



# Nueces County Truancy Committee Recommendations



Council Presentation  
June 21, 2016



# Created by State Law



## House Bill 2398 and Senate Bill 107

- Decriminalizes truancy. Focuses on preventative measures to keep students out of court and the juvenile justice system.
- Required County Judge and Mayor to appoint committee by Jan 1, 2016.
- Requires a report to be issued before December 31, 2017, on the implementation of the recommendations and compliance with state truancy laws by a school district located in the county.
- Recommendations are voluntary on ISDs, county and city.



# Committee Members



<b>Homer Flores, Chairman</b>	Nueces County Juvenile Department	<b>Annabelle Mendiola, Assistant Principal</b>	School of Science and Technology
<b>Dr. Arturo Almendarez, Superintendent</b>	Calallen Independent School District	<b>Judge Thelma Rodriguez</b>	Nueces County Justice of the Peace, Pct. 2, Place 2
<b>Dr. D. Scott Elliff</b>	Retired Superintendent	<b>Deborah Rudder</b>	Nueces County District Attorney's Office
<b>Dr. Maria Luisa Garza, Superintendent</b>	Gulf Coast Council of La Raza	<b>Judge Inna Rogoff- Klein</b>	City of Corpus Christi Municipal Court
<b>Judge Antonio B. Gonzales</b>	City of Robstown Municipal Court	<b>Mark Skurka</b>	Nueces County District Attorney
<b>Joe A. Gonzalez</b>	Nueces County Commissioner, Precinct 2	<b>Tom Tagliabue, Director</b>	City of Corpus Christi Intergovernmental Relations
<b>Dr. Roland Hernandez, Superintendent</b>	Corpus Christi Independent School District	<b>Terry Teri, Assistant Director</b>	City of Corpus Christi Municipal Court
<b>Tyner Little</b>	Nueces County Government Affairs	<b>Gilbert Ymbert, Truant Officer</b>	Roy Miller High School
<b>Judge Gail Loeb, Chief Administrative Judge</b>	City of Corpus Christi Municipal Court	<b>Angela DeLuca</b>	City of Corpus Christi City Attorney's Office



# Six Goals



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- (1) a uniform process for filing truancy cases with truancy courts
  - (2) uniform administrative procedures;
  - (3) uniform deadlines for processing truancy cases;
  - (4) a local plan with strategies to address truancy, including effective prevention, intervention, and diversion methods to reduce truancy and referrals to a truancy;
  - (5) a system for tracking truancy information and sharing truancy information among school districts, open-enrollment charter schools, truancy courts, juvenile courts, and juvenile probation departments in the county; and
  - (6) any changes to statutes or state agency rules the committee determines are necessary to address truancy.
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# Recommendations



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Goal 1. Create a uniform process for filing truancy cases with courts:

(1) The referring Independent School District (ISD) or open enrollment Charter School shall forward a petition (that has been approved by the Nueces County District Attorney's Office) to the truancy court. The petition shall contain all information and details in a timely manner, meeting all new truancy definitions, deadlines and protocols;

(2) The number of truancy courts in Nueces County be reduced to no more than two courts to streamline the truancy court process and reduce the number of court personnel the truant conduct prosecutor, attendance clerks, truant officers and others will have to coordinate with;

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# Recommendations



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## Goal 2. Uniform administrative procedures:

- (1) The truancy court(s) be uniform in the type of programming and sanctions administered and governed through the court;
  - (2) County truancy court(s), ISDs and open enrollment charter schools develop a Memorandum of Understanding with the City's Juvenile Assessment Center to utilize case management services;
  - (3) Any MOU involving case management services should require all case managers have an acceptable level of education and/or work experience in the field of criminal justice, social work, sociology or counseling;
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# Recommendations



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Goal 2 (continued). Uniform administrative procedures:

(4) Any case managers should include at least one Licensed Professional Counselor;

(5) Any case management service be governed by approved Standard Operating Procedures outlining a minimum or acceptable level of standards for education and experience of case managers and specific standards on the level of care and work to be performed;



# Recommendations



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Goal 2 (continued). Uniform administrative procedures:

(6) If an MOU is developed, the City's Juvenile Assessment Center case managers will coordinate available counseling and resources with the Truant Conduct Court case managers. The Truant Court case managers will assess available programming and resources and provide a written report of recommendations for the Court's review and consideration.

Goal 3. Uniform deadlines for processing truancy cases:

(1) All ISDs and open enrollment charter schools file on ALL applicable days or parts of days unexcused absences that apply to the student in the previous six months.

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# Recommendations



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Goal 4. Create a local plan with strategies to address truancy, including effective prevention, intervention, and diversion methods to reduce truancy and referrals to truancy court:

(1) ISDs and open enrollment charter schools attempt at least three distinct and separate truancy prevention measures before filing a truancy petition request with a court. Recommend an “A” letter meeting where truancy court personnel and/or school administrators meet with at-risk student(s) and their parent(s) to review the law and its consequences;

(2) Encourages ISDs and open enrollment charter schools to seek evidenced-based truancy prevention measures.

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# Recommendations



Goal 5. Implement a system to track and share truancy information among ISDs, open enrollment charter schools, truancy courts, juvenile courts, and county juvenile probation departments:

- (1) The city and county collaborate to create a Memorandum of Understanding with truancy-related courts, schools and other parties to allow for accurate tracking and sharing of truancy information and data;
- (2) Review the MOU annually and update as necessary to remain current to any law, policy or technological changes that may occur;
- (3) Designated Justice of the Peace court or other designated Nueces County agency be responsible in collecting local truancy data, oversee and monitor any information sharing and disseminate such data to invested, interested and designated truancy conduct personnel, professionals and/or agencies who work with at-risk truant conduct individuals;



# Recommendations



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Goal 6. Any changes to statutes or state agency rules the committee determines are necessary to address truancy:

- (1) Create a committee or board to meet annually to review the effectiveness of truancy procedures, protocol and practices and make further recommendations based on any unforeseen future legal, procedural or technological changes that could affect truant conduct court proceedings and/or best business practices;
  - (2) Create a manual of clear written guidelines on the truancy process and procedures of Nueces County that could be accessed and utilized by truancy court personnel, school administrators and other truant conduct professionals;
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# Recommendations



Goal 6 (continued). Any changes to statutes or state agency rules the committee determines are necessary to address truancy:

- (3) Create a directory of local truant conduct personnel business numbers and addresses in the city and county that can be used to network with other truant conduct professionals;
- (4) The committee recommends that a future committee or board also establish regular and continuing training for local truant conduct professionals, truant court guidelines and employ updated legal or procedural changes in the administrative, legal and judiciary process of truant conduct in Nueces County, Texas;



# Recommendations



Goal 6 (continued). Any changes to statutes or state agency rules the committee determines are necessary to address truancy:

(5) Discuss the cost of truancy procedures, changes and transition. Determine if ISDs and charter schools will contribute to case management services in Truancy Courts and, if collected, parental fines will be returned to Courts for case management services and truancy prevention programming and services; and

(6) Nueces County will have to address the recognized need for increased staffing in its Truant Court(s) for effective and meaningful case management services. Committee believes Nueces County needs to employ two case managers (vs. one current) to be effective.



# Questions?



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## **Homer Flores**

Committee Chair

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