

# State of South Carolina



Spartanburg County Court House  
180 Magnolia Street  
Spartanburg, S.C. 29306  
Phone (864) 596-2575  
Fax (864) 596-2386

Cherokee County Court House  
Floyd Baker Blvd.  
Gaffney, S.C. 29340  
Phone (864) 487-2576  
Fax (864) 487-2753

**BARRY J. BARNETTE**  
*Solicitor, Seventh Judicial Circuit*

August 1, 2017

Dear Parent or Guardian:

The school districts of Spartanburg County and the 7<sup>th</sup> Circuit Solicitor's Office are working together to keep our kids in school. The partnership utilized Spartanburg County Truancy Court to examine the problems associated with children who are chronically absent from school and develop a long-term action plan for improvement that involves both the student and the parent or guardian.

The ten-year-old deferred prosecution program is a remarkable success with school districts, court officials and parents working together to keep children in school. Fewer children are being referred to Family Court for truancy prosecution. Children who were once considered truants are returning to school.

The momentum must continue. As a former school teacher and a veteran prosecutor, I see the life-changing impact that occurs when someone makes the decision to drop out of school. Our state defines truancy as a student who has incurred three or more consecutive unlawful absences and/or 5 unlawful absences.

If a child classifies as a truant, the child and their parents will meet with school officials to discuss the truancy issue and an intervention plan developed by the school, parents and the child. If the conditions of the intervention plan are not met and the child continues to incur unlawful absences, the school will refer the child and their parents to Truancy Court. Once Truancy Court becomes involved with the case, the child and the parents will be notified by letter.

The child and their parents will be required to attend a hearing at which time the hearing officer, case manager, school officials, and officers of the court will be present. At the hearing, the hearing officer orders the child and their parents to meet certain conditions in addition to the requirement that the child attend school. Other conditions ordered by the hearing officer may include mental health counseling, good behavior at school, drug and alcohol assessments and testing, and community service. Failure by the child to attend school and/or the parents to cooperate with the program will result in the child and the parents' case being referred to Family Court for prosecution.

Each child deserves a fulfilling education, and Truancy Court will ensure every effort is made to help that happen.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Barry J. Barnette".

Barry J. Barnette  
Solicitor

BJB:sop