

Family Code
Title 3A. Truancy Court Proceedings
Chapter 65. Truancy Court Proceedings

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SUBCHAPTER A. GENERAL PROVISIONS

Sec. 65.001. SCOPE AND PURPOSE. (a) This chapter details the procedures and proceedings in cases involving allegations of truant conduct.

(b) The purpose of this chapter is to encourage school attendance by creating simple civil judicial procedures through which children are held accountable for excessive school absences.

(c) The best interest of the child is the primary consideration in adjudicating truant conduct of the child.

Added by Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 935 (H.B. 2398), Sec. 27, eff. September 1, 2015.

Sec. 65.002. DEFINITIONS. In this chapter:

(1) "Child" means a person who is 12 years of age or older and younger than 19 years of age.

(2) "Juvenile court" means a court designated under Section 51.04 to exercise jurisdiction over proceedings under Title 3.

(3) "Qualified telephone interpreter" means a telephone service that employs licensed court interpreters, as defined by Section 157.001, Government Code.

(4) "Truancy court" means a court designated under Section 65.004 to exercise jurisdiction over cases involving allegations of truant conduct.

Added by Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 935 (H.B. 2398), Sec. 27, eff. September 1, 2015.

Sec. 65.003. TRUANT CONDUCT. (a) A child engages in truant conduct if the child is required to attend school under Section 25.085, Education Code, and fails to attend school on 10 or more days or parts of days within a six-month period in the same school year.

(b) Truant conduct may be prosecuted only as a civil case in a truancy court.

(c) It is an affirmative defense to an allegation of truant conduct that one or more of the absences required to be proven:

(1) have been excused by a school official or by the court;

(2) were involuntary; or

(3) were due to the child's voluntary absence from the child's home because of abuse, as defined by Section 261.001.

(d) The affirmative defense provided by Subsection (c) is not available if, after deducting the absences described by that subsection, there remains a sufficient number of absences to constitute truant conduct.

(e) In asserting an affirmative defense described by Subsection (c), the burden is on the child to show by a preponderance of the evidence that the absence:

(1) has been or should be excused;

(2) was involuntary; or

(3) was due to the child's voluntary absence from the child's home because of abuse, as defined by Section 261.001.

(f) A decision by the court to excuse an absence for purposes of an affirmative defense under Subsection (c) does not affect the ability of the school district to determine whether to excuse the absence for another purpose.

Added by Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 935 (H.B. 2398), Sec. 27, eff. September 1, 2015.

Amended by Acts 2021, 87th Leg., R.S., Ch. 272 (H.B. 3165), Sec. 1, eff. June 4, 2021.

Sec. 65.004. TRUANCY COURTS; JURISDICTION. (a) The following are designated as truancy courts:

(1) in a county with a population of 1.75 million or more, the constitutional county court;

(2) justice courts; and

(3) municipal courts.

(b) A truancy court has exclusive original jurisdiction over cases involving allegations of truant conduct.

(c) A municipality may enter into an agreement with a contiguous municipality or a municipality with boundaries that are within one-half mile of the municipality seeking to enter into the agreement to establish concurrent jurisdiction of the municipal courts in the municipalities and provide original jurisdiction to a municipal court in which a truancy case is brought as if the municipal court were located in the municipality in which the case arose.

(d) A truancy court retains jurisdiction over a person, without regard to the age of the person, who was referred to the court under Section 65.051 for engaging in truant conduct before the person's 19th birthday, until final disposition of the case.

Added by Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 935 (H.B. 2398), Sec. 27, eff. September 1, 2015.

Sec. 65.005. COURT SESSIONS. A truancy court is considered to be in session at all times.

Added by Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 935 (H.B. 2398), Sec. 27, eff. September 1, 2015.

Sec. 65.006. VENUE. Venue for a proceeding under this chapter is the county in which the school in which the child is enrolled is located or the county in which the child resides.

Added by Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 935 (H.B. 2398), Sec. 27, eff. September 1, 2015.

Sec. 65.007. RIGHT TO JURY TRIAL. (a) A child alleged to have engaged in truant conduct is entitled to a jury trial.

(b) The number of jurors in a case involving an allegation of truant conduct is six. The state and the child are each entitled to three peremptory challenges.

(c) There is no jury fee for a trial under this chapter.

Added by Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 935 (H.B. 2398), Sec. 27, eff. September 1, 2015.

Sec. 65.008. WAIVER OF RIGHTS. A right granted to a child by this chapter or by the constitution or laws of this state or the United States is waived in proceedings under this chapter if:

(1) the right is one that may be waived;

(2) the child and the child's parent or guardian are informed of the right, understand the right, understand the possible consequences of waiving the right, and understand that waiver of the right is not required;

(3) the child signs the waiver;

(4) the child's parent or guardian signs the waiver; and

(5) the child's attorney signs the waiver, if the child is represented by counsel.

Added by Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 935 (H.B. 2398), Sec. 27, eff. September 1, 2015.

Sec. 65.009. EFFECT OF ADJUDICATION. (a) An adjudication of a child as having engaged in truant conduct is not a conviction of crime. An order of adjudication does not impose any civil disability ordinarily resulting from a conviction or operate to disqualify the child in any civil service application or appointment.

(b) The adjudication of a child as having engaged in truant conduct may not be used in any subsequent court proceedings, other than for the purposes of determining an appropriate remedial action under this chapter or in an appeal under this chapter.

Added by Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 935 (H.B. 2398), Sec. 27, eff. September 1, 2015.

Sec. 65.010. BURDEN OF PROOF. A court or jury may not return a finding that a child has engaged in truant conduct unless the state has proved the conduct beyond a reasonable doubt.

Added by Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 935 (H.B. 2398), Sec. 27, eff. September 1, 2015.

Sec. 65.011. APPLICABLE STATUTES REGARDING DISCOVERY. Discovery in a proceeding under this chapter is governed by Chapter 39, Code of Criminal Procedure, other than Articles 39.14(i) and (j).

Added by Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 935 (H.B. 2398), Sec. 27, eff. September 1, 2015.

Sec. 65.012. PROCEDURAL RULES. The supreme court may promulgate rules of procedure applicable to proceedings under this chapter, including guidelines applicable to the informal disposition of truancy cases.

Added by Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 935 (H.B. 2398), Sec. 27, eff. September 1, 2015.

Sec. 65.013. INTERPRETERS. (a) When on the motion for appointment of an interpreter by a party or on the motion of the court, in any proceeding under this chapter, the court determines that the child, the child's parent or guardian, or a witness does not understand and speak English, an interpreter must be sworn to interpret for the person. Articles 38.30(a), (b), and (c), Code of Criminal Procedure, apply in a proceeding under this chapter. A

qualified telephone interpreter may be sworn to provide interpretation services if an interpreter is not available to appear in person before the court.

(b) In any proceeding under this chapter, if a party notifies the court that the child, the child's parent or guardian, or a witness is deaf, the court shall appoint a qualified interpreter to interpret the proceedings in any language, including sign language, that the deaf person can understand. Articles 38.31(d), (e), (f), and (g), Code of Criminal Procedure, apply in a proceeding under this chapter.

Added by Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 935 (H.B. 2398), Sec. 27, eff. September 1, 2015.

Sec. 65.014. SIGNATURES. Any requirement under this chapter that a document be signed or that a document contain a person's signature, including the signature of a judge or a clerk of the court, is satisfied if the document contains the signature of the person as captured on an electronic device or as a digital signature.

Added by Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 935 (H.B. 2398), Sec. 27, eff. September 1, 2015.

Sec. 65.015. PUBLIC ACCESS TO COURT HEARINGS. (a) Except as provided by Subsection (b), a truancy court shall open a hearing under this chapter to the public unless the court, for good cause shown, determines that the public should be excluded.

(b) The court may prohibit a person from personally attending a hearing if the person is expected to testify at the hearing and the court determines that the person's testimony would be materially affected if the person hears other testimony at the hearing.

Added by Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 935 (H.B. 2398), Sec. 27, eff. September 1, 2015.

Sec. 65.016. RECORDING OF PROCEEDINGS. (a) The proceedings in a truancy court that is not a court of record may not be recorded.

(b) The proceedings in a truancy court that is a court of record must be recorded by stenographic notes or by electronic, mechanical, or other appropriate means.

Added by Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 935 (H.B. 2398), Sec. 27, eff. September 1, 2015.

Sec. 65.017. JUVENILE CASE MANAGERS. A truancy court may employ a juvenile case manager in accordance with Article 45.056, Code of Criminal Procedure, to provide services to children who have been referred to the truancy court or who are in jeopardy of being referred to the truancy court.

Added by Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 935 (H.B. 2398), Sec. 27, eff. September 1, 2015.

SUBCHAPTER B. INITIAL PROCEDURES

Sec. 65.051. INITIAL REFERRAL TO TRUANCY COURT. When a truancy court receives a referral under Section 25.0915, Education Code, and the court is not required to dismiss the referral under that section, the court shall forward the referral to a truant conduct prosecutor who serves the court.

Added by Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 935 (H.B. 2398), Sec. 27, eff. September 1, 2015.

Sec. 65.052. TRUANT CONDUCT PROSECUTOR. In a justice or municipal court or a constitutional county court that is designated as a truancy court, the attorney who represents the state in criminal matters in that court shall serve as the truant conduct prosecutor.

Added by Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 935 (H.B. 2398), Sec. 27, eff. September 1, 2015.

Sec. 65.053. REVIEW BY PROSECUTOR. (a) The truant conduct prosecutor shall promptly review the facts described in a referral received under Section 65.051.

(b) The prosecutor may, in the prosecutor's discretion, determine whether to file a petition with the truancy court requesting an adjudication of the child for truant conduct. If the prosecutor decides not to file a petition requesting an adjudication, the prosecutor shall inform the truancy court and the school district of the decision.

(c) The prosecutor may not file a petition for an adjudication of a child for truant conduct if the referral was not made in compliance with Section 25.0915, Education Code.

Added by Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 935 (H.B. 2398), Sec. 27, eff. September 1, 2015.

Sec. 65.054. STATE'S PETITION. (a) A petition for an adjudication of a child for truant conduct initiates an action of the state against a child who has allegedly engaged in truant conduct.

(b) The proceedings shall be styled "In the matter of _____, Child," identifying the child by the child's initials only.

(c) The petition may be on information and belief.

(d) The petition must state:

(1) with reasonable particularity the time, place, and manner of the acts alleged to constitute truant conduct;

(2) the name, age, and residence address, if known, of the child who is the subject of the petition;

(3) the names and residence addresses, if known, of at least one parent, guardian, or custodian of the child and of the child's spouse, if any; and

(4) if the child's parent, guardian, or custodian does not reside or cannot be found in the state, or if their places of residence are unknown, the name and residence address of any known adult relative residing in the county or, if there is none, the name and residence address of the known adult relative residing nearest to the location of the court.

(e) Filing fees may not be charged for the filing of the state's petition.

Added by Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 935 (H.B. 2398), Sec. 27, eff. September 1, 2015.

Sec. 65.055. LIMITATIONS PERIOD. A petition may not be filed after the 45th day after the date of the last absence giving rise to the act of truant conduct.

Added by Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 935 (H.B. 2398), Sec. 27, eff. September 1, 2015.

Sec. 65.056. HEARING DATE. (a) After the petition has been filed, the truancy court shall set a date and time for an adjudication hearing.

(b) The hearing may not be held on or before the 10th day after the date the petition is filed.

Added by Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 935 (H.B. 2398), Sec. 27, eff. September 1, 2015.

Sec. 65.057. SUMMONS. (a) After setting the date and time of an adjudication hearing, the truancy court shall direct the issuance of a summons to:

(1) the child named in the petition;

(2) the child's parent, guardian, or custodian;

(3) the child's guardian ad litem, if any; and

(4) any other person who appears to the court to be a proper or necessary party to the proceeding.

(b) The summons must require the persons served to appear before the court at the place, date, and time of the adjudication hearing to answer the allegations of the petition. A copy of the petition must accompany the summons. If a person, other than the child, required to appear under this section fails to attend a hearing, the truancy court may proceed with the hearing.

(c) The truancy court may endorse on the summons an order directing the person having the physical custody or control of the child to bring the child to the hearing.

(d) A party, other than the child, may waive service of summons by written stipulation or by voluntary appearance at the hearing.

Added by Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 935 (H.B. 2398), Sec. 27, eff. September 1, 2015.

Sec. 65.058. SERVICE OF SUMMONS. (a) If a person to be served with a summons is in this state and can be found, the summons shall be served on the person personally or by registered or certified mail, return receipt requested, at least five days before the date of the adjudication hearing.

(b) Service of the summons may be made by any suitable person under the direction of the court.

Added by Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 935 (H.B. 2398), Sec. 27, eff. September 1, 2015.

Sec. 65.059. REPRESENTATION BY ATTORNEY. (a) A child may be represented by an attorney in a case under this chapter. Representation by an attorney is not required.

(b) A child is not entitled to have an attorney appointed to represent the child, but the court may appoint an attorney if the court determines it is in the best interest of the child.

(c) The court may order a child's parent or other responsible person to pay for the cost of an attorney appointed under this section if the court determines that the person has sufficient financial resources.

Added by Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 935 (H.B. 2398), Sec. 27, eff. September 1, 2015.

Sec. 65.060. CHILD'S ANSWER. After the petition has been filed, the child may answer, orally or in writing, the petition at or before the commencement of the hearing. If the child does not answer, a general denial of the alleged truant conduct is assumed.

Added by Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 935 (H.B. 2398), Sec. 27, eff. September 1, 2015.

Sec. 65.061. GUARDIAN AD LITEM. (a) If a child appears before the truancy court without a parent or guardian, or it appears to the court that the child's parent or guardian is incapable or unwilling to make decisions in the best interest of the child with respect to proceedings under this chapter, the court may appoint a guardian ad litem to protect the interests of the child in the proceedings.

(b) An attorney for a child may also be the child's guardian ad litem. A law enforcement officer, probation officer, or other employee of the truancy court may not be appointed as a guardian ad litem.

(c) The court may order a child's parent or other person responsible to support the child to reimburse the county or municipality for the cost of the guardian ad litem. The court may issue the order only after determining that the parent or other responsible person has sufficient financial resources to offset the cost of the child's guardian ad litem wholly or partly.

Added by Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 935 (H.B. 2398), Sec. 27, eff. September 1, 2015.

Sec. 65.062. ATTENDANCE AT HEARING. (a) The child must be personally present at the adjudication hearing. The truancy court may not proceed with the adjudication hearing in the absence of the child.

(b) A parent or guardian of a child and any court-appointed guardian ad litem of a child is required to attend the adjudication hearing.

(c) Subsection (b) does not apply to:

(1) a person for whom, for good cause shown, the court excuses attendance;

(2) a person who is not a resident of this state; or

(3) a parent of a child for whom a managing conservator has been appointed and the parent is not a conservator of the child.

Added by Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 935 (H.B. 2398), Sec. 27, eff. September 1, 2015.

Sec. 65.063. RIGHT TO REEMPLOYMENT. (a) An employer may not terminate the employment of a permanent employee because the employee is required under Section 65.062(b) to attend a hearing.

(b) Notwithstanding any other law, an employee whose employment is terminated in violation of this section is entitled to return to the same employment that the employee held when notified of the hearing if the employee, as soon as practical after the hearing, gives the employer actual notice that the employee intends to return.

(c) A person who is injured because of a violation of this section is entitled to:

(1) reinstatement to the person's former position;

(2) damages not to exceed an amount equal to six times the amount of monthly compensation received by the person on the date of the hearing; and

(3) reasonable attorney's fees in an amount approved by the court.

(d) It is a defense to an action brought under this section that the employer's circumstances changed while the employee attended the hearing and caused reemployment to be impossible or unreasonable. To establish a defense under this subsection, an employer must prove that the termination of employment was because of circumstances other than the employee's attendance at the hearing.

Added by Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 935 (H.B. 2398), Sec. 27, eff. September 1, 2015.

Sec. 65.064. SUBPOENA OF WITNESS. A witness may be subpoenaed in accordance with the procedures for the subpoena of a witness under the Code of Criminal Procedure.

Added by Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 935 (H.B. 2398), Sec. 27, eff. September 1, 2015.

Sec. 65.065. CHILD ALLEGED TO BE MENTALLY ILL. (a) A party may make a motion requesting that a petition alleging a child to have engaged in truant conduct be dismissed because the child has a mental illness, as defined by Section 571.003, Health and Safety Code. In response to the motion, the truancy court shall temporarily stay the proceedings to determine whether probable cause exists to believe the child has a mental illness. In making a determination, the court may:

- (1) consider the motion, supporting documents, professional statements of counsel, and witness testimony; and
- (2) observe the child.

(b) If the court determines that probable cause exists to believe that the child has a mental illness, the court shall dismiss the petition. If the court determines that evidence does not exist to support a finding that the child has a mental illness, the court shall dissolve the stay and continue with the truancy court proceedings.

Added by Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 935 (H.B. 2398), Sec. 27, eff. September 1, 2015.

SUBCHAPTER C. ADJUDICATION HEARING AND REMEDIES

Sec. 65.101. ADJUDICATION HEARING; JUDGMENT. (a) A child may be found to have engaged in truant conduct only after an adjudication hearing conducted in accordance with the provisions of this chapter.

(b) At the beginning of the adjudication hearing, the judge of the truancy court shall explain to the child and the child's parent, guardian, or guardian ad litem:

- (1) the allegations made against the child;
- (2) the nature and possible consequences of the proceedings;
- (3) the child's privilege against self-incrimination;
- (4) the child's right to trial and to confrontation of witnesses;
- (5) the child's right to representation by an attorney if the child is not already represented; and
- (6) the child's right to a jury trial.

(c) Trial is by jury unless jury is waived in accordance with Section 65.008. Jury verdicts under this chapter must be unanimous.

(d) The Texas Rules of Evidence do not apply in a truancy proceeding under this chapter except:

- (1) when the judge hearing the case determines that a particular rule of evidence applicable to criminal cases must be followed to ensure that the proceedings are fair to all parties; or
- (2) as otherwise provided by this chapter.

(e) A child alleged to have engaged in truant conduct need not be a witness against nor otherwise incriminate himself or herself. An extrajudicial statement of the child that was obtained in violation of the constitution of this state or the United States may not be used in an adjudication hearing. A statement made by the child out of court is insufficient to support a finding of truant conduct unless it is corroborated wholly or partly by other evidence.

(f) At the conclusion of the adjudication hearing, the court or jury shall find whether the child has engaged in truant conduct. The finding must be based on competent evidence admitted at the hearing. The child shall be presumed to have not engaged in truant conduct and no finding that a child has engaged in truant conduct may be returned unless the state has proved the conduct beyond a reasonable doubt. In all jury cases the jury will be instructed that the burden is on the state to prove that a child has engaged in truant conduct beyond a reasonable doubt.

(g) If the court or jury finds that the child did not engage in truant conduct, the court shall dismiss the case with prejudice.

(h) If the court or jury finds that the child did engage in truant conduct, the court shall proceed to issue a judgment finding the child has engaged in truant conduct and order the remedies the court finds appropriate under Section 65.103. The jury is not involved in ordering remedies for a child who has been adjudicated as having engaged in truant conduct.

Added by Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 935 (H.B. 2398), Sec. 27, eff. September 1, 2015.

Sec. 65.102. REMEDIAL ACTIONS. (a) The truancy court shall determine and order appropriate remedial actions in regard to a child who has been found to have engaged in truant conduct.

(b) The truancy court shall orally pronounce the court's remedial actions in the child's presence and enter those actions in a written order.

(c) After pronouncing the court's remedial actions, the court shall advise the child and the child's parent, guardian, or guardian ad litem of:

- (1) the child's right to appeal, as detailed in Subchapter D; and
- (2) the procedures for the sealing of the child's records under Section 65.201.

Added by Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 935 (H.B. 2398), Sec. 27, eff. September 1, 2015.

Sec. 65.103. REMEDIAL ORDER. (a) A truancy court may enter a remedial order requiring a child who has been found to have engaged in truant conduct to:

- (1) attend school without unexcused absences;
- (2) attend a preparatory class for the high school equivalency examination administered under Section 7.111, Education Code, if the court determines that the individual is unlikely to do well in a formal classroom environment due to the individual's age;
- (3) if the child is at least 16 years of age, take the high school equivalency examination administered under Section 7.111, Education Code, if that is in the best interest of the child;
- (4) attend a nonprofit, community-based special program that the court determines to be in the best interest of the child, including:
 - (A) an alcohol and drug abuse program;
 - (B) a rehabilitation program;
 - (C) a counseling program, including a self-improvement program;
 - (D) a program that provides training in self-esteem and leadership;
 - (E) a work and job skills training program;
 - (F) a program that provides training in parenting, including parental responsibility;
 - (G) a program that provides training in manners;
 - (H) a program that provides training in violence avoidance;
 - (I) a program that provides sensitivity training; and
 - (J) a program that provides training in advocacy and mentoring;
- (5) complete not more than 50 hours of community service on a project acceptable to the court; and
- (6) participate for a specified number of hours in a tutorial program covering the academic subjects in which the child is enrolled that are provided by the school the child attends.

(b) A truancy court may not order a child who has been found to have engaged in truant conduct to:

- (1) attend a juvenile justice alternative education program, a boot camp, or a for-profit truancy class; or
- (2) perform more than 16 hours of community service per week under this section.

(c) In addition to any other order authorized by this section, a truancy court may order the Department of Public Safety to suspend the driver's license or permit of a child who has been found to have engaged in truant conduct. If the child does not have a driver's license or permit, the court may order the Department of Public Safety to deny the issuance of a license or permit to the child. The period of the license or permit suspension or the order that the issuance of a license or permit be denied may not extend beyond the maximum time period that a remedial order is effective as provided by Section 65.104.

Added by Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 935 (H.B. 2398), Sec. 27, eff. September 1, 2015.

Sec. 65.104. MAXIMUM TIME REMEDIAL ORDER IS EFFECTIVE. A truancy court's remedial order under Section 65.103 is effective until the later of:

- (1) the date specified by the court in the order, which may not be later than the 180th day after the date the order is entered; or
- (2) the last day of the school year in which the order was entered.

Added by Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 935 (H.B. 2398), Sec. 27, eff. September 1, 2015.

Sec. 65.105. ORDERS AFFECTING PARENTS AND OTHERS. (a) If a child has been found to have engaged in truant conduct, the truancy court may:

- (1) order the child and the child's parent to attend a class for students at risk of dropping out of school that is designed for both the child and the child's parent;
- (2) order any person found by the court to have, by a wilful act or omission, contributed to, caused, or encouraged the child's truant conduct to do any act that the court determines to be reasonable and necessary for the welfare of the child or to refrain from doing any act that the court determines to be injurious to the child's welfare;
- (3) enjoin all contact between the child and a person who is found to be a contributing cause of the child's truant conduct, unless that person is related to the child within the third degree by consanguinity or affinity, in which case the court may contact the Department of Family and Protective Services, if necessary;

(4) after notice to, and a hearing with, all persons affected, order any person living in the same household with the child to participate in social or psychological counseling to assist in the child's rehabilitation;

(5) order the child's parent or other person responsible for the child's support to pay all or part of the reasonable costs of treatment programs in which the child is ordered to participate if the court finds the child's parent or person responsible for the child's support is able to pay the costs;

(6) order the child's parent to attend a program for parents of students with unexcused absences that provides instruction designed to assist those parents in identifying problems that contribute to the child's unexcused absences and in developing strategies for resolving those problems; and

(7) order the child's parent to perform not more than 50 hours of community service with the child.

(b) A person subject to an order proposed under Subsection (a) is entitled to a hearing before the order is entered by the court.

(c) On a finding by the court that a child's parents have made a reasonable good faith effort to prevent the child from engaging in truant conduct and that, despite the parents' efforts, the child continues to engage in truant conduct, the court shall waive any requirement for community service that may be imposed on a parent under this section.

Added by Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 935 (H.B. 2398), Sec. 27, eff. September 1, 2015.

Sec. 65.106. LIABILITY FOR CLAIMS ARISING FROM COMMUNITY SERVICE. (a) A municipality or county that establishes a program to assist children and their parents in rendering community service under this subchapter may purchase an insurance policy protecting the municipality or county against a claim brought by a person other than the child or the child's parent for a cause of action that arises from an act of the child or parent while rendering the community service. The municipality or county is not liable for the claim to the extent that damages are recoverable under a contract of insurance or under a plan of self-insurance authorized by statute.

(b) The liability of the municipality or county for a claim that arises from an action of the child or the child's parent while rendering community service may not exceed \$100,000 to a single person and \$300,000 for a single occurrence in the case of personal injury or death, and \$10,000 for a single occurrence of property damage. Liability may not extend to punitive or exemplary damages.

(c) This section does not waive a defense, immunity, or jurisdictional bar available to the municipality or county or its officers or employees, nor shall this section be construed to waive, repeal, or modify any provision of Chapter 101, Civil Practice and Remedies Code.

Added by Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 935 (H.B. 2398), Sec. 27, eff. September 1, 2015.

Sec. 65.107. COURT COST. (a) If a child is found to have engaged in truant conduct, the truancy court, after giving the child, parent, or other person responsible for the child's support a reasonable opportunity to be heard, shall order the child, parent, or other person, if financially able to do so, to pay a court cost of \$50 to the clerk of the court.

(b) The court's order to pay the \$50 court cost is not effective unless the order is reduced to writing and signed by the judge. The written order to pay the court cost may be part of the court's order detailing the remedial actions in the case.

(c) The clerk of the court shall keep a record of the court costs collected under this section and shall forward the funds to the county treasurer, municipal treasurer, or person fulfilling the role of a county treasurer or municipal treasurer, as appropriate.

(d) The court costs collected under this section shall be deposited in a special account that can be used only to offset the cost of the operations of the truancy court.

Added by Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 935 (H.B. 2398), Sec. 27, eff. September 1, 2015.

Sec. 65.108. HEARING TO MODIFY REMEDY. (a) A truancy court may hold a hearing to modify any remedy imposed by the court. A remedy may only be modified during the period the order is effective under Section 65.104.

(b) There is no right to a jury at a hearing under this section.

(c) A hearing to modify a remedy imposed by the court shall be held on the petition of the state, the court, or the child and the child's parent, guardian, guardian ad litem, or attorney. Reasonable notice of a hearing to modify disposition shall be given to all parties.

(d) Notwithstanding any other law, in considering a motion to modify a remedy imposed by the court, the truancy court may consider a written report from a school district official or employee, juvenile case manager, or professional consultant in addition to the testimony of witnesses. The court shall provide the attorney for the child

and the prosecuting attorney with access to all written matters to be considered by the court. The court may order counsel not to reveal items to the child or to the child's parent, guardian, or guardian ad litem if the disclosure would materially harm the treatment and rehabilitation of the child or would substantially decrease the likelihood of receiving information from the same or similar sources in the future.

(e) The truancy court shall pronounce in court, in the presence of the child, the court's changes to the remedy, if any. The court shall specifically state the new remedy and the court's reasons for modifying the remedy in a written order. The court shall furnish a copy of the order to the child.

Added by Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 935 (H.B. 2398), Sec. 27, eff. September 1, 2015.

Sec. 65.109. MOTION FOR NEW TRIAL. The order of a truancy court may be challenged by filing a motion for new trial. Rules 505.3(c) and (e), Texas Rules of Civil Procedure, apply to a motion for new trial.

Added by Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 935 (H.B. 2398), Sec. 27, eff. September 1, 2015.

SUBCHAPTER D. APPEAL

Sec. 65.151. RIGHT TO APPEAL. (a) The child, the child's parent or guardian, or the state may appeal any order of a truancy court. A person subject to an order entered under Section 65.105 may appeal that order.

(b) An appeal from a truancy court shall be to a juvenile court. The case must be tried de novo in the juvenile court. This chapter applies to the de novo trial in the juvenile court. On appeal, the judgment of the truancy court is vacated.

(c) A judgment of a juvenile court in a trial conducted under Subsection (b) may be appealed in the same manner as an appeal under Chapter 56.

Added by Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 935 (H.B. 2398), Sec. 27, eff. September 1, 2015.

Sec. 65.152. GOVERNING LAW. Rule 506, Texas Rules of Civil Procedure, applies to the appeal of an order of a truancy court to a juvenile court in the same manner as the rule applies to an appeal of a judgment of a justice court to a county court, except an appeal bond is not required.

Added by Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 935 (H.B. 2398), Sec. 27, eff. September 1, 2015.

Sec. 65.153. COUNSEL ON APPEAL. (a) A child may be represented by counsel on appeal.

(b) If the child and the child's parent, guardian, or guardian ad litem request an appeal, the attorney who represented the child before the truancy court, if any, shall file a notice of appeal with the court that will hear the appeal and inform that court whether that attorney will handle the appeal.

(c) An appeal serves to vacate the order of the truancy court.

Added by Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 935 (H.B. 2398), Sec. 27, eff. September 1, 2015.

SUBCHAPTER E. RECORDS

Sec. 65.201. SEALING OF RECORDS. (a) A child who has been found to have engaged in truant conduct may apply, on or after the child's 18th birthday, to the truancy court that made the finding to seal the records relating to the allegation and finding of truant conduct held by:

- (1) the court;
- (2) the truant conduct prosecutor; and
- (3) the school district.

(b) The application must include the following information or an explanation of why one or more of the following is not included:

- (1) the child's:
 - (A) full name;
 - (B) sex;
 - (C) race or ethnicity;
 - (D) date of birth;
 - (E) driver's license or identification card number; and
 - (F) social security number;
- (2) the dates on which the truant conduct was alleged to have occurred; and

(3) if known, the cause number assigned to the petition and the court and county in which the petition was filed.

(c) The truancy court shall order that the records be sealed after determining the child complied with the remedies ordered by the court in the case.

(d) All index references to the records of the truancy court that are ordered sealed shall be deleted not later than the 30th day after the date of the sealing order.

(e) A truancy court, clerk of the court, truant conduct prosecutor, or school district shall reply to a request for information concerning a child's sealed truant conduct case that no record exists with respect to the child.

(f) Inspection of the sealed records may be permitted by an order of the truancy court on the petition of the person who is the subject of the records and only by those persons named in the order.

(g) A person whose records have been sealed under this section is not required in any proceeding or in any application for employment, information, or licensing to state that the person has been the subject of a proceeding under this chapter. Any statement that the person has never been found to have engaged in truant conduct may not be held against the person in any criminal or civil proceeding.

(h) On or after the fifth anniversary of a child's 16th birthday, on the motion of the child or on the truancy court's own motion, the truancy court may order the destruction of the child's records that have been sealed under this section if the child has not been convicted of a felony.

Added by Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 935 (H.B. 2398), Sec. 27, eff. September 1, 2015.

Sec. 65.202. CONFIDENTIALITY OF RECORDS. Records and files created under this chapter may be disclosed only to:

(1) the judge of the truancy court, the truant conduct prosecutor, and the staff of the judge and prosecutor;

(2) the child or an attorney for the child;

(3) a governmental agency if the disclosure is required or authorized by law;

(4) a person or entity to whom the child is referred for treatment or services if the agency or institution disclosing the information has entered into a written confidentiality agreement with the person or entity regarding the protection of the disclosed information;

(5) the Texas Department of Criminal Justice and the Texas Juvenile Justice Department for the purpose of maintaining statistical records of recidivism and for diagnosis and classification;

(6) the agency; or

(7) with leave of the truancy court, any other person, agency, or institution having a legitimate interest in the proceeding or in the work of the court.

Added by Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 935 (H.B. 2398), Sec. 27, eff. September 1, 2015.

Sec. 65.203. DESTRUCTION OF CERTAIN RECORDS. A truancy court shall order the destruction of records relating to allegations of truant conduct that are held by the court or by the prosecutor if a prosecutor decides not to file a petition for an adjudication of truant conduct after a review of the referral under Section 65.053.

Added by Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 935 (H.B. 2398), Sec. 27, eff. September 1, 2015.

SUBCHAPTER F. ENFORCEMENT OF ORDERS

Sec. 65.251. FAILURE TO OBEY TRUANCY COURT ORDER; CHILD IN CONTEMPT OF COURT. (a) If a child fails to obey an order issued by a truancy court under Section 65.103(a) or a child is in direct contempt of court, the truancy court, after providing notice and an opportunity for a hearing, may hold the child in contempt of court and order either or both of the following:

(1) that the child pay a fine not to exceed \$100; or

(2) that the Department of Public Safety suspend the child's driver's license or permit or, if the child does not have a license or permit, order that the Department of Public Safety deny the issuance of a license or permit to the child until the child fully complies with the court's orders.

(b) If a child fails to obey an order issued by a truancy court under Section 65.103(a) or a child is in direct contempt of court and the child has failed to obey an order or has been found in direct contempt of court on two or more previous occasions, the truancy court, after providing notice and an opportunity for a hearing, may refer the child to the juvenile probation department as a request for truancy intervention, unless the child failed to obey the truancy court order or was in direct contempt of court while 17 years of age or older.

(c) On referral of the child to the juvenile probation department, the truancy court shall provide to the juvenile probation department:

- (1) documentation of all truancy prevention measures taken by the originating school district;
- (2) documentation of all truancy orders for each of the child's previous truancy referrals, including:
 - (A) court remedies and documentation of the child's failure to comply with the truancy court's orders, if applicable, demonstrating all interventions that were exhausted by the truancy court; and
 - (B) documentation describing the child's direct contempt of court, if applicable;
- (3) the name, birth date, and last known address of the child and the school in which the child is enrolled; and

- (4) the name and last known address of the child's parent or guardian.

(d) The juvenile probation department may, on review of information provided under Subsection (c):

- (1) offer further remedies related to the local plan for truancy intervention strategies adopted under Section 25.0916, Education Code; or

- (2) refer the child to a juvenile court for a hearing to be conducted under Section 65.252.

(e) A truancy court may not order the confinement of a child for the child's failure to obey an order of the court issued under Section 65.103(a).

Added by Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 935 (H.B. 2398), Sec. 27, eff. September 1, 2015.

Sec. 65.252. PROCEEDINGS IN JUVENILE COURT. (a) After a referral by the local juvenile probation department, the juvenile court prosecutor shall determine if probable cause exists to believe that the child engaged in direct contempt of court or failed to obey an order of the truancy court under circumstances that would constitute contempt of court. On a finding that probable cause exists, the prosecutor shall determine whether to request an adjudication. Not later than the 20th day after the date the juvenile court receives a request for adjudication from the prosecutor, the juvenile court shall conduct a hearing to determine if the child engaged in conduct that constitutes contempt of the order issued by the truancy court or engaged in direct contempt of court.

(b) If the juvenile court finds that the child engaged in conduct that constitutes contempt of the order issued by the truancy court or direct contempt of court, the juvenile court shall:

- (1) enter an order requiring the child to comply with the truancy court's order;

- (2) forward a copy of the order to the truancy court within five days; and

- (3) admonish the child, orally and in writing, of the consequences of subsequent referrals to the juvenile court, including:

- (A) a possible charge of delinquent conduct for contempt of the truancy court's order or direct contempt of court; and

- (B) a possible detention hearing.

(c) If the juvenile court prosecutor finds that probable cause does not exist to believe that the child engaged in direct contempt or in conduct that constitutes contempt of the order issued by the truancy court, or if the juvenile probation department finds that extenuating circumstances caused the original truancy referral, the juvenile court shall enter an order requiring the child's continued compliance with the truancy court's order and notify the truancy court not later than the fifth day after the date the order is entered.

(d) This section does not limit the discretion of a juvenile prosecutor or juvenile court to prosecute a child for conduct under Section 51.03.

Added by Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 935 (H.B. 2398), Sec. 27, eff. September 1, 2015.

Sec. 65.253. PARENT OR OTHER PERSON IN CONTEMPT OF COURT. (a) A truancy court may enforce the following orders by contempt:

- (1) an order that a parent of a child, guardian of a child, or any court-appointed guardian ad litem of a child attend an adjudication hearing under Section 65.062(b);

- (2) an order requiring a person other than a child to take a particular action under Section 65.105(a);

- (3) an order that a child's parent, or other person responsible to support the child, reimburse the municipality or county for the cost of the guardian ad litem appointed for the child under Section 65.061(c); and

- (4) an order that a parent, or person other than the child, pay the \$50 court cost under Section 65.107.

(b) A truancy court may find a parent or person other than the child in direct contempt of the court.

(c) The penalty for a finding of contempt under Subsection (a) or (b) is a fine in an amount not to exceed \$100.

(d) In addition to the assessment of a fine under Subsection (c), direct contempt of the truancy court by a parent or person other than the child is punishable by:

- (1) confinement in jail for a maximum of three days;
- (2) a maximum of 40 hours of community service; or
- (3) both confinement and community service.

Added by Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 935 (H.B. 2398), Sec. 27, eff. September 1, 2015.

Sec. 65.254. WRIT OF ATTACHMENT. A truancy court may issue a writ of attachment for a person who violates an order entered under Section 65.057(c). The writ of attachment is executed in the same manner as in a criminal proceeding as provided by Chapter 24, Code of Criminal Procedure.

Added by Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 935 (H.B. 2398), Sec. 27, eff. September 1, 2015.

Sec. 65.255. ENTRY OF TRUANCY COURT ORDER AGAINST PARENT OR OTHER ELIGIBLE PERSON. (a) The truancy court shall:

(1) provide notice to a person who is the subject of a proposed truancy court order under Section 65.253; and

(2) provide a sufficient opportunity for the person to be heard regarding the proposed order.

(b) A truancy court order under Section 65.253 must be in writing and a copy promptly furnished to the parent or other eligible person.

(c) The truancy court may require the parent or other eligible person to provide suitable identification to be included in the court's file. Suitable identification includes fingerprints, a driver's license number, a social security number, or similar indicia of identity.

Added by Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 935 (H.B. 2398), Sec. 27, eff. September 1, 2015.

Sec. 65.256. APPEAL. (a) The parent or other eligible person against whom a final truancy court order has been entered under Section 65.253 may appeal as provided by law from judgments entered by a justice court in civil cases.

(b) Rule 506, Texas Rules of Civil Procedure, applies to an appeal under this section, except an appeal bond is not required.

(c) The pendency of an appeal initiated under this section does not abate or otherwise affect the proceedings in the truancy court involving the child.

Added by Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 935 (H.B. 2398), Sec. 27, eff. September 1, 2015.

Sec. 65.257. MOTION FOR ENFORCEMENT. (a) The state may initiate enforcement of a truancy court order under Section 65.253 against a parent or person other than the child by filing a written motion. In ordinary and concise language, the motion must:

- (1) identify the provision of the order allegedly violated and sought to be enforced;
- (2) state specifically and factually the manner of the person's alleged noncompliance;
- (3) state the relief requested; and
- (4) contain the signature of the party filing the motion.

(b) The state must allege the particular violation by the person of the truancy court order that the state had a reasonable basis for believing the person was violating when the motion was filed.

(c) The truancy court may also initiate enforcement of an order under this section on its own motion.

Added by Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 935 (H.B. 2398), Sec. 27, eff. September 1, 2015.

Sec. 65.258. NOTICE AND APPEARANCE. (a) On the filing of a motion for enforcement, the truancy court shall by written notice set the date, time, and place of the hearing and order the person against whom enforcement is sought to appear and respond to the motion.

(b) The notice must be given by personal service or by certified mail, return receipt requested, on or before the 10th day before the date of the hearing on the motion. The notice must include a copy of the motion for enforcement. Personal service must comply with the Code of Criminal Procedure.

(c) If a person moves to strike or specially excepts to the motion for enforcement, the truancy court shall rule on the exception or motion to strike before the court hears evidence on the motion for enforcement. If an

exception is sustained, the court shall give the movant an opportunity to replead and continue the hearing to a designated date and time without the requirement of additional service.

(d) If a person who has been personally served with notice to appear at the hearing does not appear, the truancy court may not hold the person in contempt, but may issue a warrant for the arrest of the person.

Added by Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 935 (H.B. 2398), Sec. 27, eff. September 1, 2015.

Sec. 65.259. CONDUCT OF ENFORCEMENT HEARING. (a) The movant must prove beyond a reasonable doubt that the person against whom enforcement is sought engaged in conduct constituting contempt of a reasonable and lawful court order as alleged in the motion for enforcement.

(b) The person against whom enforcement is sought has a privilege not to be called as a witness or otherwise to incriminate himself or herself.

(c) The truancy court shall conduct the enforcement hearing without a jury.

(d) The truancy court shall include in the court's judgment:

(1) findings for each violation alleged in the motion for enforcement; and

(2) the punishment, if any, to be imposed.

(e) If the person against whom enforcement is sought was not represented by counsel during any previous court proceeding involving a motion for enforcement, the person may, through counsel, raise any defense or affirmative defense to the proceeding that could have been asserted in the previous court proceeding that was not asserted because the person was not represented by counsel.

(f) It is an affirmative defense to enforcement of a truancy court order under Section 65.253 that the court did not provide the parent or other eligible person with due process of law in the proceeding in which the court entered the order.

Added by Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 935 (H.B. 2398), Sec. 27, eff. September 1, 2015.