

The Becca Law

- **Protecting Children**
- **Supporting Parents**
- **Strengthening Families**
- **Keeping Children in School**

The Becca Law (**RCW 28A.225**) was enacted by the Washington State Legislature to:

- **Protect children who are endangering themselves**
- **Keep families together through assessment and treatment services**
- **Provide tools for schools, parents and Juvenile Court to keep children in school**
- **Hold children and parents accountable to the order of the Court**

Schools must file a truancy petition with Juvenile Court when a child has reached five unexcused absences in a month or ten in a school year.

The law makes attendance compulsory for all children ages eight to eighteen unless the child:

- Is sixteen and is engaged regularly/lawfully in a useful occupation and parent agrees that the child should not be required to attend school
- Is emancipated
- Has met graduation requirements
- Has received a certificate of educational competence
- Is receiving home-based instruction.

School officials will follow the steps outlined below when working with enrolled students beginning at the age of six years who have accrued the required unexcused absences. A truancy petition involving a six or seven year old student may only be filed against the parent. The student is not required to attend hearings.

- Juvenile Court will inform the child and parent/guardian that a petition has been filed and direct them to work with the school to correct the attendance problem.
- Should those efforts fail, Juvenile Court will order the child to attend school and participate in services to reduce barriers to regular school attendance.
- The parent can also be ordered to send their child to school and participate in services to ensure regular school attendance.

At Risk Youth Petition (ARY)

Parents may petition Juvenile Court to order their child to remain at home when:

- ✓ The child is younger than age 18
- ✓ The child has been absent from home, without parental permission for more than 72 hrs
- ✓ The child's behavior is beyond the parent's control and endangers the health, safety or welfare of the child or another person
- ✓ The child has a serious substance abuse or drug or alcohol problem
- ✓ Families have made an effort to remedy the problem through means such as

counseling

Both children and parents can be ordered by Juvenile Court to attend counseling, classes, and other measures to reduce family conflict.

Contact Julie Curtis at Juvenile Court at 477-2459 for further truancy information.

Children in Need of Services (CHINS)

A minor, legal custodial parent or guardian, or a Department of Children and Family Services social worker may petition Juvenile Court to approve an out-of-home placement when the conflict between parent and child is so severe the family cannot remain intact. Placement may occur with supervision from Juvenile court with:

- A relative
- An appropriate friend or neighbor
- Department of Children and Family Services

The legal parent/guardian may be financially responsible for the cost of the placement.

Approved placement is only temporary for a maximum of nine months.

Juvenile Court will order certain conditions the child and parent must comply with including attending classes, counseling and other measures to reunite the family.

Contact Julie Curtis at Juvenile Court at 477-2459 for further information.

“The family unit is the fundamental resource of American Life which should be nurtured . . . ”

RCW 13.32A

For questions or comments, please call Pat Crumpacker at 228-5404.