96-004 Truancy Enforcement

Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department

FIELD OPERATIONS DIRECTIVE

Field Operations Support Services

TRUANCY ENFORCEMENT

The purpose of this Directive is to establish guidelines for the enforcement of the Los Angeles County Truancy Ordinance, Title 13, Chapter 13.57. This ordinance was enacted March 1, 1996.

BACKGROUND

The truancy ordinance allows a peace officer to cite a student under 18 years of age, between 0830 and 1330 hours, on regularly scheduled school days, if the offender is loitering in a public place without a legitimate excuse to be absent from school. The Los Angeles County Juvenile Traffic Court is empowered to conduct hearings on all juvenile traffic matters, and some citable misdemeanors/infractions, including vandalism, trespassing, curfew and truancy violations. Juveniles who are detained and cited by patrol deputies for violation of the truancy ordinance are required to appear in Juvenile Traffic Court, accompanied by a parent or legal guardian. The offender may be fined and/or ordered by the hearing officer to comply with specific mandates agreed upon by the Court and the appropriate school district.

IMPLEMENTATION

On March 1, 1996, the Los Angeles County Office of Education began notifying students, faculty and parents within Los Angeles County of the truancy ordinance. Beginning April 15, 1996, the Sheriff's Department will enforce the ordinance within the unincorporated county area. Field deputies shall cite juveniles to their local Juvenile Traffic Court, as they currently do for curfew citations.

PROCEDURES

When a field deputy detains and cites a juvenile for violation of the truancy ordinance, the deputy must include the following information on the citation:

- "Must bring one parent", written along the left margin of the citation
- Name of the school attended, written along the right margin of the citation

Once the offender is cited he/she may be released in the field. However, if the student fails to return to school or go home, the deputy may transport him/her to school for release to school officials.

JUDICIAL PROCESS

Juvenile offenders who appear in Juvenile Traffic Court and are convicted on a first offense are fined approximately $135. The fine is generally "set aside" if the student attends school without an unexcused

absence for 60 days. A second offense requires a $675 fine, which may again be set “aside” if the student attends school without an unexcused absence for 60 days, and completes a community service program. A parent/guardian is generally required to attend and complete an accredited parenting class. Juvenile offenders who fail to appear in Juvenile Traffic Court are issued a “No Bail” arrest warrant.

TRUANCY ENFORCEMENT PROGRAM - TRACKING

Each patrol station shall process and track truancy citations on a monthly basis, similar to the procedures utilized for curfew citations. The following information is required:

- Date of issuance
- Location
- Time of day
- Student’s school
- Age / Gender / Race
- Total number of citations issued

Monthly reports shall be submitted to each Division Chief for review, and then forwarded to Field Operations Support Services for compilation. A comparative analysis will be conducted by each station after the first 180 days to determine what impact the program has on the station crime rate.

UNIT COMMANDER RESPONSIBILITY

Unit commanders are encouraged to contact school officials within their jurisdictions in order to inform them of the Department’s philosophy on truancy enforcement, and the potential impact on student truancy. Station captains shall also encourage their concerned contract city officials to review the County’s Truancy Ordinance for consideration in their city.