



Education &  
Communities

*Public Schools NSW*

# STUDENT ATTENDANCE IN GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

## The Phone Intervention Program

Learning and Engagement Directorate  
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# The Phone Intervention Program

## Guidelines for the Implementation of Phone Intervention Programs (PIPs)

Early and direct contact with the parents of students who are absent from school is a proven way to improve regular attendance and to build a positive relationship with parents in relation to school attendance. Phone Intervention Programs (PIPs) are a means to achieve early and direct contact.

PIPs may involve contacting all parents of students who are absent or it may target particular groups of students or particular days eg Years 7 and 8 on Tuesdays and Wednesdays.

The purpose of PIPs is to inform parents that their children are not at school and to seek a brief explanation for the absence. Explanations provided by parents by telephone may be accepted as reasons for absences and entered on Attendance Registers (rolls). Parents can give an explanation for their child's absence over the phone and therefore do not need to provide a written note.

Teachers, school administrative staff or other personnel nominated by the principal, make initial telephone contact with parents. PIPs contact involves:

- informing a parent that their child is absent from school
- determining whether the parent is aware of the absence. If parents are unaware of the absence, the matter should be investigated as possible truancy
- recording reasons given by the parent for the absence. A written record of the reason should be made and entered in the school attendance register.

If a parent declines to provide a reason for an absence, the principal or nominee must be notified and an absentee notice issued.

Parents wishing to discuss in length or dispute absences should be asked to contact the principal or nominated member of staff. Aggressive responses to PIPs should be noted and referred to the principal.

Information shared by parents regarding concerns about the welfare or wellbeing of their child should be referred to the principal so that school counsellor, learning support or welfare support can be provided.

Attendance officers such as Home School Liaison Officers (HSLOs) and Learning and Engagement Officers can provide schools with advice and support in establishing PIPs. Attendance Officers should not assume daily management of or routine participation in a school's program. The program is generally managed within school resources.

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## Consulting and informing the school community

Schools must inform parents about the school attendance policy at the beginning of each year. Local parent and community organisations must be consulted prior to the introduction of PIPs.

A school newsletter item or posting on the school website about PIPS may be effective ways of communicating with parents and community. When informing parents about PIPs, it is important not to create the impression that the school will contact them by phone call every time their child is absent from school.

Interpreters and translated materials should be utilised when communicating with parents from language backgrounds other than English who do not speak English well to enable the parents to engage fully with the process.

Parents must be informed that it is not compulsory to be involved in PIPs and they may withdraw from participation in the program at any time.

## Establishing PIPS

- Step 1: Consult local parent and community organisations
- Step 2: Inform the school community about the program
- Step 3: Provide all parents with an opportunity to be involved in the program
- Step 4: Establish a list of parents who cannot be contacted by phone or who have indicated that they do not wish to be contacted by phone
- Step 5: Plan PIPs protocols and strategies. Establish roles and routines. Identify personnel who will collect information from daily rolls and who will phone parents
- Step 6: Establish procedures for parents to be contacted
- Step 7: Provide staff with training in contact procedures. Attendance Officers may be of assistance in developing a script to be used when contacting parents. All non-teaching staff should be aware that they are an initial point of contact and should refer parents to nominated teaching staff when parents wish to discuss attendance issues
- Step 8: Ensure that student details on ERN, OASIS or other records are current

Schools should review their roll-marking procedures to ensure that rolls are marked accurately. This will avoid embarrassment arising from contacting parents when their child is actually present.