

## **SARB: School Attendance Review Board**

California compulsory education law requires everyone between the ages of 6 and 18 years of age to attend school, except 16 and 17 year-olds who have graduated from high school or passed the California High School Proficiency Exam (CHSPE) and obtained parental permission to leave. Some students, however, violate compulsory education laws and have a pattern of unexcused absences. Although truancy and excessive absenteeism are not new problems, they cause costly, long-term problems to the students, school, and the community.

In 1974, the Legislature enacted a statute to enhance the enforcement of compulsory education laws and to divert students with school attendance or behavior problems from the juvenile justice system until all available resources have been exhausted. This statute created School Attendance Review Boards (SARB's), composed of representatives from various youth-serving agencies, to help truant or recalcitrant students and their parents or guardians solve school attendance and behavior problems through the use of available school and community resources. Although the goal of SARB is to keep students in school and provide them with a meaningful educational experience, SARB does have the power, when necessary, to refer students and their parents or guardians to court.

State SARB members developed a handbook, *School Attendance Review Boards: Operations and Resources*, to help county and local SARB's identify and handle attendance problems early. The handbook provides information on establishing a SARB; identifies behavioral patterns of problem students; gives helpful hints on how to work with students and their parents or guardians; suggests by-laws and standing rules; identifies effective factors for parent and pupil conferences; lists California compulsory attendance and other related laws; and provides sample letters and forms to petition the Probation Department, Office of the District Attorney, and the courts.