



OSPI Randy I. Dorn, State Superintendent

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REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE

UPDATE: Truancy Report

December 2015

Authorizing legislation: RCW 28A.225.151

(<http://app.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=28A.225.151>)

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Executive Summary

At the end of the school year, each district compiles (from its schools), verifies, and submits summary data on truancy petitions to the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). There was an increase in the total number of truancy petitions reported being filed for the 2014-15 school year. The provision of more clearly defined rules, definitions, and reporting expectations from OSPI has assisted districts in the tracking and reporting of truancy data.

Truancy data is currently provided to OSPI at the aggregate level by district. This level of reporting does not allow for disaggregated reporting of truancy petitions by subgroups (e.g., building, grade level, or demographics). Beginning with the 2016-17 school year, student-level data will be collected and allow for more thorough data analysis.

Background

Twenty years ago the Washington State Legislature enacted the Becca Bill in response to the tragic death of Becca Hedman, whose chronic truancy and running away from home led to her murder at the age of 12. The intent of the law is to unite schools, courts, communities, and families in an effort to overcome the barriers that prevent school attendance.

Update Status

OSPI began collecting student-level absence data, for both excused and unexcused absences, in the 2012–13 school year. Prior to that, information was only collected on an aggregate basis. WAC 392-400-325 provides the definitions for excused and unexcused daily absences. However, truancy petition information is still submitted at an aggregate level.

Data elements required in the Truancy Report include:

- Total number of unexcused absences,
- Number of students with 10 or more unexcused absences in a school year or five or more unexcused absences in a month, and the
- Number of truancy petitions filed with the courts.

The expanded tables for Grades 1–8 and Grades 9–12 include information on enrollment, unexcused absences, truancy petitions, and more.

Grades 1–8 Statewide Truancy Report Totals

	2014–2015	2013–2014	2012–2013	2011–2012
October Enrollment	646,576	636,621	622,150	625,631
Unexcused Absences	169,149	144,550	147,021	134,396
5+ Unexcused Absences Within 30 Days	12,184	9,658	10,360	8,830
10+ Unexcused Absences in a school year	13,025	10,777	11,316	9,213
Total Truancy Petitions Filed Between 9/1/14 and 5/31/15	3,390	3,058	3,621	2,901
Total Truancy Petitions Filed Between 6/1/15 and 8/31/15	398	425	310	193

Grades 9–12 Statewide Truancy Report

	2014–2015	2013–2014	2012–2013	2011–2012
October Enrollment	333,274	327,161	320,153	324,951
Unexcused Absences	172,395	162,191	171,451	190,602
5+ Unexcused Absences Within 30 Days	37,990	34,042	36,146	36,647
10+ Unexcused Absences in a school year	43,538	39,143	40,838	40,858
Total Truancy Petitions Filed Between 9/1/14 and 5/31/15	6,423	6,088	6,680	6,752
Total Truancy Petitions Filed Between 6/1/15 and 8/31/15	718	535	460	299

Conclusion and Next Steps

The original intent of the Truancy Report was to provide information on the relationship between the “habitual truant” and truancy petitions as an intervention. Clearer, more defined guidance from OSPI in the definition of *unexcused absences*, and the accountability for districts to report the data to OSPI, have moved districts to review and redefine attendance policies across the state.

The Data Management and the Data Governance groups approved the collection of student-level data for truancy. The data will be gathered beginning with the 2016–17 school year and will be reported on in future truancy reports.

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