



# Project A.T.T.E.N.D.

(Attendance to Tackle Educational Needs Daily)

## **A.T.T.E.N.D. Truancy Prevention Mediation Project**

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Funded by United Way of Southeastern Michigan and in collaboration with  
Communities in Schools, Children's Aid Society, the Truancy Court.

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## **Program Structure**

- The mediations are scheduled during school hours, at approximately 60-minute intervals.
- Trained mediators from Wayne Mediation Center conduct the mediations.
- The teachers and school representatives are trained to participate appropriately and completely in the mediation process.
- The school coordinator collects and authenticates the attendance records pre and post-mediation.
- The school coordinator sends out warning letters, schedules mediations, and mails the mediation notices to each student's family.
- The school coordinator notifies the teachers and the Project ATTEND coordinator of the date and time the mediations are scheduled.
- The school coordinator places a reminder call to the family 1 or 2 days in advance to remind them of the mediation and to confirm their attendance at the meeting.
- Mediators write down agreements made by the school, parents, and student and a copy of the agreement is signed by and given to each participant.
- The ATTEND Program provides attendance follow-up and evaluation results.
- The focus is on identifying and addressing issues and barriers contributing to truancy in a supportive and non-adversarial environment.
- The goal is to improve attendance and avoid court involvement.

## **ATTEND Mediation Project Responsibilities**

- **Provide the school with trained mediators** to conduct the mediations.
- **Coordinate** roles, planning meetings, and working relationships between Project ATTEND and the schools and community stakeholders it serves.
- **Provide the training** necessary for program delivery to school personnel and mediators.
- Provide technical **assistance and training** to participating schools.
- Obtain **follow-up and track post-mediation attendance** on each case mediated.
- **Collect raw data** for analysis and **evaluation of the program**.
- **Establish and facilitate advisory committee** meetings throughout the year. (Committee includes stakeholders from the schools, court, collaborative).
- Distribute and **collect mediation survey forms**.
- Provide **case management** on mediated cases.
- Provide periodic **reports to funders and participating schools** on project.

## Mediators Roles and Responsibilities

- Provide the parties with a procedure to discuss the student's unexcused absences in a **safe, non-adversarial and productive environment**.
- Maintain **integrity of the process**.
- Be **sensitive** to feelings, unmet emotional needs, and interests.
- **Ensure that everyone understands** what is being said.
- Assist parties in **generating available options** and maintain a **positive approach** to resolving the issues contributing to the student's unexcused absences.
- Keep personal values, opinions, and judgments from invading the mediation process.
- **Monitor communication** so that people have the ability to disagree and to make sure the language does not become abusive or unproductive.
- Demonstrate **effective problem solving**, behavior and attitude.
- Give participants a way to change their position and discuss problems without "losing face."
- Act as an **agent of reality** who helps build a reasonable and implementable settlement in a non-threatening way. Ask questions and challenge parties who have extreme and unrealistic goals.
- Keep the flow of the mediation going forward towards a resolution. Establish and maintain control as a neutral party who will **protect and keep a balance of power** among all parties.
- Maintain **neutrality, confidentiality and ethical obligations** of mediators.
- Make sure consent form is signed and understood by all parties.
- Write up any agreements, making sure **agreements are informed, voluntary decisions**, have all parties to the agreement sign; copy and distribute agreements to all parties.
- When necessary, make sure interpreter is present to translate.
- **Make appropriate referrals**, with parents' consent, to other service providers necessary to remove barriers to attendance.

## **School's Responsibilities**

The school is responsible for providing a school coordinator, a room adequate for accommodating 5 to 6 people, indentifying students to be referred to the program, coordinating the mediation with the families, Project ATTEND, and ensuring a substitute teacher or school representative is provided when the classroom teacher attends the mediation. Each school will also file a petition with the district attendance agent or court, for those cases where the parents refuse to appear for mediation, mediation has been unsuccessful, and/or truancy continues after mediation.

### **Participating schools must:**

- Provide a “**project coordinator**” who tracks attendance, selects and schedules families for mediation, reconfirms the appointment prior to mediation, serve as a liaison with the mediation coordinator and program, arranges for a school interpreter when necessary, and oversees the program for the school.
- Provide at least one **representative who knows the student**, with authority to make agreements on behalf of the school, to participate in the mediation for the entire session.
- Designate a **private**, closed room with no walk-through traffic or ringing phones.
- Provide school representative with a **copy of the student's attendance record** and other pertinent information to be taken into mediation.
- Keep **accurate attendance** records.
- Provide **periodic follow-up attendance reports** requested by Project ATTEND.
- Complete **evaluations / surveys** necessary for analysis and evaluations of the program.
- **Participate in any training, meetings, etc.** necessary for the success of the program.
- **Provide** the parents or guardians with **appropriate referrals** to school and community resources.
- **Follow through with any commitments** the school staff made during the course of the mediation.
- **Notify the school project coordinator** immediately if student(s) are not coming to school and / or not following the terms of the agreement.
- **Make a determination**, with the school project coordinator, and perhaps the mediation project coordinator, if parent(s) / guardian(s) are not in compliance with the mediation agreement, whether
  - ✓ A follow-up mediation should be scheduled, or
  - ✓ The case should be referred directly to attendance agent / court

## **Role of Attendance Agent / Court**

Attendance agent / prosecutor / court will provide **legal remedy** for truancy cases where school or mediation intervention has failed to correct the problem.

## **School Project Coordinator Responsibilities**

- **Identify students** who qualify for referral to Project ATTEND (accumulation of **3-5+ unexcused absences in a quarter or 10+ absences in a semester and / or significant tardiness**).
- **Mail warning letters** to the family of students who accumulate 3+ unexcused absences.
- **Schedule mediations** for parents / students with 3-5+ unexcused absences.
- **Send notices to the student's family of the scheduled mediation.**
- **Schedule and notify the participating teacher / staff** of the time and place of mediation.
- **Request a "floating substitute"** for the scheduled mediation day(s).
- **Fax or e-mail; the mediation schedule** to the Project ATTEND Coordinator monthly.
- **Place a reminder call to the parent(s) / guardian(s)** of the student **1-2 days prior** to the scheduled mediation.
- **Notify Project ATTEND Coordinator** if school or an appointment is cancelled on a mediation day.
- **Inform teachers of the student's progress** and when / if a truancy petition is filed on a family.
- **Place a copy of the agreement** in the students' cumulative file.
- **Monitor attendance** (pre and post-mediation).
- **Have students' files**, case cover sheet and **ACCURATE** attendance collected for mediation.
- **Refer students to attendance agent / court** if mediation fails and / or truancy continues to be a problem after mediation.
- **Notify staff and the community about participation in the Project ATTEND program** in the school's newsletter and school meetings.

## **Teacher or School Representative Role in the Mediation Process**

*If you are asked to be part of mediation, it is because you have been identified as having a unique perspective on the student with the truancy issues and you know the effect it has on your class. It may be helpful to think about what concerns you have about the student's absences, as well as what you have observed from the student, and any requests or ideas that you may have for the family. Participating in mediation provides a good opportunity for you to talk with the student's parent(s) / guardian(s) about anything related to the student that you feel is important.*

### **Before Mediation**

- Try to **keep lines of communication open** with all parents.
- Assist the school project coordinator in **identifying “at risk” students**.
- **Be available to attend mediation**, if requested.

### **On Mediation Day**

- **Prepare work, if necessary, for the substitute** (if one is provided by the school to cover your class while you participate in mediations).
- Bring a **copy of the student’s most recent attendance record**.
- Bring a **copy of the student’s most recent grades**.
- Be prepared to discuss with the mediator and parent(s) / guardian(s) any **issues, concerns and ideas** you may have to improve the student’s attendance and overall progress in school.
- Remember that the mediation is a **non-adversarial meeting**. The goal of the mediation process is to engage, the parent(s) / guardian(s) and teacher in **appropriate and effective problem solving** for each particular student.
- Try to remain focused on the **student’s best interests** and **separate “the people from the problem.”** The mediator assists in achieving this goal.
- If you are unsure of any solutions included in the mediation agreement, please **voice your concerns** to the mediator before signing the agreement. You are a party to the mediation and the agreement should be workable for **all parties**.

### **Parental Responsibilities**

The families are responsible for **attending the mediation** when requested and ensuring that all efforts are made to **increase their child’s attendance**.

Sources: U. S. Department of Education, Truancy Projects  
Truancy Prevention Model, Ohio  
Smart Program, California