

District Court, Kit Carson County, Colorado 251 16th Street, Suite 301 Burlington, CO 80807	
District Court, Logan County, Colorado 110 North Riverview Road, Suite 205 Sterling, CO 80751	
District Court Morgan County, Colorado 400 Warner Street Fort Morgan, CO 80701	
District Court, Phillips County, Colorado 221 South Interocean Avenue Holyoke, CO 80734	
District Court, Sedgwick County, Colorado Third & Pine Julesburg, CO 80737	
District Court, Washington County, Colorado P.O. Box 455 Akron, CO 80720	
District Court, Yuma County, Colorado 310 Ash Street, Suite L Wray, CO 80758	
ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER NO. 2016-A-1	
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THIRTEENTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT POLICY ADDRESSING THE REDUCTION OF THE USE OF DETENTION AS A SANCTION IN TRUANCY CASES	

Senate Bill (SB) 15-184, as enacted by the Colorado General Assembly and signed into law by Governor Hickenlooper in 2015, seeks to reduce the use of detention as a sanction in truancy cases and recommends that truancy courts use detention only as a sanction of last resort. Recognizing that the best methods to reduce truancy and its underlying causes will differ in each community, SB 15-184 contemplates a meeting of community stakeholders in each judicial district within the State of Colorado. The goal of the meeting of stakeholders is to create a district-wide policy to address truancy cases and to seek alternatives to the use of detention as a sanction for juveniles.

As Chief Judge, on February 8, 2016, the District Court Magistrate and I met in Morgan County, Colorado with members from the community, representatives from the school districts actively pursuing truancy cases, caseworkers from the Morgan County Department of Human Services, the truancy court SB-94 officer, attorneys representing school districts in truancy cases, representatives from Centennial Mental Health Center, representatives from the Morgan County Interagency Oversight Group, and educators from

Morgan Community College. The meeting was held in Morgan County, Colorado because the District Court in that county presides over the vast majority of all truancy cases in the 13th Judicial District. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the use, frequency, and effectiveness of detention as a sanction in truancy cases.

It was decided that detention will continue to be used only as a sanction of last resort. If a truancy petition leads to a contempt citation, the District's truancy courts will consider any and all other viable alternatives to detention to attain the goals of improving a student's school attendance, educational performance, and the successful termination of a truancy case.

The stakeholders agreed to continue to work collaboratively to reduce the need for truancy cases throughout the District. The stakeholders identified several common challenges for students who struggle with school attendance and performance. Those challenges include a lack of family resources; students who have multiple on-going cases involving truancy, juvenile delinquency, and dependency and neglect; substance abuse problems by the students or in their homes; lack of support and reinforcement from parents on the importance of education; students feeling that they are too far behind their peers in class and attendance will not now make a difference; identification of and intervention with students with special educational needs; and the lack of funding and resources throughout the District.

The stakeholders, the Magistrate, and I identified strategies that are currently in place or that can be implemented to reduce truancy and the use of detention. These strategies include clearly identifying for juveniles and their families the desired outcomes of a truancy case and the means to achieve those ends, implementing key problem-solving court principles, providing clear and frequent case management and review, promoting family engagement in the truancy program, promoting mentorship and community involvement in the lives of truants, early assignment of counsel for the parties if contempt proceedings are initiated, and identifying and exhausting all other options before detention is considered as a sanction. The stakeholders and the Magistrate will also coordinate with local law enforcement agencies to monitor truant activity and to deliver juveniles who are truant to their respective schools. The stakeholders and the Magistrate agree to collaborate with the local departments of human services and county attorneys to determine whether filings of dependency or neglect proceedings should be initiated for educational neglect to shift the focus from incarceration of juveniles to the imposition of sanctions against parents who fail to insure their children attend school, especially in cases where there are concerns about other forms of parental abuse or neglect or juveniles are beyond the control of their parents.

The importance of an education cannot be overstated and the District is committed to working with community stakeholders to reduce truancy and to improve the educational experiences and opportunities of youth in the 13th Judicial District. During the meeting, the stakeholders identified common challenges students, their families, and the stakeholders encounter in trying to reduce truant behavior. To address these challenges, the stakeholders and the Magistrate committed to continue their open dialogues and their collaborative, problem-solving approach to truancy cases. The Magistrate will continue to preside over truancy cases; to monitor case filings, progress, challenges, and successes; to elicit and receive feedback from the stakeholders; and report back to me on a quarterly basis, or more frequently if the need arises.

DATED AND SIGNED this 25th day of February, 2016, effective immediately.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael K. Singer". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal blue line.

MICHAEL K. SINGER
Chief Judge, 13th Judicial District