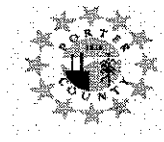


# PORTER COUNTY JUVENILE SERVICES

1660 SOUTH STATE ROAD 2  
VALPARAISO, IN 46385



**JUVENILE PROBATION**  
CHRISTOPHER BUYER, CHIEF  
DEANA HARRIS, ASSISTANT CHIEF  
PHONE: (219) 465-3475  
FAX: (219) 465-3600

HON. MARY A. DeBOER, JUDGE  
HON. KRISTEN MULLIGAN, MAGISTRATE  
AMY K. BEIER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

**JUVENILE DETENTION**  
ALISON M. COX, DIRECTOR  
BECKY D. LUTZ, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR  
PHONE: (219) 465-3520  
FAX: (219) 465-3623

---

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Congratulations on enrolling your child in Kindergarten! What an exciting time for you and your child. These initial school years are so important in the growth of critical skills (educationally, socially, and developmentally) for your child and the key to your child's ongoing success is regular attendance at school. As you start this adventure with your child there are a few things we would like to explain to you regarding school attendance.

In Porter County there is a program called Project Attend. This preventative program is managed by the Porter County Juvenile Probation Department and is designed to address attendance problems without the direct involvement of the Court. If your child begins to accumulate too many unexcused absences and/or tardies, you may receive a letter or phone call from the school saying that further attendance issues will result in a referral to Project Attend. So what does that mean? First, we would like to explain what the law says about school attendance.

In Indiana, there is something called the Compulsory School Attendance Law. It states that a child must attend school every school day, unless legally excused until the age of 18. Although Kindergarten is not "technically" required, the law states a student is bound by this requirement if they are formally enrolled in school. So now that you have enrolled your child in Kindergarten, this law applies to you.

Next we would like to explain what the law says about absenteeism. The law defines absenteeism two ways: Habitual and Chronic. Habitual truancy means a student has been absent ten (10) days or more from school within a school year without being excused or without being absent under a parental request that has been filed with the school. In other words, ten unexcused absences within a school year. Chronic absenteeism means the student has been absent from school for ten percent or more of a school year for any reason. In other words, since there are 180 school days a year, the student was absent (excused or unexcused) for 18 or more days.

If your child falls into either of these two categories, the school has a responsibility to refer the issue to the Juvenile Probation Department's Project Attend program because you are in violation of Compulsory School Attendance law.

Once a referral is received, the staff with Project Attend will work with your child, your family, and the school to resolve the attendance issues in every way possible. However, if the issue is not improved by working with the program, the Project Attend staff will have to refer the matter to the judicial system. Because Project Attend focuses on elementary aged children and their families, a referral can mean a few things. You, as the parent, can be charged with Education Neglect (a felony). Possible outcomes of this charge can range from fines to jail time. The Project Attend staff may also have to refer the matter to the Department of Child Services for neglect. These outcomes do not happen often and only occur after every other avenue to help you and your child is exhausted.

Attendance is vital to your child's success in school. Here are a few tips to reduce your child's absences. Keep vacations and/or appointments scheduled when school is not in session. Limit sick days to when the child is having a real issue and keep open communication with the school nurse regarding chronic and/or ongoing medical issues. Plan your morning and nighttime routines in order to ensure your child gets on the bus and to school on time every day. And always, speak with the school staff and your child's teacher to keep them informed of any changes that may affect your child's attendance.

Thank you for your attention and have a great school year!