



A message from King
County Prosecuting
Attorney's Office

NEW!! See CTV Truancy Talk
Channel 22

Please visit our website:
<http://www.metrokc.gov/proatty/truancy/>
Or Call Bonnie Glenn, Deputy Prosecutor,
At 206-296-9035



Spotlight on Truancy Prevention

By Norm Maleng

Welcome to the King County Prosecuting Attorney's Office Truancy Newsletter. I believe that this newsletter will be useful to parents, students, school districts, and anyone who has an interest in helping our young people stay in school.

As many of you know, I have been deeply committed to enforcing our state's truancy laws. I support these laws not only because I believe young people should attend school, but because I also believe these laws are an effective tool for early detection and intervention of children at risk.

I am proud to say that, in King County, our truancy laws are working. Many young people have returned to school because schools, courts, parents, and community volunteers are intervening in truancy prevention efforts. Although we will never know how many of these children would have entered the criminal justice system, we do know that every child returned to school has a better chance to travel a different path.

I ask each of you to consider finding some way to support our youth, families in crisis and your local school or Community Truancy Board. Reaching out to a troubled youth in need may be just enough for them to make a different life choice. Young people are our future. Lets continue to work together and help change the lives of children and families in Washington. Together we can make a difference in their future.

2003 – 2005 LEGISLATIVE BUDGET INCLUDES BECCA FUNDING!

By Bonnie Glenn



(Photo: from Year End Brown Bag Potluck)

Back Row: Dianne Devine, Jean Guthrie, Ann Kuehn, Barbara Graber, Nancy Saunders, Katie Vandenberg, Karin Newman, Janice Crotty, Veronique Chevallier-Gruschow, Erin Grotting, Stan Lemmel;
Front Row: Vicki Gladsjo, Bonnie Glenn, Bill Gladsjo

In this legislative session, our Becca Laws were uncertain. Retaining funding for our state Becca Laws looked bleak. In a tough budget year, many good and well-deserving programs were being cut from our state budget. Would our Compulsory School Attendance Laws survive this legislative session? Would legislators uphold the promise it had made to youth and families in crisis when enacting our "Becca Laws," in 1995? Current budget challenges at the state level had put these very important programs in jeopardy.

With a slogan, "Support Becca and Truancy Prevention: Invest Now or Pay More Later," The Washington State Becca Task Force, chaired by Norm Maleng and Justice Bobbe Bridge, championed this issue in Olympia. By the 6th week of the legislative session, there was not a legislator in Olympia who had not heard about the Becca



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Task Force and its mission to sustain Becca funding. With statewide support from Task Force members, including legislators, law enforcement, treatment providers, prosecutors, defense attorneys, courts, judges, and schools, the Task Force championed this issue in Olympia.

With Senator Jim Hargrove at the helm, the Task Force was able to secure sustained funding for our Becca Laws, re-establish the petition reimbursement for schools, and transfer the Becca budget from DSHS to the Administration Office of the Courts.

As a team we were able to work together and urge lawmakers to reaffirm the principles adopted in 1995 to assist our youth and families in crisis. Without the assistance of Task Force members, School Representatives, and lawmakers, this could not have happened. Senator Hargrove stated he had a deep commitment to our Becca Laws and would fight to sustain them. Without a doubt he did just that. We could not have obtained funding without him. Senator Hargrove's deep commitment and dedication to our Becca Laws should be acknowledged and lauded.

As to the Task Force, it will continue and work towards outlining best practices for our Becca Laws across the state. We will continue to meet and work toward making our Washington Becca Laws the best in the country. I think Renton Superintendent Dolores Gibbons summed up this year best by saying: "Well done Task Force members... the Margaret Mead quote fits well here:" "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has." Indeed!

BECCA Works

**By Sgt. John Hayes – Seattle Police
Department**

Over the past several months the BECCA Task Force has been meeting and strategizing ways to retain the funding for the program. Leading the BECCA Task Force was the dynamic team of King County Prosecutor Norm Maleng and Justice Bobbe Bridge. As members from the courts, schools, law enforcement and State Legislature from all over the State of Washington weighed in on the strategy, stories were being shared and those stories re-enforced why everyone was willing to work together to keep the BECCA Program. What everyone knew inside, but had a chance to now experience collectively, was that the BECCA Laws saved lives and that intervention does work. The BECCA Laws don't make up the total answer to what we need to do to address the needs of youth we serve, but it does fill a big void that was present prior to 1995.

From a law enforcement perspective the BECCA Laws make a difference. Keeping youth in school has a direct correlation to the amount of criminal activity that takes place in many communities across the State of Washington. The BECCA Laws gave officers in the detective follow-up units and those working patrol an added tool in their work with at-risk youth, runaways and truant youth. Having and using the tools designed for early intervention and providing prevention techniques saves money and changes lives. An individual youth has a greater chance at success in their lives if they are able to stay with their families and stay in school. If the only tool a law enforcement officer has is enforcement than the options are limited. It



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is hard to explain the expression on the faces of countless parents when they respond to a knock on the door and they hear an officer say, "Hi, I'm Detective Lebar and I have good news. I'm here to help you." That was not possible without the assistance and support of the BECCA Laws.

On June 5, 2003 the state budget was passed by the Washington State Legislature with funding for our Becca Laws. There is no doubt that the great work done by the members of the BECCA Task Force made the difference. This team came together and will make a difference in the lives of youth across the State of Washington for years to come.

I currently supervise the Seattle Police Department's Community and Youth Outreach Unit. We have two officers that do direct community collaboration, three detectives that do direct family intervention and work with high-risk youth, a Community Service Officer that handles runaways and the Drug Court Liaison Officer that works directly with the courts (adult and juvenile) on drug related issues. The Seattle Police Department is committed to working on the issues of truancy, at-risk youth and runaways with the King County Superior Courts, Seattle Public Schools, and the King County Prosecuting Attorney's Office. The Community and Youth Outreach Unit use the BECCA Laws to work with families and youth. It is a tool that has enhanced our working relationship with the community.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the BECCA Taskforce for their hard work. If you would like to contact me and know more about how the Seattle Police Department's Community and Youth Outreach Unit incorporates the use of the

BECCA Laws and works with the community and youth please give me a call at 206-615-0886 or e-mail me at john.hayes@seattle.gov.

2003 King County Academic Awareness Award

By Bonnie Glenn



Photo: Deputy Prosecutor Bonnie Glenn being presented with Roses from School Representatives in King County.

The King County Prosecuting Attorney's Office is deeply committed to enforcing our state's truancy laws. Many young people have returned to school because schools, courts, and community volunteers are intervening in truancy prevention efforts. We feel it is important to recognize truancy prevention success stories.

On April 24, 2003, the KCPAO presented the annual King County Academic Awareness Award. This award is presented to a student who has overcome difficulties and adversity to make school a priority in life, taking into account the personal success of the student, the school district's intervention efforts in preventing further truancy by the student, and the student's ability to overcome adversity.

This year's award winner was Ms. Andria Hanes from Highline School District.



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Andria overcame tremendous difficulties in school. Andria was able to turn things around with the help of her family, the courts, the school, and the community. Andria is a bright student who has a brighter future ahead of her. She will be graduating this month with a 4.0 from Shoreline Community College. Andria considers herself very lucky and feels the court system, school, and her family played a huge role in turning her life around. Congratulations to Andria and her family.

At the awards ceremony Veronique Gruschow from Highline School District was also honored for her work with Truancy Prevention and a special award of excellence was presented to Vicki Gladsjo from Bellevue School District. Vicki was presented with an award for her deep commitment and leadership in Truancy Prevention. Vicki will retire this year after working in Truancy Prevention in both Kent and in Bellevue. Vicki is considered as the "mom" of Becca by many and has worked tirelessly to make our system work well. Vicki will truly be missed, but we are so happy that she will have many happy times ahead of her on the open road in her new RV. We'll miss you Vicki! Thank you to everyone for making the 2003 Truancy Awards a success!

Philadelphia Schools Hire Parents to Cut Down on Truancy

By Michael Rubinkam
The Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — Jennifer Jones doesn't take any guff. Not from her own kids, not from the ones in the neighborhood, and especially not from the ones she sees

goofing off on the subway or at the mall when they should be in school.

Jones, 42, is one of 250 truant officers hired by the Philadelphia school district this school year to get thousands of truants back to class.

It is no accident that Jones is a parent of two school-age children. The district is specifically recruiting parents.

"Parents know the terrain, know the environment, understand the culture and may even know some of the individual parents and kids," said Paul Vallas, chief executive of the 200,000-student school system.

Truancy is a big concern in Philadelphia and other cities. On any given day, more than 12,000 Philadelphia students are absent without an excuse, a rate of 6.4 percent.

The problem worries school officials because truants are more likely to use drugs, join gangs, commit crimes or drop out.

"Truancy is our first best flag that a kid will enter the juvenile-justice system," said Ken Seeley, who is studying the effectiveness of seven truancy-reduction programs for the U.S. Justice Department.

Vallas hired 600 parents for a similar program in Chicago, where he headed the school system for six years. He said the program cut truancy from 5.7 percent to 3.9 percent.

Philadelphia contracted with 12 community and religious organizations to hire and train parent truant officers. The program began last month as 166 parents completed their training and started visiting the homes of



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truants. The officers are paid \$9 an hour for at least 10 hours a week. "The primary role is to inform parents that their child has been truant, that resources are available, that we are ready to help," said Vern Trent, who heads the program.

Some parents are simply unaware their children are cutting class. Others cannot afford school clothing or bus tokens. Still others are on drugs or alcohol.

Officers explain that chronic absenteeism could land both students and their parents in the city's truancy court, with the possibility of fines, community service and even jail for the adults and transfer to an alternative school for the kids.

That is smart, Seeley said, because any successful truancy-reduction program needs to have both carrots and sticks. In Jacksonville, Fla., one of the programs he is studying, more than 100 parents have been arrested for failing to send their children to school.

Truant officer Jones, whose children are 6, 16 and 19, said Philadelphia's truancy program was a natural fit for her.

Her house has always been a magnet for neighborhood kids; she has been known to break up fistfights; even before she became a truant officer, she confronted truants and ordered them to go back to school.

And because her own children are sometimes less than enthusiastic about school, she understands how some parents have trouble making sure theirs go to class.

"I think people feel more comfortable dealing with another parent," said she.

"Parents know what kids are capable of, how their minds work."

Did You Know?

Research by Bryan Stech – U of W Law Student

- Each student who falls into delinquent behavior and doesn't graduate from high school costs society from \$1.7 million to \$2.3 million over a lifetime, whether it's spent in jail or unemployed (The State Newspaper, SC).
- Each year's class of dropouts will cost the country over \$200 billion during their lifetimes in lost earnings and unrealized tax revenue (Catterall, 1985).
- Nationally, 82% of America's prisoners are high school dropouts (The Demographics of School Reform, 1990).
- According to the University of Michigan Institute for Social Research, 13.1% of all 8th graders, 14.1% of all 10th graders, and **21.4%** of all 12th graders nationwide missed more than 5 days of class in a 4-week period in 2000, the latest year for such statistics. Over **50%** of all 12th graders had missed 2 or more days in the same 4-week period.
- High school graduates, on the average, earn \$9,245 more per year than high school dropouts. (Employment Policy Foundation, 2002).
- In October of 1994, 30% of those who had dropped out of school were not employed—43% of those who had dropped out in the previous 12 months were employed (NCES, 1996).



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What's New!!

WSSROA Conference July 21-23, 2003

On July 21 – July 23, the Washington State School Resource Officers Association will be holding a conference in Yakima, Washington on school safety issues. If you would like more information on the conference, please contact Senior Deputy Prosecutor Chuck Lind for more information regarding the WSSROA Conference. Chuck has a wealth of information regarding the prevention of school violence and juvenile issues. Please contact Chuck if you have any questions regarding school violence issues in King County. Chuck can be reached at: 206-296-0880 or via email at: Chuck.Lind@metrokc.gov

University of Washington School of Law – SYLAW Program

In the Fall of 1997, the University of Washington started SYLAW, Street Youth Legal Advocates of Washington. In response to the large population of homeless and at-risk youth, ranging from 12 to 21 years of age in the City of Seattle, the university decided to work to increase the services available to these youth. While there were gains in providing some youth services, there was a missing component for legal assistance. Street youth face a variety of legal problems, including family issues, educational problems, mental health issues, and

difficulty accessing state and federal entitlements such as housing and financial assistance. If these particular needs are not met, youth are often prevented from reaching other goals necessary for leaving life on the streets for stable housing, jobs, and educational opportunities. Other cities have initiated successful endeavors to meet these

needs. It was critical that Seattle do so as well. As such SYLAW works in conjunction with street link and helps provide the much needed legal services to our youth. For more information please see their website at:
www.students.washington.edu/sylaw

Fall Truancy Workshop

The Fall Truancy Workshop will take place in mid-September. For more information, please contact Kaki Dimock – the At-Risk Programs Manager, for King County Superior Court. Kaki will send out information regarding the logistics and topics in the Fall. Kaki can be reached at 206-205-9335 or via email at Kaki.Dimock@metrokc.gov

Truancy Contact List

If you are a school representative or someone who works with the court or schools with truancy prevention, please contact myself for a contact list for King County Truancy Representatives. I can be reached at 206-296-9035 or via email at Bonnie.Glenn@metrokc.gov

Law Students Volunteer For Truancy

Special thank you to Stacie Robertson from Seattle University School of Law for volunteering with our office in Truancy



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Prevention. Stacie is now working this summer for Judge Harry McCarthy and will start back at SU as a 3L in the fall. Stacie helped with the layout for the newsletter, helped coordinate the truancy awards, and worked on various projects last semester. Thank you again to Stacie for all her help. You're truly a star!

This summer, Bryan Stech from the University of Washington Law School joined our office as an extern. Bryan will be working with myself and Trial Teams this summer. Bryan helped provide research for this newsletter, helped with the layout, and still managed to have time to volunteer with SYLAW. Lets welcome Bryan!



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

By: Bonnie Glenn

**Q: What do I do when I get a
Summons for court?**

A: The first thing to do is **appear** at the court hearing. If you do not appear at the hearing, a **warrant** may be issued for your arrest. Prior to the hearing, you may want to call your school district's attendance office and obtain the most recent attendance information regarding your child. Remember, court is a way to get to the bottom of attendance issues. The more open and honest you and your child are with the court, the easier it will be to address attendance issues.

Q: What is a preliminary hearing?

A: At the **preliminary hearing**, the court will decide whether or not a student and/or parent has violated the [Becca Bill](#). People who may be present at this hearing include the student, parent, and a school

representative who presents the school's case. At this hearing the student is not entitled to representation by an attorney because detention is not a possibility at the preliminary hearing. However, the parent and student may retain their own attorney at any time. Also at this hearing, the child and parent may appear and stipulate (agree) to the truancy petition and the parties agree to take appropriate steps to ameliorate the truancy. The court would then issue an order and jurisdiction for the case begins. A child and parent/guardian may also appear and dispute the absences in the petition or challenge the court's legal sufficiency. The court then holds a contested preliminary hearing where the parties testify under oath about the truancy. The district must prove the absences by a preponderance of the evidence. If the judge finds that the student/child violated the Becca Bill, the order is issued and jurisdiction begins. If the student/parent violates the order of the court, they will come back to court for a Contempt/Show Cause Hearing.



Photo: Commissioner Richard Gallaher on the Bench at the Regional Justice Center

Q: What is a contempt hearing?

A: The **contempt hearing** takes place when a school alleges that a student or parent have violated the terms of the court's order entered at the preliminary hearing. The student has the right to be represented at this



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hearing because if the court finds that the order has been violated and holds the student in contempt, the student may then be subject to sanctions to include detention if the court deems appropriate.

Q: Can a parent be held responsible for their child's truancy?

A: Yes. [RCW 28A.225.010](#) states that, "All parents in this state of any child eight years of age and under eighteen years of age shall cause such child to attend the public school of the district in which the child resides...." In addition, Washington law allows courts to issue community service or a fine of \$25 per day of absence to parents who are found to have violated their duty.

Q: What is an unexcused absence?

A: An unexcused absence is an absence for which no appropriate excuse has been given. Each school may set their own policy for what is considered an excused or unexcused absence. For instance, many schools require that a doctor's note be given in cases of excessive illness in order to be considered an excused absence. Any absence that does not follow the school's attendance policy will be considered unexcused. Refer to the student manual for your district's attendance policy.

Q: How many unexcused absences can a student have before the court gets involved?

A: [RCW 28A.225.030](#) states that a school **may** file a petition to the Superior Court after five (5) absences in a month. However, the school **must** file a petition after seven (7) absences in a month or ten (10) absences in a year.

Q: Is there a minimum age for a child before a truancy action can be initiated?

A: Pursuant to [RCW 28A.225.015](#) a truancy action can be initiated on behalf of a child as young as 6 years of age.

**How Other States
are Addressing
Truancy Issues**



**Research By Bryan Stech – U of W Law
Student**

In Laconia, NH, family mediation sessions are conducted in lieu of a court appearance. Children and parents are given an opportunity to discuss their problems with a state-sponsored mediator. Two mediators assist the family to identify issues, and agreements are usually put in writing and signed by both sides. (Concord Monitor Online, 4 June 2003)

In Salinas, CA, local officials are fighting to keep local after-school programs alive in the face of budget cuts. They cite a Department of Education study that shows a correlation between after-school programs with a decrease in juvenile delinquency and truancy. (The Californian Online)

In Bennington, Vermont, the Quantum Leap program assigns mentors to at-risk youth. These youth are often referred to the program, but participation is voluntary. The mentors work with the students to help them find their own reasons for staying in school. In the four years of its existence, Quantum Leap has helped 135 youths graduate from high school – on a budget of about \$65,000 a year. (The Bennington Banner)



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**THANK YOU TO EVERYONE FOR ALL YOUR HARD WORK!
OUR YOUTH AND FAMILIES IN WASHINGTON HAVE A
BRIGHTER FUTURE BECAUSE OF YOU!!**

