



Department of  
Education

## **Guidelines for Attendance Advisory Panels**

## Guidelines for Attendance Advisory Panels

Referring a case of persistent student absence to an Attendance Advisory Panel (AAP) is one of the formal responses available to schools and regions seeking to restore a student's attendance. AAPs may require a series of meetings to recommend and evaluate interventions.

The AAP must give the student and their parents an opportunity to be heard but may otherwise determine its own procedure.

If the offer of a panel is not accepted or failure to follow advice and engage with assistance provided persists, the AAP can issue a certificate to commence prosecution pursuant to Section 42 of the *School Education Act 1999* (the Act).

### What are Attendance Advisory Panels?

An AAP is a group of people, convened under Section 39 of the Act, who have the necessary experience, skills, attributes or qualifications that are appropriate to the case brought before them. Convening a panel provides the opportunity for a group of people from the community, who are independent of the school, to bring a new perspective to the case. There is no requirement for the AAP to include a representative from the Department of Education. The AAP has the authority to inquire into the reasons for a child's failure to attend school and to advise or assist the family in restoring satisfactory attendance (Section 40).

Advice should be sought from the regional Engagement and Transition Manager regarding AAPs for students who are not meeting the attendance requirements of their approved *Notice of Arrangements*.

### When to use Attendance Advisory Panels

The school should refer the parent(s) to an AAP when it is determined that the family may benefit from the advice and assistance that an AAP consisting of community members can offer. This decision will usually be made after a number of school-devised strategies have been unsuccessful.

The principal should consider whether the persistent absence places the student at suspected risk of harm and/or what other elements of risk to the student's wellbeing may be indicated by persistent absence from school.

The Act allows for a principal, Regional Executive Director, badged attendance officer or the Director General to refer a case of persistent absence to an AAP (Section 40). Notice to the parent(s) must be in writing from the chairperson. If an Executive Officer has been appointed to provide support, they will facilitate any correspondence for the chairperson (see Appendices for suggested template letter to parent). Where an AAP is convened, parents should be urged to attend.

The letter should be sent by registered mail or hand delivered and followed up with personal contact to ensure parents have received and understand the information. This is particularly important where parents have a low level of literacy or where Standard Australian English is not the first language of the parents.

The Act advises that the child and parent(s) may be accompanied by a support person. This person is not to represent the child or parent(s) unless the AAP determines that the process will not work effectively without such representation.

If parents do not accept the offer of an AAP, the Regional Executive Director or Independent Public School (IPS) principal should still consider whether convening a panel is likely to be of benefit in restoring attendance.

Relevant factors to consider include:

- whether the parents wish to have the assistance of an AAP or not;
- whether parents have failed to respond to the offer; and
- the history of the case, including interventions by the school and whether all reasonably practicable steps have been taken to restore the student's attendance.

If it is deemed that no purpose would be served by forming an AAP, then prosecution should be considered and a certificate obtained from the Director General (see Appendices for suggested template letter to parent and *Guidelines for prosecution*).

### **Information to be provided to the Attendance Advisory Panel**

The AAP should review past interventions; discuss with parent(s) and student issues impeding attendance; and suggest possible solutions to restore satisfactory attendance.

A formal report from the school, or provider, for the AAP is not required. However, the AAP may request documents or records they deem pertinent to the case. Copies of these documents may be retained by the AAP for the purpose of summarising this information for the panel report.

School, network or regional staff may be called on to provide documentary evidence of:

- attendance (e.g. SIS Lesson Attendance reports);
- behaviour and academic performance;
- contact with the student and parents;
- factors considered to be influencing the student's persistent absences;
- earlier attempts to improve attendance and their effectiveness;
- additional support provided by other agencies; and
- educational options or programs available to meet the student's needs.

### **The composition and authority of an Attendance Advisory Panel**

An AAP should consist of a minimum of three people who the Regional Executive Director or IPS principal considers to have experience, skills, attributes or qualifications appropriate to the case. The AAP must include community members (Section 39).

Panel members cannot be:

- a parent of a child attending the same school as the student for which the panel is being formed; or
- a member of the teaching staff of the school.

#### **Chairperson**

A person appointed by the Regional Executive Director or IPS principal to chair the panel meeting and facilitate panel decision making. The chairperson cannot be a Department of Education employee (Section 39).

#### **Executive Officer**

Although the Executive Officer role is not prescribed by the Act, it is the generally accepted method by which the Department ensures the provision of support services to an AAP.

The Executive Officer is not a member of the AAP. The Regional Executive Director, IPS principal or chairperson may request an Executive Officer assist in coordinating the panel and to communicate with the parent(s). The Executive Officer also ensures that the panel is procedurally fair and adheres to legislation and Department policy.

The role of the Executive Officer may include:

- liaising with the Regional Executive Director or IPS principal in the early identification of the chairperson;
- ensure that panel members who are not employees of the Department are approved and complete a conflict of interest/confidentiality declaration (see Appendices for suggested template);
- arrange a mutually agreeable time and place to meet with panel members, the student, the student's parent(s) and the referrer;
- make every effort to ensure that the student and his or her parent(s) are supported to attend the meeting;
- talk to the parent(s) about the purpose of the panel, and any information the family may wish to provide during the meeting;
- advise the parent(s) that they may bring a support person to the panel;
- work with the panel to manage any request made by the parent(s) for representation;
- brief the panel about the case to be reviewed ensuring that all relevant information is available to panel members;
- support the chairperson to prepare correspondence required in accordance with the Act;
- prepare an agenda for the meeting in consultation with the chairperson;
- clarify policy or legislation for the panel;
- take notes during the meeting, prepare the panel report; and
- distribute the report on behalf of the chairperson.

### **Recommendations of the Attendance Advisory Panel**

The primary objective of an AAP is to enquire into the reasons for the student or parents' failure to comply with the obligation to regularly attend school and to give advice and assistance to support restoration of satisfactory attendance.

Advice may be of a practical nature, and may include referral to external agencies or services that will provide the parent(s) and student with assistance. The AAP can offer the parent(s) a Responsible Parenting Agreement.

If the parent refuses to enter into a Responsible Parenting Agreement, the AAP should ask why they have refused, and offer the parent(s) a further opportunity to accept.

### **The initial report**

The Act requires that the AAP prepare a written report after each meeting. The report should summarise the student's case, case management actions taken by the school, and recommendations made by the panel. The report must also include any advice or assistance provided by the AAP (see Appendices for suggested template).

A copy of the report must be provided to:

- the parent(s) or carer;
- the student if they are an independent minor;
- the principal;
- the badged attendance officer or Engagement and Transitions Manager, if they were the referrer; and

- the Director General:
  - for non-IPS: through the Regional Executive Director and K-12 Coordination Branch; or
  - for IPS: through the K-12 Coordination Branch.

### **The final report and prosecution**

Where there is a failure to follow the advice or accept the assistance of the AAP, a decision to pursue prosecution should be made.

In these circumstances, the AAP (rather than the Director General) must certify that all reasonable steps have been taken to secure compliance, but that breaches of attendance requirements have continued (see Appendices for suggested checklist of steps). The Executive Officer may seek legal advice from the Legal Services Branch to progress a certificate.

A final report on the student's educational background and the steps that have been taken to restore attendance should be prepared and sent to the Legal Services Branch. If a certificate of non-compliance is issued, this should accompany the final report along with all relevant documentation relating to the case.

*Guidelines for prosecution* provide procedural information on progressing prosecution of a parent for their child's persistent absence from school.

### **Delegations and sub-delegations**

The Act provides for the Minister for Education to delegate certain functions and powers to the Director General. These functions and powers may in turn be formally sub-delegated to other officers. This guideline document has been written with existing delegations and sub-delegations in mind. Officers referring to this guideline document and then to the Act itself, should be mindful that discrepancies in roles are likely because the function and/or power has been delegated or sub-delegated to another officer in the Department.

Questions relating to the use of attendance panels should be directed to the Education Regional Office or for IPS principals, the K-12 Coordination Branch, Statewide Services on 9264 4863.

# Letter to parents offering to form an Attendance Advisory Panel

[Title] [Parent 1] and [Title] [Parent 2]  
[Address 1]  
[SUBURB] WA [POSTCODE]

Dear [Title] [Parent 1] and [Title] [Parent 2]

**RE: OFFER OF AN ATTENDANCE ADVISORY PANEL FOR [CHILD'S FIRST NAME] [CHILD'S SURNAME], DOB: [INSERT DATE OF BIRTH]**

The *School Education Act 1999* requires parents ensure their children attend the school in which they are enrolled on each day that the school is open unless there is good reason for them not to attend.

To assist you to improve [Child's First Name]'s school attendance, I am offering you the opportunity for an Attendance Advisory Panel to be formed.

An Attendance Advisory Panel is a group of people brought together to provide advice and assistance to parents of a child not meeting the legislative requirements of school attendance. The panel is made up of appropriately qualified people who are independent of the school and its staff.

At an Attendance Advisory Panel meeting, you would be given an opportunity to raise issues you and/or your child believe are relevant. The panel will provide recommendations and advice to you about how to improve [Child's First Name]'s attendance.

If you wish to ask someone to accompany you to the Attendance Advisory Panel, you can discuss this further with [Name of Executive Officer] on [phone contact for Executive Officer]

I urge you to take up this offer. Please advise me within seven days of the date of this letter whether you wish to accept.

Failure to respond will require me to initiate steps that may lead to prosecution for your child's persistent absences pursuant to the *School Education Act 1999*. The maximum penalty is \$1 000 for each offence.

Yours sincerely

[Regional Executive Director's name/ IPS principal's Name]  
Regional Executive Director/Principal  
[Name of Region/Name of School]

[Date]

# Letter to parents advising of Attendance Advisory Panel details

[Title] [Parent 1] and [Title] [Parent 2]  
[Address 1]  
[SUBURB] WA [POSTCODE]

Dear [Title] [Parent 1] and [Title] [Parent 2]

**RE: ATTENDANCE ADVISORY PANEL FOR [CHILD'S FIRST NAME] [CHILD'S SURNAME], DOB: [INSERT DATE OF BIRTH]**

Thank you for accepting the offer of an Attendance Advisory Panel for [Child's first name].

Details for this meeting are:

**Time:**

**Date:**

**Venue:**

The purpose of the Attendance Advisory Panel is to give you and your child an opportunity to discuss why your child has not been attending school. The panel will then recommend advice or strategies to help you to support your child to restore satisfactory attendance.

Attendance Advisory Panels are independent of the school and may consist of community members and other education staff.

If you wish to ask someone to accompany you to the meeting, you can discuss this further with [Name of Executive Officer] on [phone contact for Executive Officer]

I strongly recommend that you attend this meeting.

If you have any further questions, please contact [Name of Executive Officer] on [phone contact for Executive Officer].

Yours sincerely

[Chairperson's Name]  
Chairperson  
Attendance Advisory Panel  
[Region Name/Name of School]

[Date]

# Letter to parents advising no Attendance Advisory Panel will be formed

[Title] [Parent 1] and [Title] [Parent 2]  
[Address 1]  
[SUBURB] WA [POSTCODE]

Dear [Title] [Parent 1] and [Title] [Parent 2]

**RE: ATTENDANCE PANEL FOR THE PERSISTENT ABSENCES OF [CHILD'S FIRST NAME] [CHILD'S SURNAME], DOB: [INSERT DATE OF BIRTH]**

The *School Education Act 1999* requires parents ensure their children attend the school in which they are enrolled on each day that the school is open unless there is good reason for them not to attend.

Following many attempts to work with you to improve [Child's First Name]'s attendance, you were recently offered the option of an Attendance Advisory Panel to assist you in restoring satisfactory attendance of your child.

You have failed to respond within the time frame specified in the letter.

**OR**

You have chosen to decline the offer of an Attendance Advisory Panel.

**(Delete whichever is not applicable)**

It has been decided that no Attendance Advisory Panel will be formed and that the matter will now be referred to the Department of Education's Legal Services Branch for consideration of prosecution under the *School Education Act 1999*, with the maximum penalty of \$1 000 for each offence.

Yours sincerely

[Regional Executive Director's name/ IPS principal's Name]  
Regional Executive Director/Principal  
[Name of Region/Name of School]

[Date]



# Attendance Advisory Panel - Initial report

School to keep any transcript of panel meeting

<b>Student details:</b> Name, address, date of birth and year level	<b>Parent(s) details:</b> Name and address.
<b>Education-related Responsible Parenting Agreement offered?</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N	<b>If yes, was it complied with?</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N
<b>Panel offer rejected:</b> Panel need not be formed. A recommendation to issue a Certificate may be made.	<b>School details:</b> School name, address and Principal.
<b>Chairperson:</b> Name of chairperson and if they are a community representative.	<b>Executive Officer:</b> Name of Executive Officer and their position if they are a Department of Education employee.
<b>Date of panel meeting:</b>	

## Panel Membership:

Name	Community representative
	<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N
	<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N
	<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N
	<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N

## Panel enquiries:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Social                                | <input type="checkbox"/> Learning difficulties |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cultural                              | <input type="checkbox"/> Geographic            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lingual                               | <input type="checkbox"/> Economic              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other factors relevant to the student | _____  |
- 

## Discussion with parent(s) and student:

Summation of interview with parent(s) and student.

## Summary of case management by school:

Attach Attendance panel checklist.

## Advice and assistance recommended by the Panel:

Advice and assistance offered to the student and/or their parent(s). Include measurable outcomes and timelines.

## Attendance Advisory Panel checklist

<b>Student details:</b> Name, date of birth and year level	<b>Parent(s) details:</b>
<b>School level case manager:</b>	

### Strategies attempted to date:

(Not all strategies will be appropriate. List date(s) action taken)

Strategies	Used
Telephone calls to parents	
Letters to parents	
Home visits by Badged Attendance Officer	
Parent/student attendance interview	
Teacher mentoring	
Student peer mentoring/shadowing	
Attendance reward system applied	
School case conference	
Documented plan	
Interagency case conference(s) / Strong Families Conference(s)	
Modified or alternative education program, training, employment. (circle)	
School psychologist/social worker/chaplain involvement	
Police involvement	
Formal meeting	
Consultation with the network or region attendance coordinator	
Education-related Responsible Parenting Agreement	
Attendance Advisory Panel	

Other Strategies implemented

# Letter to request to convene an Attendance Advisory Panel

[Title] [RED]  
 [Address 1]  
 [SUBURB] WA [POSTCODE]

Dear [Title] [RED]

## REQUEST TO CONVENE AN ATTENDANCE ADVISORY PANEL FOR [CHILD'S FIRST NAME] [CHILD'S SURNAME], DOB: [INSERT DATE OF BIRTH]

To assist in improving [Child's First Name]'s school attendance, I am requesting approval for an Attendance Advisory Panel to be formed.

In attempt to re-engage [Child's First Name] the following strategies have been implemented: (the following are examples of the type of strategies recommended for schools to implement prior to requesting to convene an attendance panel)

Strategies	Used (please tick)
Case Conference Attendance Improvement Plan Implemented? Yes/No (please circle)	
Consultation with relevant Regional Officer (please circle) Aboriginal Education Team, CRS/CRO, Behaviour and Attendance Team, ETM	
Name of Officer(s):	
Responsible Parenting Agreement Offered	
Formal Meeting	
Date:	

If you have any further questions, please contact me on [phone contact].

Yours sincerely

[Principal's Name]  
 Principal  
 [Name of School]

[Date]

This section is to be completed by the Regional Office	
Approved by Regional Executive Director	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> (Please Tick)
_____ (Name), Regional Executive Director	
_____ (Signature)	
Appointed Executive Officer: _____	