

**299.5A Mediation.**

If a child is truant as defined in section 299.8, school officers shall attempt to find the cause for the child's absence and use every means available to the school to assure that the child does attend. For a child who has completed educational requirements through the sixth grade, the means may include but are not limited to the use of an attendance cooperation process which substantially conforms with the provisions of section 299.12. If the parent, guardian, or legal or actual custodian, or child refuses to accept the school's attempt to assure the child's attendance or the school's attempt to assure the child's attendance is otherwise unsuccessful, the truancy officer shall refer the matter to the county attorney for mediation or prosecution.

If the matter is referred for mediation, the county attorney shall cause a notice of the referral to be sent to the parent, guardian, or legal or actual custodian and designate a person to serve as mediator in the matter. If mediation services are available in the community, those services may be used as the designated mediation service. If mediation services are not available in the community, mediation shall be provided by the county attorney or the county attorney's designee. The mediator shall contact the school, the parent, guardian, or legal or actual custodian, and any other person the mediator deems appropriate in the matter and arrange meeting dates and times for discussion of the child's nonattendance. The mediator shall attempt to ascertain the cause of the child's nonattendance, attempt to cause the parties to arrive at an agreement relative to the child's attendance, and initiate referrals to any agencies or counseling that the mediator believes to be appropriate under the circumstances.

If the parties reach an agreement, the agreement shall be reduced to writing and signed by a school officer, parent, guardian, or legal or actual custodian, and the child. The mediator, the school, and the parent, guardian, or legal or actual custodian shall each receive a copy of the agreement, which shall set forth the settlement of the issues and future responsibilities of each party.

The school district shall be responsible for monitoring any agreements arrived at through mediation. If a parent, guardian, or legal or actual custodian refuses to engage in mediation or violates a term of the agreement, the matter shall be rereferred to the county attorney for prosecution under section 299.6. The county attorney's office or the mediation service shall require the parent, guardian, or legal or actual custodian and the school to pay a fee to help defray the administrative cost of mediation services. The county attorney's office or the mediation service shall establish a sliding scale of fees to be charged parents, guardians, and legal or actual custodians based upon ability to pay. A parent, guardian, or legal or actual custodian shall not be denied the services of a mediator solely because of inability to pay the fee.

The mediator may refer a truant to the juvenile court if mediation breaks down without an agreement being reached.

91 Acts, ch 200, §9; 94 Acts, ch 1172, §33; 97 Acts, ch 174, §2