



OSPI Randy I. Dorn, State Superintendent

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TO THE LEGISLATURE

UPDATE: Truancy Report

2016

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 2015-16 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

In 1995, 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

	2015-2016	2014–2015	2013–2014	2012–2013
October Enrollment	657,781	646,576	636,621	622,150
Unexcused Absences	179,499	169,149	144,550	147,021
5+ Unexcused Absences Within 30 Days	13,663	12,184	9,658	10,360
10+ Unexcused Absences in a school year	14,728	13,025	10,777	11,316
Total Truancy Petitions reported	3,950	3,788	3,483	3,931

Grades 9–12 Statewide Truancy Report

	2015-2016	2014–2015	2013–2014	2012–2013
October Enrollment	337,694	333,274	327,161	320,153
Unexcused Absences	169,283	172,395	162,191	171,451
5+ Unexcused Absences Within 30 Days	38,655	37,990	34,042	36,146
10+ Unexcused Absences in a school year	44,201	43,538	39,143	40,838
Total Truancy Petitions reported	7,217	7,141	6,623	7,140

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.

Both the OSPI 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. Additionally, with the passage of SSHB 2449, a request has been made to the Data Governance group to collect data as to whether the truancy petition was stayed, and the student and family were served by a community truancy board or other coordinated intervention. If approved, this data will be collected in the 2017-18 school year. It is worth noting that many districts are expanding the menu of tiered interventions with students and families and not filing petitions. In elementary school about 30 percent of the eligible students (who reached the threshold of 10 unexcused absences in a year) had petitions filed and in secondary school about 19 percent of the students with ten or more unexcused absences in a year had petitions filed. The new data analytics that OSPI has released on chronic absenteeism and the intentionality on early intervention, needs assessment and responses to root causes may be contributing factors to not filing truancy petitions.

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