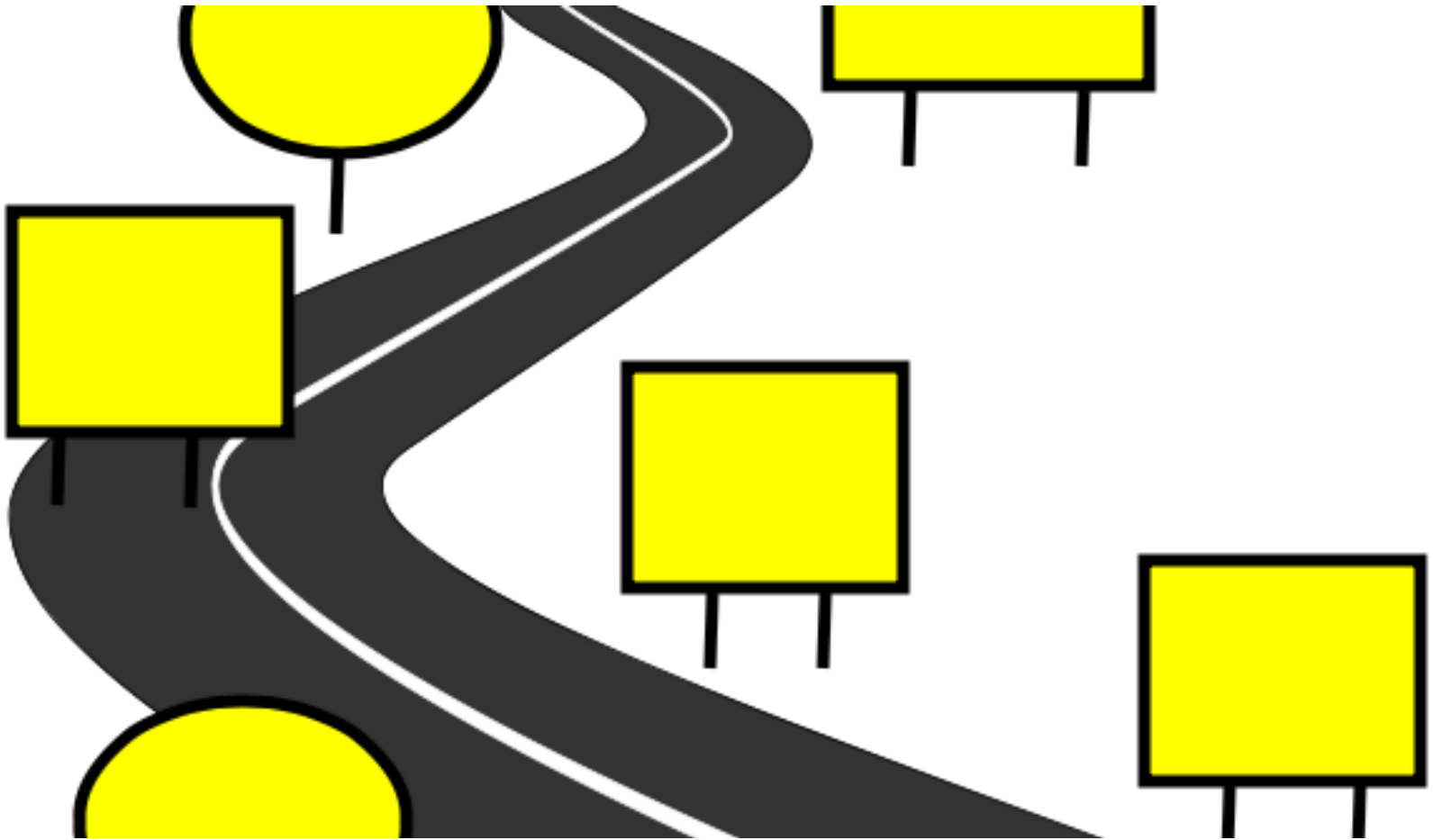
# Chronic Absenteeism in Ohio

Statewide Chronic Absence Rate and Number of Chronically Absent Students





# HOW



# 10 Critical Steps To School Truancy



# Legal Timelines

- Habitual Truancy Trigger Date
- **7 school days** to assign an Absence Intervention Team & make at least three meaningful good faith attempts at parental participation
- **10 school days** of triggering absence assign juvenile to the AIP
- **14 school days** after AIP is assigned to develop an Absence Intervention Plan
- **60 calendar days** to monitor
- 61-day to file a formal complaint





# Step 1: Power School Reports

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- Run CONSISTENT REPORTS...
- Daily
- Weekly



**PowerSchool**

# Step 2:

## Send 1<sup>st</sup> Letter

- Send a Letter when a student has been absent
  - **38+ hours/month**
- OR**
- **65+ hours/school year and notify**
  - **Includes**
  - **EXCUSED (Legitimate Excuse)**

**AND/OR**  
**UNEXCUSED (Without Legitimate Excuse)**



# Step 3: Habitual Truant

- Send a Letter when a child has triggered “Habitual Truancy”
- “UNEXCUSED” hours only





# Step 4

## Absence Intervention Team

- The Superintendent of each school district shall establish a district absence intervention team for use by schools that do not establish their own teams.
- Principal or chief administrator may establish an absence intervention team in lieu of the district team



# Step 5

## Identify Absence Intervention Team Members

- Superintendent, Principal or Chief Administrator selects team. May vary based on student's needs but must include:
  - School representative
  - School representative who knows the child, and
  - Parent or parent's designee, or guardian, custodian, GAL or temp. Custodian
- May include: school psychologist, counselor, social worker, or absence reduction agency rep.



# Parent Participation

Within seven (7) school days of reaching habitual truant threshold, the Superintendent, Principal or Chief Administrator shall make at least three meaningful, good faith attempts to secure the participation of the student's parent, custodian, GAL or temporary custodian on the team.

If parent responds but is unable to participate for any reason, he/she must be informed that may appear by designee

If parent fails to respond, then school must do both of the following:

- Investigate whether the failure to respond triggers mandatory reporting to children services, and
- Instruct the absence intervention team to develop an intervention plan notwithstanding the parent's absence.



## Step 6

# Absence Intervention Plan

- The team shall develop an absence intervention plan within 14 school days of being assigned.
- The plan must be based on the student's individual needs

# Required language

- The absence intervention plan must include language that the attendance officer must file a complaint in juvenile court no later than 61 days after the plan was implemented if the child refused to participate or failed to make satisfactory progress on the intervention plan or the alternative to adjudication





**Step 7**  
**Place the Absence**  
**Intervention Plan date in**  
**Power School**

# Step 8 Notice

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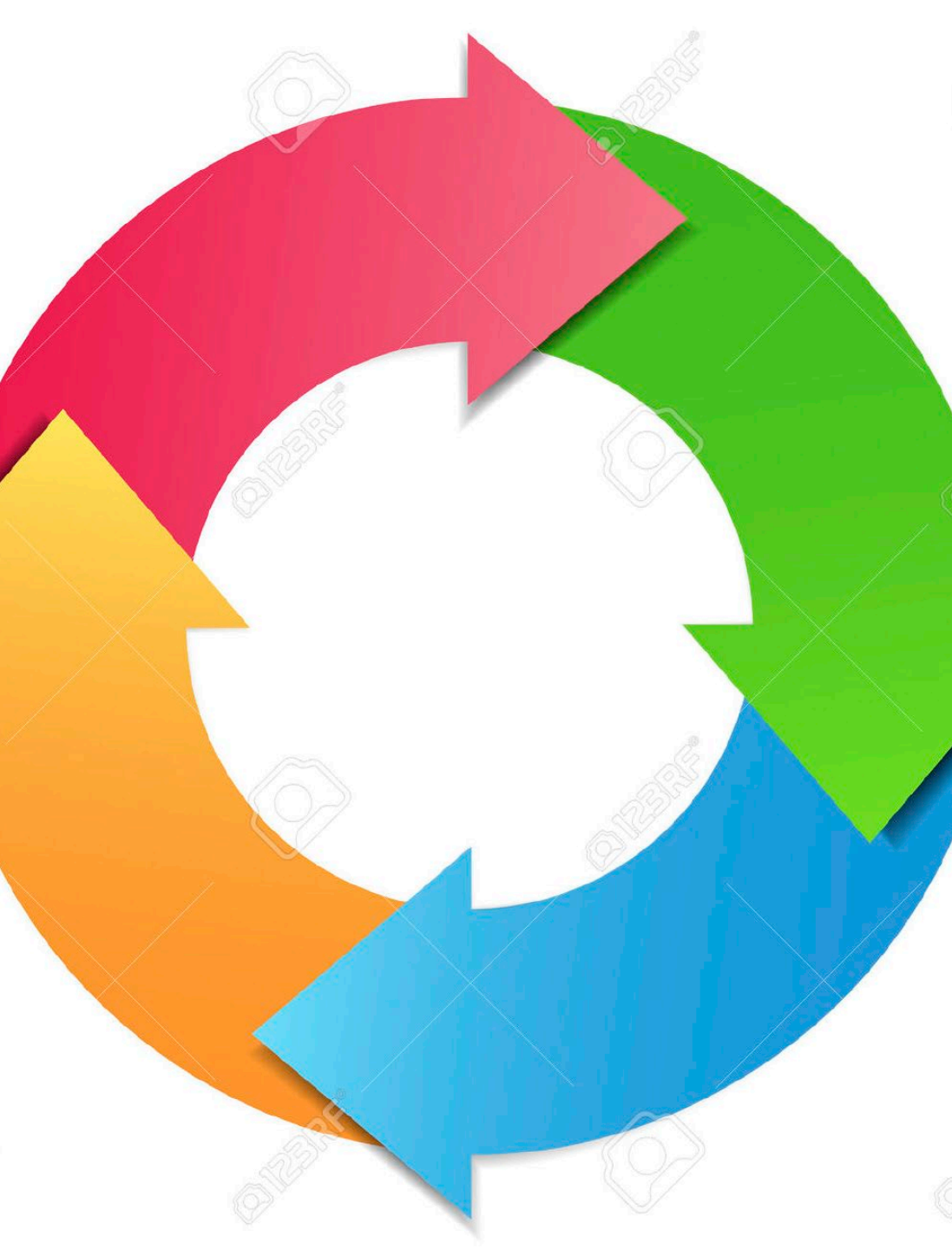
- Within seven (7) calendar days of the plan's development, the school shall make reasonable efforts to provide the parent/guardian/custodian/GAL with written notice of the plan.





## **Step 9**

### **Evaluate the Plan**



## **Step 10 Monitor**

Continue to Monitor  
Progress for 60  
calendar days...



# Official Complaint

- The attendance officer shall file a complaint in the juvenile court "not" later than 61 days after implementation of the plan if all of the following apply...



- Additionally, if, during implementation of the intervention plan, unexcused absences continue and reach 30+ consecutive hours or 42+/school month, then the complaint must be filed unless the team determines the student has made substantial progress on the plan.



# Things to be mindful of...

- Residency Checks
- Review Absence Intervention Plan status
- How will you share information with your team
- When will the team meetings be held
- How will the team meetings be held (Virtual, in person, in the home...)
- Who is responsible to manage each task



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## Powerschool Required Notices

- Districts must also notify the Department of Education "as soon as practicable and in a format and manner prescribed by the department" the following:
  - When a student has been absent 38+ hours/month or 65+ hours/school year and parent has been notified;
  - When a child has been absent without legitimate excuse the number of hours to be considered an habitual truant;
  - When a child who has been adjudicated an habitual truant violates the adjudicatory court order;
  - When an absence intervention plan has been implemented.

