

District Court, Weld County, State of Colorado Court Address: 901 9 th Avenue, Greeley, CO 80631 Mailing Address: P.O. Box 2038, Greeley, CO 80632-2038	<p style="text-align: center;">▲ COURT USE ONLY ▲</p>
ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER NO. 2015-15	
NINETEENTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT POLICY FOR ADDRESSING THE REDUCTION OF THE USE OF DETENTION AS A SANCTION IN TRUANCY CASES	

Senate Bill 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 only use detention 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 to create a policy for addressing truancy cases that seeks alternatives to the use of detention as a sanction.

The undersigned chief judge met with the magistrate presiding over the truancy docket shortly after SB 15-184 became law to discuss the continued use of detention as a sanction in truancy cases in the 19th Judicial District. It was decided that detention would only be used as a sanction of last resort and any detention imposed would not exceed five days in duration. If a truancy petition is filed, the court will consider any and all viable alternatives to detention to attain the goals of improving a student's school attendance, educational performance, and ultimately leading to the successful termination of the truancy action. Equally important, the court is committed to partnering and working collaboratively with the school districts, law enforcement, and community agencies to reduce the number of truancy cases filed in Weld County.

The undersigned chief judge reached out to community stakeholders and formed a working group consisting of representatives from: (1) several school districts in Weld County; (2) the Weld County Department of Human Services; (3) guardians *ad litem*; (4) the Weld County Probation Department; (5) law enforcement agencies; (6) SB-94; (7) Youth and Family Connections; (8) Access and Ability; (9) court liaisons; (10) the Board of Weld County Commissioners; (11) respondent parent's counsel; (12) GOAL Academy; (13) parents of students; and (15) attorneys representing school districts in truancy cases. The magistrate who presides over truancy cases in the 19th Judicial District was also part of the working group.

The working group met four times between July and November of 2015, and identified several common challenges for students who struggle with school attendance and performance:

- (A) The lack of family resources for such things as transportation to school and child care for students who are parents themselves;
- (B) Students who have a combination of truancy, juvenile delinquency and/or dependency and neglect cases pending at the same time;
- (C) Students struggling with substance abuse issues;
- (D) The lack of support and reinforcement from the student's parents on the importance of education;
- (E) Truant students often feel unwelcome or uncomfortable when returning to school, or feel like they are too far behind in their studies for their attendance to now make a difference;
- (F) Early identification and intervention when a student has special educational needs;
- (G) The lack of funding for community-based programs to assist truant students and their families.

The working group discussed several strategies for reducing the number of truancy cases filed in Weld County, as well as alternatives to imposing detention as a sanction. These include:

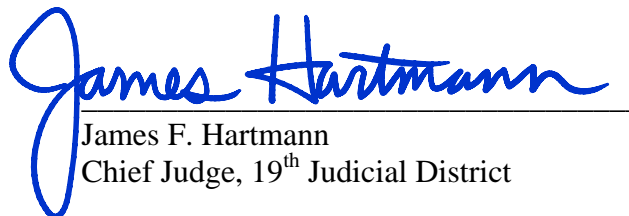
- The working group created three subcommittees comprised of: (1) school districts; (2) the courts, probation, and law enforcement; and (3) community service providers. The subcommittees will meet and discuss their role in accomplishing the overarching goal of reducing detention use in truancy cases and explore methods by which information is more readily shared with other stakeholders, and then report back to the entire working group.
- Identifying children at risk for truant behavior at an early age and/or earlier in the school year, and providing intervention services to those students (school districts).
- Early assessment of whether the child would benefit from specialized educational programs (school districts: Child Find MTSS), (community service providers: Massachusetts Youth Screening Instrument [MAYSI-II], School Refusal Assessment Survey [SRAS], and the Global Appraisal of Individual Needs – Short Screen [GAIN-SS], Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths assessment [CANS]).
- The Motivation, Achievement, & Power (“M.A.P.”) used in the 16th Judicial District, which is designed to motivate youth to achieve high attendance and academic performance in school (courts).
- The National Center for School Engagement Theory of Change used in the 18th Judicial District, which focuses on the interrelationship between enhanced community capacity, quality programs, and increased family involvement in the child's educational experience (courts).
- The Specialized Alternatives for Families and Youth of Colorado (“SAFY”), which works with children who have suffered trauma and provides multigenerational treatment services for families in crisis (community services providers).
- Campus Corps, which provides mentoring by college students to at risk youth (school districts).
- Existing community groups that provide mentoring and support for youth, such as the Boys and Girls Club of Weld County, and reaching out to adults who have participated in those programs to provide testimonials regarding the benefits of participating in those programs (community agencies).
- Parent and student workshops presented through the school districts, which would identify family and student needs and allow for early intervention, provide the family

- with information on available community resources, establishing school attendance plans, goal setting, etc. (school districts).
- Obtaining quantitative and qualitative data from students whose truancy cases were successfully terminated to identify what factors led to that student's success (school districts).
 - Establishing "welcoming committees" and support groups consisting of school staff and possibly other students when a truant student returns to school. One idea was to include a testimonial from a peer who successfully terminated a truancy case (school districts).
 - School districts may consider whether breaking the school year down by quarters, as opposed to semesters, for issuing grades and accumulating school credits would provide truant students with a better opportunity to succeed (school districts).
 - The Bright Futures program, established in 2015 by the Weld County Board of Commissioners, provides scholarships of up to \$3,000 per year for up to four years, which can be used for post-secondary education or vocational training programs. This new program is available to Weld County residents who have graduated from high school or received their G.E.D., and is an incentive for students to graduate or obtain a G.E.D. (community agencies).
 - The working group will investigate the feasibility of completing manifestation evaluations, either pre-truancy filing or after a truancy action is opened, and determine how other districts pay for these evaluations (school districts and community service providers).
 - The stakeholders will discuss the possibility of creating a specialty truancy docket in the 19th Judicial District for a defined number of cases, which would allow more time and resources to be allocated on those cases.

The importance of an education cannot be overstated and the court is committed to working with community stakeholders to reduce truancy and improve the educational experience of our youth. During our meetings, the working group identified common challenges students encounter that increase the risk of truant behavior. To address these challenges, thereby increasing the likelihood that the student will be successful and reduce the use of detention as a truancy sanction, the working group came up with a number of strategies as listed above. The court and stakeholders will collect empirical data over time, which will include identification of the risk factors then-existing, to measure the success of the alternatives to detention in truancy cases that are employed in the 19th Judicial District. In addition, the undersigned judge plans to convene the working group at least annually to gauge the progress and success of the 19th Judicial District Plan.

Dated: November 4, 2015.

BY THE COURT:


James F. Hartmann
Chief Judge, 19th Judicial District