

The juvenile magistrate who ruled on truancy cases in Denver took an unofficial tally of the major issues he found to exist among the truants whom he saw in court on one day early in 2003. Of the 40 truants, only three revealed no readily discernable underlying problem. A wide range of issues surfaced among the 37 remaining students including child neglect, abandonment, mental and physical health concerns including substance abuse among both parents and students, and 18 prior referrals to health and human services (Heilbrunn, 2004).

Mental and physical health problems, poverty, and family dysfunction can contribute to truancy, as can negative aspects of a student's school experience, such as bullying or feelings of academic failure. Personal academic motivation may help a child overcome some of these challenges, but given the seriousness of some of the issues faced by chronic truants, many need significant support to get them back on track.

### **Outcomes and Correlates of Truancy**

Truancy has been clearly shown to be related to high school dropout, substance use and abuse, and delinquency. The relationships are circular, rather than linear. That is, truancy can be both a cause and a consequence of any of these troubling behaviors.

#### ***Connections to High School Dropout***

The link between truancy and dropout has been demonstrated by a number of studies that show that dropouts may begin having attendance problems as early as 1<sup>st</sup> grade (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002), or 4<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> grade (Morris et al., 1991). Students who skip significant numbers of classes often fail to earn credit for those classes, either because they also neglect homework and fail tests, or because of mandatory attendance requirements set by the schools. Students who have experienced school retentions and are overage for grade as a result, are at greater risk of high school dropout, even when the