



# Truancy and House Bill 2398

**BOARD  
PRESENTATION**

**Presented by:**

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## Truancy Update

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- During the 84<sup>th</sup> Legislative Session, House Bill 2398 was passed decriminalizing truancy.
- It goes into effective September 1, 2015.

## H.B. 2398

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- Criminal court to Civil court
  - Complaints to Referrals
- Assign a District Truancy Prevention Facilitator
- Implement approved Truancy Prevention Measures
  - upon 3 unexcused absences
- Upon 10 absences in a 6 month period, referral to appropriate authority
- Fort Bend County must create a Truancy Plan

## How else will FBISD respond?

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- Attendance Campaign: *Attendance Works*
- ADA Specialists added at High Schools
  - ADAs and other specific staff will contact families
- Small Focus Groups in Community
- New District-wide Procedures at Campus Level
- Ongoing Communication

# FBISD Truancy Procedures

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1. Upon any student absence, an **automated phone call** will go to the parent/guardian the same day.
2. Upon the student's return, he or she will have **five school days to provide a note of excuse for any absence** to the school's attendance clerk. (See handbook for a list of approved absences.)
3. Upon the **third unexcused absence in a four week period or the fifth total unexcused absence**, a **Truancy Warning and Request for Conference Letter** will be mailed to the parent at the home address on record with the school, and Truancy Prevention Measures will be implemented by Campus Assistant Principal.

# FBISD Truancy Procedures

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4. Upon the **fifth total unexcused absence**, a **Truancy Diversion Program (TDP) Letter** will be sent to the parent/guardian. In addition, an automated phone call will go to the parent/guardian the week prior to the scheduled TDP, and, while attending the TDP the Student Attendance Contract will be signed by the student and parent and forwarded to the campus.
5. Following an invitation to TDP, the parent/guardian and student will meet with the campus assistant principal and any relevant staff to develop a Truancy Action Plan.
6. If a student accrues **ten unexcused absences in a six-month period**, whether the student/parent has attended TDP or not, a truancy referral will be sent to the appropriate authority, unless the student is eligible for one of the four exceptions under the law.

# Truancy Prevention Measures

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Districts are required to adopt prevention measures that are designed to address student conduct related to truancy before students engage in truant conduct and that minimize the need for truancy referrals.

Districts can employ one or more of the following three truancy measures:

**(1) require** behavior intervention plans

**(2) require** school-based community service

**(3) refer** the student to counseling, mediation, mentoring, a teen court program, community-based services or other in-school or out-of-school service aimed at addressing the student's truancy (e.g. Truancy Diversion Program)

# Truancy Diversion Program

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The TDP is an information-based intervention program offered to parents and students as a truancy preventative measure to intervene

- before students receive a referral to truancy court; and
- to educate parents/guardians and students who are experiencing truancy problems about the consequences associated with unexcused absences.



# Truancy Diversion Program

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- In addition, the program identifies available and appropriate resources for families who are experiencing issues that may be contributing to a student's truancy.
- After the program, the parent and student will sign off on an Attendance Contract stating they agree to attend school daily.
- The TDP is offered to students and parents only once during each school year.

# Truancy Action Plan

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The Assistant Principal meets with the student, parent and relevant staff to listen to the family and find out why the student is having difficulty attending school and then the committee will develop a Truancy Action Plan.

The meeting may be led by a Dropout Prevention Specialist (if available on your campus), but the Assistant Principal should be involved.

# Truancy Referral

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If a student fails to attend school without excuse on 10 or more days or parts of days within a six-month period in the same school year, the district shall refer the student to a truancy court.

# Truancy Referral Requirements

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Referrals must be accompanied by a statement from the student's school certifying

- that the school applied the district's truancy prevention measures and the measures failed to “meaningfully address the student's school attendance”
- whether the student is eligible for or receives special education services

## More rules to come...

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- H.B. 2398 requires the TEA to adopt rules creating minimum standards and best practices for truancy prevention measures, as well as sanctions for noncompliance with prevention requirements.

# Documentation and Monitoring

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- Notice letter
- Warning and request for conference letter
- Campus Attendance and Truancy Prevention Measures form
- Attendance at the Truancy Diversion Program
- Student Attendance Contract

## Next Steps

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- Collaborate with Community Relations to publicize processes
- Distribute letter on first day to all students and parents
- Communicate expectations with all staff (counselors, ADA's, Student Affairs, principals)
- Superintendent update to community

# Quick Summary

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# Questions