



Truancy Reduction

1. Purpose:

This funding is provided solely for the implementation of chapter 291, Laws of 2017, the compulsory attendance laws.

2. Description of services provided:

This proviso solely funds OSPI staff to develop guidance, disseminate best practices, communicate to schools and districts, provide professional development, provide technical assistance, inform data reporting requirements and interpretation, convene peer learning opportunities, and collaborate across agency and cross system partners to improve our state’s approach to attendance & truancy.

3. Criteria for receiving services and/or grants:

N/A

Beneficiaries in the 2022-23 School Year:

- Number of School Districts: All
- Number of Schools: N/A
- Number of Students: N/A
- Number of Educators: N/A
- Other: N/A

4. Are federal or other funds contingent on state funding?

No

5. State funding history:

Fiscal Year	Amount Funded	Actual Expenditures
2023	\$178,000	\$178,000
2022	\$178,000	\$178,000
2021	\$178,000	\$141,781
2020	\$178,000	\$169,616
2019	\$178,000	\$164,537



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6. Number of beneficiaries (e.g., school districts, schools, students, educators, other) history:

Fiscal Year	Number of Districts
2023	295

7. Programmatic changes since inception (if any):

In January of 2022, the OSPI Attendance & Truancy program launched a comprehensive state-wide initiative, the ESSER Attendance and Reengagement Project. This project funds staffing in districts, STECs and ESDs to address attendance, engagement, truancy and reengagement greatly impacted by the pandemic. Read more about the [ESSER Attendance & Reengagement Project](#). OSPI Attendance program staff dedicated a significant portion of their time developing, managing, coordinating, and supporting this project, particularly the regional ESD Attendance & Reengagement Coordinators who in turn are providing intentional, tactical support of districts in their region. Regional coordinators have supported and conducted various trainings and co-developed resources with OSPI including a [Truancy 101 webinar](#) (over 750 registered), Community Engagement Board trainings and [web resources](#), and a [training series](#) for schools and districts to improve attendance.

In September of 2021, the OSPI Attendance & Truancy launched the OSPI Re-envisioning Truancy Project, in partnership with American Institutes for Research (AIR), Puget Sound Educational Service District (PESD) and the Center for Children & Youth Justice (CCYJ). This project is engaging and listening to youth and families with lived experience with the truancy process, as well as our partners in and with the education system, to understand more about the process, the gaps, and the reality of implementation. This project will provide a report and recommendations to OSPI leadership by May 2024.

During the pandemic and after, OSPI Attendance program has worked consistently to produce guidance and webinars on the topic of withdrawing students, in order to dispel the myth that districts are required to withdraw students after 20 days. The OSPI team continues to work internally and externally to raise awareness and address the system barriers and policy gaps that underpin this harmful practice. The attendance team hosted a webinar in Spring of 2023 that had over 1,300 participants register. Students that are withdrawn are often overlooked when we consider truancy, because primarily students that are withdrawn do not have a truancy petition filed and are therefore missed by the system of possible supports.



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8. Program evaluation or evaluation of major findings:

While the final Re-envisioning Truancy Project report will provide comprehensive analysis of the findings, we do know that school districts consistently file truancy petitions on a small percentage of students that meet the unexcused absence criteria. During the three school years prior to the pandemic (SY 2017, 2018, 2019), of the students that met the criteria for a truancy petition, only 11.3%, 12.6%, and 11.1% ever had a truancy petition filed on them. More data regarding truancy can be found on the [OSPI Attendance Policies, Guidance and Data Reporting webpage](#).

9. Major challenges faced by the program:

While the final Re-envisioning Truancy Project report will provide comprehensive analysis of challenges, anecdotally we know that districts cite unprecedented attendance and engagement challenges post-pandemic, with students experiencing high rates of anxiety and depression, physical health barriers, feeling disconnected socially, falling behind in classes and believing they can't catch up, not having the support they need at school and more. Schools and districts are also experiencing budget cuts due to the end of ESSER dollars as well as reduced enrollment, and state that there are not enough staff to do the work necessary to follow through on the truancy process or do intensive reengagement work. In MTSS language, their triangles are upside down and there are many more students with extreme high rates of absences and poor academic performance that case management and one on one supports are just not possible for all the students that need it. This highlights the need for more system building and tier 1 strategies, to go upstream, and to reduce the number of students who need tier 2 and 3 supports. Relevant to both truancy and chronic absence, districts and schools are reporting they struggle to access the data necessary to organize effectively around attendance and engagement.

Traditional approaches to truancy which rely on a punitive approach, are still widely used. The elimination of the valid court order which allowed courts to place students in juvenile detention has resulted even less intervention from courts in some areas and contributed to a more hands off approach in some districts. Improving and enhancing school and districts' tiered approaches and early warning systems is critical, as we have learned even schools with strong systems prior to the pandemic were overwhelmed during the last two years, and now are picking up the pieces. The state, and its partners, have a key role in supporting schools, districts, and courts to rethink this approach to one of support and addressing barriers to learning, either student or system caused. The District Truancy & Excessive Absenteeism liaison position, required by law, is not funded and is often one small part of someone's job, and often without positional authority to influence school or district practice. School districts continue to see truancy as an unfunded mandate.



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10. **Future opportunities:**

We look forward to learning from students, families and partners in and with education about their experiences, needs and hopes for supporting youth who are experiencing unexcused absences and using that information to inform our policy and budget priorities and/or state-wide supports.

Future opportunities include building on the pilot implementation of a temporarily ESSER funded regional capacity to support schools and districts address absences and truancy. ESDs have a key role to play to provide a need layer of support and reengagement services, so that courts can truly be a last resort in truancy cases. They also play a key role in supporting training and coaching of districts to embed attendance and early warning systems in their multi-tiered system of supports through teaming, data, tiered interventions, and community partnerships as well as support districts with developing their Community Engagement Boards.

11. **Statutory and/or budget language:**

\$178,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2022 and \$178,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2023 are provided solely for implementation of chapter 291, Laws of 2017 (truancy reduction efforts).

12. **Other relevant information:**

None

13. **Schools/districts receiving assistance:**

[preliminaryfy23state-fundedprovisograntawardsupdated-42823.xlsx \(live.com\)](#)

14. **Program Contact Information:**

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