School Attendance Review Board (SARB) FAQs and Features

The School Attendance Review Board (SARB) is a strategy that utilizes school and community resources, to help students to improve their attendance and address truancy-related issues. A “panel of experts,” including school officials, counseling agencies, the probation department, law enforcement, the District Attorney, Department of Children and Family Services, and other agencies meet with families to develop truancy intervention strategies.

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What is SARB?
The School Attendance Review Board (SARB) is a strategy that utilizes school and community resources to help the student improve his or her attendance and deal with truancy-related issues.

Why do I need to attend?
The SARB process starts at the school site with the identification of attendance and/or behavior problems. SARB is a community/school-based program that provides intensive guidance and coordinates service delivery to students.

Referral Process A pre-SARB meeting called the School Attendance Review Team (SART) is held prior to SARB to address the identified problems with the student, parents, and school counselors, administrators, or teachers while intervention, and services are to be introduced to family to return student to regular attendance.

What if family or student chooses not to participate? SARB is specifically charged with finding solutions to unresolved student attendance and discipline problems: parents and student may be referred to mediation or prosecution for truancy. Family members may be subpoenaed to attend, as well, especially in severe or chronic cases.

What if my work won’t let me attend?
No employer shall discharge or in any manner discriminate against an employee who is the parent or guardian of a pupil for taking time off to appear in the school of a pupil pursuant to a request made under Section 48900.1 of the Education Code, if the employee, prior to taking the time off, gives reasonable notice to the employer that he or she is requested to appear in the school. Any employee who is discharged, threatened with discharge, demoted, suspended, or in any other manner discriminated against in the terms and conditions of employment by his or her employer because the employee has taken time off to appear in the school of a pupil pursuant to a request made under Section 48900.1 of the Education Code shall be entitled to reinstatement and reimbursement for lost wages and work benefits caused by those acts of the employer.
What happens at SARB?

The SARB may recommend attendance improvement strategies such as daily attendance checks, tutoring, counseling, mentoring, parenting classes, medical check-ups, recreation, or mentoring programs.

See School Attendance: The Truancy Toolbox for more information
**SARB and Gangs**

High truancy and dropout rates are common among gang involved youth. This population experiences a high rate of absenteeism for a variety of reasons including: issues of violence in the family, learning problems, substance abuse, fear or intimidation by other gang members and safe passage to and from school. Absences from school result in disengagement and loss of learning. Students begin to feel disconnected and find it increasingly difficult to engage in the process. Assisting gang involved youth, that are truant, is more difficult than assisting other school aged truant youth because they often need more intensive services that require a more specialized approach.

Schools must implement evidence based programs that measure fidelity and that are built in to the overall school environment. Strategies to reduce gang issues should engage all stakeholders including schools, parents, law enforcement, community, and the courts.

Responsibilities of the following persons is delineated in: The Truancy Toolbox

- **School administrators**
- **Parents**
- **Law enforcement**
- **Courts**
- **Community stakeholders**
- **School attendance staff and agencies**

*Intervention Services that can be offered to gang involved youth are also available in: The Truancy Toolbox*

**SARB and Special Education**

As long as services are being provided, most disabilities should not prevent a Special Education student from regular school attendance. A Severely Emotionally Disturbed (SED) or Emotionally Disturbed (ED) child, or a child with school phobia might have difficulty attending school, but services would still need to be provided.

If a student is excessively absent and tardy, could it be related to his or her disability? Some students develop patterns of absence on Mondays and Fridays, when exams are scheduled. Others are absent from the same class frequently. Some are absent before lunch, or absent or late after lunch, or late for Physical Education (P.E.) classes, or after P.E. What is the reason for these absence patterns?

*Involuntary transfer by SARB is a change of placement that is not appropriate unless part of the IEP process.*

See School Attendance: The Truancy Toolbox for more information
SARB and 504
Should students served by a Section 504 accommodation plan be referred to SARB? What is Section 504? How does it differ from Special Education students served under the Individuals with Disabilities Act, or IDEA, who are referred to SARB?

Students served under Section 504 are not exempt from compulsory education, and accommodations are designed to support their attendance at school.

See School Attendance: The Truancy Toolbox for more information regarding:
- Limiting Mental or Physical Disability
- Major Life Activities
- Mitigation Measures
- A Medical Diagnosis
- Transitory and Minor Impairment
- Disabilities: Episodic or in Remission

SARB and Homeless Education
Children and youth, 0-22 years of age, who lack a “fixed, regular, and adequate” nighttime address, are considered homeless. This age range reflects the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance mandates relevant to early education students, as well as special education students who have the right to remain in school until the age of 22.

The district should ensure that all protocols have been followed to remove any barriers for a homeless student that may impede his/her academic achievement prior to implementation of the SARB process. The district homeless liaison should be invited to join in the SART/SARB panel(s) in order to support the homeless student through this process, while upholding the districts attendance policy. Regular school attendance is a key component to support a student’s academic achievement. It is the best way for the student to circumvent the cycle of poverty and move forward in life to pursue his/her dreams.

SARB and Foster Youth
Students in foster care represent one of the most educationally vulnerable populations of students. Decades of research including recent studies in California, has found that compared to their peers, these youth have higher rates of tardiness, absence, and truancy. The most significant barrier that is unique to students in foster care is instability in their education caused by frequent changes in school placement. Students in foster care change schools about once every six months, and some research suggests that they lose an average of four to six months of educational progress each time.

To support students in overcoming these educational barriers, California has afforded specific protections for these vulnerable students.
**SARB and Probation**  
The Los Angeles County Probation Department is a strong supporter of SARB and school district efforts to ensure good attendance in school. Probation Officers commonly serve as members of the various SARBs in Los Angeles County, providing their expertise to SARBs on compulsory attendance laws, and possible consequences for non-attendance. Some school districts have school-based probation officers with offices at school or district office sites. These officers are a valuable resource to the schools, in working with students who are on probation, and helping to deter others who are exhibiting signs of delinquency through their lack of attendance or behavior.

If school districts do not have their own probation officer, they should consider contacting the Supervising Deputy Probation Officer of the Juvenile Supervision Unit to request the participation of a Probation Officer in the SART meeting. [www.probation.co.la.uc/](http://www.probation.co.la.uc/).

See School Attendance: The Truancy Toolbox for more information regarding:
- **Incorrigible Students**
- **Incorrigible and Truant**
- **Filing the 601 Case**
- **Confinement and 601 Cases**
- **601 Court-Ordered Conditions**
- **WIC 602 Cases**
- **Day-time Loitering Citations and Probation Citation Diversion**

**Excused Absences and Chronic Absenteeism**
Our goal is to assist you in educating your child. We can be successful if your child is in school every day and on time.

See School Attendance: The Truancy Toolbox for more information regarding:
- **Excused absences per California Education Code 48205**
- **Chronic Absenteeism: Risks to missing 10% of school educational time**
- **Absences for religious purposes**
- **Exempted Children**
- **Work Permits**
- **Other Health Concerns**
- **Court Appearances**
**Bullying**
According to a report released by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, OJJDP in 2011, victims of bullying are distanced from learning, causing academic disadvantages and are more likely to become truant. Although the correlation between bullying and truancy is not strong, the effects of bullying and health consequences, which may cause absence is clear.

A caring school community, in which students are challenged academically and supported by the adults, can reduce the negative effects of bullying, including truancy and academic failure. Positive based instruction in schools can overcome the negative effects of bullying if they adopt strategies that engage students in their work, creating positive learning environments that produce academic achievement.

**Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS)**

Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) is a proactive system-wide framework for creating and maintaining safe and effective learning environments in schools, and ensuring that all students have the social skills needed to ensure their success at school and beyond. PBIS is not a curriculum, intervention, initiative or practice. It is a decision-making framework that guides selection, integration, and implementation of the best evidence-based academic and behavioral practices for improving academic and behavior outcomes for students.

*See School Attendance: The Truancy Toolbox for more information about:*
- **Focus on Community Partners**
- **Focus on Parents**
- **Focus on Students**

**Charter Schools**

Charter Schools are exempt from most of the California Education Code. However, mechanisms should be in place where the parents and students are regularly notified of the expectations of the school as well as the parent/student responsibilities. *(EC 48980 et seq. requires non-charter public schools to notify parents or guardians of their rights and responsibilities at the beginning of each academic year and EC 48982 requires parents or guardians to sign the notice and return it to the school.)*
Abolish Chronic Truancy (ACT)

The ACT Program is a highly successful truancy intervention program that is run by the Office of the Los Angeles District Attorney’s Office. The program targets parents and guardians of elementary school-aged children who, because of excessive unexcused absences, are in danger of becoming habitual or chronic truants. The program uses a series of escalating interventions with students and their parents.

The first step is for the school to identify children with excessive absences. The Office of the District Attorney will then contact the parents in writing and invite them to attend a group Parent Meeting where the legal and the long term consequences of truancy are presented. Following this meeting, if the student continues to be absent without excuse, a District Attorney representative, along with a school administrator, will meet personally with the student and the parent to identify and discuss the barriers to school attendance.

See School Attendance: The Truancy Toolbox for more information

The school may be evaluated on their level of truancy. If the school is accepted into the program, a Memorandum of Understanding is executed and then ACT personnel are assigned to handle the school.

Related Laws:

**Education Code 48260.** A student is truant when he/she is absent from school without an excuse three full days in one school year or tardy or absent for more than any 30-minute period during the school day three times.

**Education Code 48262.** Definition of a habitual truant.

**Education Code 48263.** If any minor pupil in any district is a habitual truant or is habitually insubordinate or disorderly during attendance at school, the pupil may be referred to SARB.

**Education Code 48263.5.** SARB referral to a truancy mediation program.

**Education Code 48263.6.** Definition of a chronic truant.

**Education Code 48292.** Parents are responsible to send their children to school or they will face charges in court.

**Education Code 48293(a).** A parent or guardian may be held responsible if a student does not follow the SARB contract.

**Vehicle Code 13202.7.** The court may revoke or delay the issuance of a driver’s license to a student between the ages of 13 and 18 if he/she is a habitual truant.

**Penal Code 270.1.** Misdemeanor penalty for the parent of a student considered to be a chronic truant.

**Penal Code 272.** Misdemeanor penalty for the parent contributing to the delinquency of a minor.
FAQs from California Dept. of Education/LACOE

What are allowable absences?
- Illness.
- Quarantine directed by a county or city health officer.
- Having medical, dental, or optometric services rendered.
- Attending funeral services of a member of the pupil's immediate family to the extent of not more than one day if the service is conducted in California. Not more than three days if the service is conducted outside of California.

Who is authorized to make the decision regarding excused absences?
**AB 2616** authorizes school administrators to determine whether other reasons are deemed to constitute a valid excuse. Attendance clerks, office managers, counselors or other staff members are not authorized to make these decisions. In an effort to promote consistency, the district should consider designating one administrator per school site to address these matters.

Can they take my children away at a SARB meeting?
No. The purpose of the DCFS is to protect children and keep families together unless there is severe abuse or neglect. All persons who work with children are mandated reporters who must report suspected abuse to the Department of Child and Family Services. It is only a suspicion that starts the report, however, the SDCF counselor is then required to conduct a thorough investigation before responding to the report. The purpose of DCFS on the SARB panel is to provide access to additional resources that are available through their division and expertise. Safety, substance abuse, and sexual trafficking will be investigated by DCFS to ensure child is well protected from potential abuses.

Should charter schools establish their own SARBS?
No. Charter school students with attendance problems that need a SARB referral should have the case referred to the student’s home school district SARB.

See School Attendance: The Truancy Toolbox for more information and FAQs
Or refer to CDE website:  [http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/ai/sb/](http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/ai/sb/)

What are possible methods of verification for absences?
How should districts provide training/guidance to school sites?
What is a student’s home school district?
How does a charter school connect with the home school district SARB?
Will participation in the home school district SARB be too overwhelming?
What are the prerequisites for a charter school to bring a SARB case?
When should the charter school refer a case to the home district SARB?
Can SARB be used as an intervention with IEP-served students?
Should a Manifestation Determination be conducted prior to SARB?
Is an intervention/behavior plan an appropriate part of the SARB process?
Can functional behavioral assessment help to identify environmental situations that may affect attendance?
What steps of the IEP process should be completed prior to a SARB referral?
What IEP documentation should be included with the SARB referral packet?
Can the IEP meeting be combined with the SART meeting?
What are examples of IEP attendance goals?
What should the student do if they are experiencing conflicts with other students, who should they see or report to?
Is it true that compulsory attendance laws do not apply to Special Education students?
Can SARB help in situations where a parent refuses to send a student to school because he/she does not like the IEP recommended placement?
Is SARB used to “enforce” the IEP?
Does SARB help to open communication with parents who refuse to attend IEP meetings?
Can the IEP include references to SART/SARB contract stipulations?
Can SARB refer Special Education students for prosecution ages 18-22?
Can SARB Support Assessment?
How does a student qualify for protections under Section 504?
What are examples of 504 disabilities or impairments that may necessitate a 504 Plan?
What about ADD/ADHD?

**RESOURCE List**

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Model SARB from Los Angeles County

The Model School Attendance Review Board (SARB) Recognition Program identifies and recognizes outstanding results-based school attendance improvement programs at the district or county level and creates a resource list of quality programs for dropout reduction. These model programs provide direct services to high-risk youth with persistent school attendance and/or school behavior problems, or they provide consultant and coordinated services within a county. The CDE encourages SARBs that meet the eligibility criteria, including measuring and reporting outcomes, to submit an application to the Model SARB Recognition Program. The following are Model SARBs in Los Angeles County:

SARB 16: El Segundo USD, Hermosa Beach CSD, Manhattan Beach UD, Redondo Beach USD*

SARB 20B: Bellflower USD/Paramount USD

SARB 7: Los Angeles USD, Local District 6
Model SARB recognition: 2010

SARB 22: Montebello USD

SARB 4: Alhambra USD

SARB 20: Downey USD
Model SARB recognition: 2011, 2014

SARB 28: Covina-Valley USD/Charter Oak USD
Model SARB recognition: 2014

SARB 17: Long Beach USD
Model SARB recognition: 2015, 2016

* SARB 16 was named the first Distinguished SARB