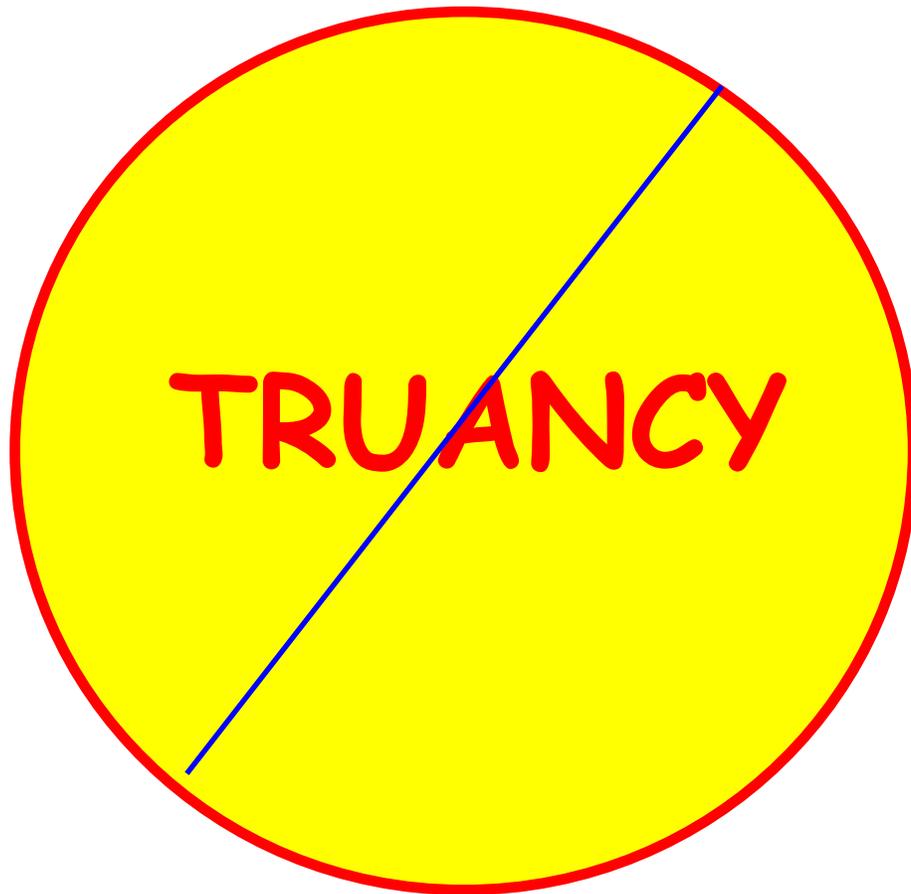


# Let's End Truancy

The L.E.T. Program



County of San Bernardino

# Office of the District Attorney

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\* Manual printed through the use of AB 1913 funds.

## A Message From the District Attorney

The San Bernardino County District Attorney's Office takes truancy very seriously. We know that it is often the "gateway" to juvenile delinquency and, later, more serious adult crime. Making sure that kids go to school and stay in school is very important to me for two reasons. One is because as District Attorney of San Bernardino County I want kids to stay out of trouble and out of the court system. The best way to do this is by making sure kids stay in school. The second reason is that, since I served seven years on the Redlands' School Board, I know how important a good education is to a child's future. Children are our most important resource. Parents, it's up to you to see that they get the best education available. Students, it's up to you to stay in school so that you are ready to lead us into the future.

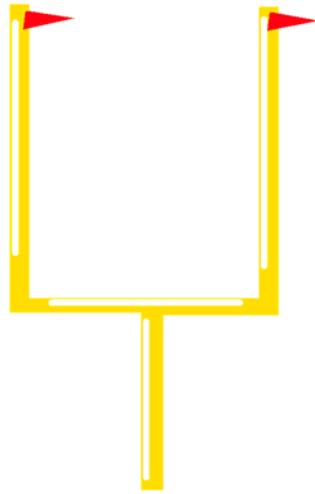
Michael A. Ramos, District Attorney

## What Is the L.E.T. Program ?



- 👍 L.E.T. stands for "Let's End Truancy" and means striking a blow against truancy.
- 👍 L.E.T. means that we are serious about truancy and want to help kids stay in school.
- 👍 L.E.T. means making everyone aware that when kids are truant it affects us all.
- 👍 L.E.T. means everyone working together to make sure all of our kids get the education they deserve and need in order to succeed.
- 👍 L.E.T. means we care about truancy because we care about kids.

## What Are L.E.T.'s Goals?



- 🔔 Improving school attendance for previously truant students
- 🔔 Discouraging future truancy
- 🔔 Helping to make education a top priority for students
- 🔔 Looking at the truant student individually to best assess his or her needs
- 🔔 Using a progressive discipline approach for truants and families
- 🔔 Working with families to determine the causes of truancy
- 🔔 Reducing the negative impacts caused by truancy and juvenile delinquency

## Why Have a Manual About Truancy?



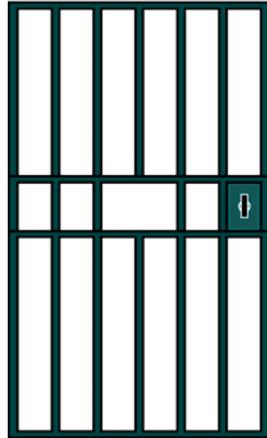
- Kids need a good education and they can't get it if they're not in school.
- A manual points out why it's important for kids to go to school.
- A manual spells out exactly what is expected of students and what will happen if they don't go to school.
- A manual brings together different agencies with the same goal and lets everyone know who's responsible for what.

## Why Talk About Truancy?



- Truancy is a big problem in San Bernardino County that affects all of us.
- Truancy is expensive and we all end up paying for it sooner or later.
- There is a direct link between truancy and juvenile delinquency.
- Kids who are truant are at greater risk for getting involved with alcohol, drugs, gangs, and violence.
- Parents need to understand why it's important for their kids to get to school and stay there.
- Kids need to understand that education should be their top priority.
- Everyone needs to understand the consequences of truancy.

## What's the Link Between Truancy and Delinquency?



- ☹ Students who drop out of school are more likely to end up in prison.
- ☹ 78% of prison inmates had truancy as the first entry on their arrest records.
- ☹ The most likely juvenile recidivists were those whose first referrals were truancy, burglary, motor vehicle theft or robbery.
- ☹ Truants are found to be at greater risk for becoming involved with gangs, drugs, alcohol or violence. 67% of truants tested positive for drugs at the time they were detained.
- ☹ 57% of violent crimes committed by juveniles occur on school days.
- ☹ 82% of prisoners today are school dropouts.

## Just the Facts . . .



- More than \$1 billion is spent annually on the juvenile justice system by state and local agencies.
- Truancy cases increased 65% between 1986 and 1995.
- 53% of surveyed cities that have imposed daytime curfew laws credit the new laws for a decrease in juvenile crime.
- Truancy rates are as high as 30% in some cities.
- High rates of truancy are linked to high dropout rates.
- High school dropouts are two and a half times more likely to be on welfare than are high school graduates.

## Which Agencies Work to Stop Truancy?



Truancy is a problem that affects the whole community, and many agencies are responsible for helping to reduce it. They are:

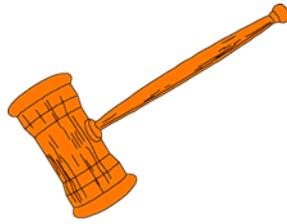
- 👓 San Bernardino County District Attorney's Office
- 👓 San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools
- 👓 Local school districts
- 👓 San Bernardino County Children's Network
- 👓 San Bernardino County Probation Department
- 👓 School Resource Officers county wide

# Why Does My Child Need to Go To School?



- ✎ To get the best start in life, a child needs a good education.
- ✎ If your child does not go to school, he or she can't get the grades needed to progress and graduate.
- ✎ Often employers won't hire employees with poor school attendance.
- ✎ Failure to attend school may result in an inability to secure a loan/scholarship for college.
- ✎ Young people who miss school are often victims or perpetrators of crime.
- ✎ If your child doesn't go to school you and the child can be prosecuted.

## What is the Truancy Law?



Section 48260 of the Education Code states: "Any pupil subject to compulsory full-time education or to compulsory continuation education who is absent from school without a valid excuse 3 full days in one school year or tardy or absent for more than any 30 minute period during the school day without a valid excuse on 3 occasions in 1 school year, or any combination thereof, is a truant and shall be reported to the attendance supervisor or to the superintendent of the school district."

This means your child must be in school and ready to work unless there is a valid reason. If your child is found to be a habitual truant, you and your child can be prosecuted. You could go to jail or pay a fine, or both. It is your responsibility to make sure your child goes to school and stays in school!

## What Happens to the Truant Child?



1. A letter is sent or a phone call is made to the parents.
2. A school worker may visit the home.
3. The parents meet with the School Administration.
4. The parents receive a letter from the D.A. (District Attorney).
5. The student appears before the local S.A.R.B. (School Attendance Review Board) made up of school officials and community representatives.
6. The case is sent to the county S.A.R.B. made up of personnel from law enforcement, Child Protective Services, Behavioral Health, and School District personnel.
7. If attendance doesn't improve, the child and parents may be cited by the police into court

## The Case Goes to the D.A. and ?



- 📁 The D.A.'s office is the last stop for the truant.
- 📁 Before a case is referred to the D.A.'s office, it has already gone through many stages. Each stage was a chance for the truant to turn his or her life around and start attending school.
- 📁 The truant and his or her parents have already received a letter from the D.A. stating that if the child does not attend school, the child and the parent could be prosecuted.
- 📁 When the D.A. receives a case he or she will review it and decide whether or not to prosecute the parent, the child or both.

## What Are the Penalties?



If the officer issues a citation against the parents under Education Code 48291/48293, the penalties are:

- \$100 - \$500 fine plus penalty assessments imposed by the court
- Court ordered to attend a parent education and counseling program
- Court ordered to personally drop off student at school daily
- Community Service

## What Are the Penalties?



If the D.A. files charges against the parents under Penal Code 272: Contributing to the Delinquency of a Minor, a misdemeanor, the penalties are:

- \$2,500 fine plus penalty assessments imposed by the court
- Up to 1-year county jail
- Up to five years probation with terms and conditions.
- Failure to comply with a court order may result in additional jail time for contempt of court.

Additional penalties:

- If it is determined that the child is not "regularly attending school as required", Welfare and Institution Code 11253.5 authorizes the County CalWORKS office to reduce a family welfare grant.

## What Are the Penalties?



If the D.A. files charges against the student under Welfare & Institution Code 601, the penalties are:

- Wardship
- Probation with terms & conditions
- 20 - 40 hours of community service
- A maximum fine of \$100 plus the penalty assessment imposed by the court
- Driving privileges are suspended, revoked or delayed up to 4 years
- Court ordered to attend a truancy prevention program

## How Can I Help My Child?



-  Make sure your child goes to school regularly.
-  Take an interest in your child's schoolwork.
-  If your child starts to miss school, speak to the school and let your child know he or she must attend.
-  If your child is ill, contact the school and explain the reason for the absence.
-  Don't expect the school to agree to frivolous outings, such as shopping trips or family vacations.
-  Don't expect your older children to stay home and act as babysitters for younger children.

# Why Should I Stay in School?



- ☺ If you stay in school and get your diploma, you'll double your chances of getting a good paying job.
- ☺ If you stay in school, you're less likely to get involved with gangs and drugs.
- ☺ If you stay in school, you're less likely to be a victim of crime.
- ☺ If you stay in school, you won't run the risk of being prosecuted by the District Attorney's Office for truancy.
- ☺ If you stay in school, you can write your own ticket to go anywhere and to do anything.

County of San Bernardino

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