

THE BECCA LAW

Protecting Children
Supporting Parents
Strengthening Families
Keeping Children in School

The Becca Law ([RCW 13.32A](#)) was enacted by the Washington State Legislature to:

- Protect children who are endangering themselves
- Keep families together through assessment and treatment services
- Provide tools for schools, parents and Juvenile Court to keep children in school
- Hold children and parents accountable to the order of the Court

Schools must file a truancy petition with Juvenile Court when a child has more than five unexcused absences in a month or ten in a school year. The parent will be notified of the truancy petition unless the child is attending an approved private school or home based instruction.

Truancy (TRU)

The law makes attendance compulsory for all children ages eight to eighteen unless the child:

- Is sixteen and is engaged regularly/lawfully in a useful occupation and parent agrees that the child should not be required to attend school
- Is emancipated
- Has met graduation requirements
- Has received a certificate of educational competence
- Is receiving home-based instruction.

If an “enrolled” six or seven year old has unexcused absences the school must take the same steps as outlined below. A petition may only be filed against the parent at this age and six and seven year olds are not required to attend hearings.

Juvenile Court will inform the child and parent/guardian that a petition has been filed and direct them to work with the school to correct the attendance problem.

Should those efforts fail, Juvenile Court will order the child to attend school and participate in services to reduce barriers to regular school attendance.

The parent can also be ordered to send their child to school and participate in services to ensure regular school attendance.



At Risk Youth Petition (ARY)

Parents may petition Juvenile Court to order their child to remain at home when:

- The child is younger than age 18
- The child has been absent from home, without parental permission for more than 72 hrs
- The child's behavior is beyond the parent's control and endangers the health, safety or welfare of the child or another person
- The child has a serious substance abuse or mental health problem
- Families have made an effort to remedy the problem through means such as counseling

Both children and parents can be ordered by Juvenile Court to attend counseling, classes and other measures to reduce family conflict.

Contact Julie Curtis at Juvenile Court at 477-2459 for further information.

Children in Need of Services (CHINS)

Children, parents or a Department of Children and Family Services social worker may petition Juvenile Court to approve an out-of-home placement when the conflict between parent and child is so severe the family cannot remain intact. Placement may occur with supervision from Juvenile court with:

- A relative
- An appropriate friend or neighbor
- Department of Children and Family Services

The legal parent/guardian may be financially responsible for the cost of the placement.

Juvenile Court will order certain conditions the child and parent must comply with including attending classes, counseling and other measures to reunite the family.

Contact Julie Curtis at Juvenile Court at 509-477-2459 for further information.

“The family unit is the fundamental resource of American Life which should be nurtured . . .”

[RCW 13.32A](#)

For questions or comments please call the Becca office at 509-354-6474.

