

Dealing with Truancy, Drug Use & Undesirable Behaviors

Truancy

Truancy is the first sign of trouble; the first indicator that a young person is giving up and losing his or her way. When young people start skipping school, they are telling their parents, school officials and the community at large that they are in trouble and need our help if they are to keep moving forward in life.

Truancy is the gateway to crime. High rates of truancy are linked to high daytime burglary rates and high vandalism. According to the Los Angeles County Office of Education, truancy is the most powerful predictor of juvenile delinquent behavior. "I've never seen a gang member who wasn't a truant first," says California District Attorney Kim Menninger. Truancy prevention efforts should be a part of any community policing effort to prevent crime before it happens.

What parents/guardians can do:

- Talk about the importance of regular school attendance with your child.
- Let the child know that you expect him/her to attend school everyday.
- Help your child to arrive at school on time.
- Participate in all possible areas of your child's education.
- Call the school or write a note to report the dates and the reason(s) for absences within two school days.
- Notify the school about anticipated absences before they occur.
- Attend school conferences to resolve any attendance issues.
- Cooperate with school personnel in correcting attendance problems.
- Monitor the accuracy of your child's attendance records on a frequent basis.
- Notify the school of any changes in your home address or home/work/emergency/telephone numbers.
- Read and discuss the Code of Student Conduct

Drug Use

If you find your child using alcohol and/or drugs, how do you react? What can you do as a parent? What are your parental responsibilities in this situation?

When you find that this is the case, be prepared to talk and to really listen. Be aware that lecturing might not work. Find out when the situation began and what substances are being used. How is your child obtaining them? Is he or she paying for them or is somebody giving them to him or her? Is your child being pressured by someone?

If you find that your child is getting the alcohol or other substances at school, you will need to talk to the school authorities. If you do not see that school is taking any actions talk to police. Be ready to act quickly on this. Find professional help- such as a drug counselor or psychologist. If the drug use is heavy, you might have to take your child to a center that specializes in drug rehabilitation. In all plans you make with your child, be clear and consistent about consequences. Remember that you bear the responsibility for your minor child. Open communication with your child is key.

Reckless Driving

There are two main reasons why teens are at a higher risk for being in a car crash: lack of driving experience and their tendency to take risks while driving.

- **Lack of experience.** Teens drive faster and do not control the car as well as more experienced drivers. Their judgment in traffic is often insufficient to avoid a crash. In addition, teens do most of their driving at night, which can even be more difficult. Standard driver's education classes include 30 hours of class-room teaching and 6 hour of behind-the-wheel training. This is not enough time to fully train a new driver.
- **Risk Taking.** Teen drivers are more likely to be influenced by peers and other stresses and distractions. This can lead to reckless driving behaviors such as speeding, driving while under the influence of drugs or alcohol, and not wearing a seat belt.

