

Truancy Intervention

National Models and Connecticut Initiatives

Kathryn Scheinberg, J.D.
Equal Justice Works Fellow

Center for Children's Advocacy
65 Elizabeth Street, Hartford, CT 06105
www.kidscounsel.org

January 25, 2010

Truancy Intervention

National Models and Connecticut Initiatives

National Truancy Intervention Models..... 1

- School and Community Teams
- Community Teams
- Case Management
- Truancy Centers
- Parent Education and Involvement
- Attorney/Mentor Projects
- Truancy Courts
- Mediation
- Mental Health Models
- Youth Courts

Current Truancy Initiatives in Connecticut 6

- School and Community Teams
- Court Models
- Law Enforcement Model
- Mental Health Model
- Juvenile Review Board Model
- City Youth Service Bureaus

National Truancy Intervention Models

School and Community Teams

Features

- Teams, which may consist of a school social worker or guidance counselor, a prosecutor, a police or probation officer, an educational assistant, and/or a case manager, meet with the parent and child after 3/more unexcused absences.
- The team works together to identify root causes of the truant behavior and create a contract for successful school attendance. Contracts are signed by both student and parent.
- Referrals to social service agencies made when necessary.

The team intensely monitors the student's attendance as well as the other conditions of the contract.

Examples

Stop Truancy Opportunity Program (STOP)

Madera County, CA

www.madera-county.com/probation/stopprogram.html

Program is of a series of 5 graduated steps for truant students.

Outcome: The vast majority of participants improve after the first step (parent notification after 1-3 unexcused absences), and thus do not have to proceed to the following 4 intensive steps. See the website for full midyear and annual reports since 2002.

Youth R.E.A.C.H.

King County, WA

Information at the Center for Children and Youth Justice website at www.ccyj.org.

Program is a three-tiered funnel approach, and includes interventions of school engagement workshops, community truancy board, and case management.

Outcome: To be determined.

Truancy Intervention Project (TIP)

Ramsey County, St. Paul, MN

www.co.ramsey.mn.us/attorney/TIPOverview.htm

Outcome: During the 2007-2008 school year, 76% of St. Paul students in the program improved their attendance. Filings for truancy petitions have dropped approximately 50% since TIP started in 1995.

Check and Connect

Developed in Minnesota, curriculum was expanded nationwide <http://ici.umn.edu/checkandconnect/>

Program consists of an adult monitor "checking" in with students consistently, in order to monitor attendance and gauge student engagement, as well as "connecting" student to school community through both basic and intensive interventions.

Outcome: Recent studies of a four-year follow-up of 12th graders (who started the program in 9th grade) found a 42% increase in the percentage of students who had completed high school via diploma or GED, as well as a 37% increase in the rate of persistent attendance.

Community Teams

Features

- Similar to the above model, except for the composition of the teams. In this model, schools and/or court officials refer the truant student to panel of community members. The community members are usually involved with youth social service programs to which they can connect the students in order to achieve the goals of their contracts.
- Case management is usually a key component of this model.

Examples

School Attendance Review Boards

Statewide - CA

Superior Court At-Risk Youth Program

King County (WA)

National Center for School Engagement

www.schoolengagement.org/truancy-prevention-registry/index.cfm?fuseaction=programinfo&displayprogramid=39

Program provides a combination of attendance workshops, community review boards, and case management.

Outcome: In the first year of the workshops, preliminary court hearings were reduced by 57%. In addition, 75% of the youth that participated did not go on to attend court on the truancy matter.

Case Management

Features

- School officials review attendance records and send notification letters home to truant students and parents.
- If attendance does not improve, truant students may be referred to a caseworker/truancy officer.
- Truancy officer makes referrals to community services.
- If services are not successful in reducing truancy, cases may be referred to police officers, and petitions are filed in truancy court.

Examples

Chronic Truancy Initiative

MI State University Criminal Justice Program
Information at OJDDP website
www2.dsgonline.com/mpg/mpg_program_detail.aspx?ID=594&title=Chronic%20Truancy%20Initiative

Outcome: Significant reductions in absences were noted at each progressive level. At the letter-to-parents stage, absences decreased by 5%. At the truancy officer level, absences decreased by 6%. Referrals to social services also resulted in absence decreases.

Truancy Intervention Program

Butler County (PA)
www.alt-vision.org/tip.html

Program involves case management counselors, court liaisons, school liaisons, and truancy counselors.

Outcome: The programming is based on a Pittsburgh pilot program which resulted in an 18.5% per student increase in cumulative school year attendance, with an 82% overall student success rate in the program.

Positive Attendance and School Support (PASS)

Olympia, WA

Program utilizes a case manager, who determines at the intake session whether the student should appear before the Youth Court, Community Truancy Board, or should receive intensive case management services.

Outcome: To be determined.

Truancy Centers

Features

- Truant students are taken by police officers to central locations which may be staffed by police, school safety officers, attendance monitors, and/or staffers from the District Attorney's Office.
- Parents are notified when their child is taken to the center.
- When parents pick up a student, they are given a letter advising them of their obligations as parents to ensure their children's regular school attendance.
- Parents whose children are chronic truants may be asked to attend a meeting with program staffers for information about their duties under the law.
- Parents are also provided with information about local community service agencies that specialize in assisting families.

Examples

Truant Recovery Program

California
OJDDP Model Programs
www2.dsgonline.com/mpg/mpg_program_detail.aspx?ID=50&title=Truant%20Recovery%20Program

Program involves police officers transporting students to truancy centers if they are found on the street during school hours without an excuse slip. Personnel at the center contact parents and return the youth to school. The centers work in tandem with Student Attendance Review Boards (for habitual truants), and also have a probation officer on staff to screen youth for probation violations and bench warrants.

Outcome: School attendance of participants has increased, and the program is considered "promising" as an OJDDP Model Program. The program is attempting to provide more complete data for future analyses.

Truancy Assessment Center (TAC)

Lexington, KY

Program completes a holistic, comprehensive assessment of the family's strengths, needs, and issues impacting the youth's school attendance, and refers to services. TAC can also provide case management services, and will generally assist families in avoiding formal court proceedings.

Outcome: 57% of youth served have exhibited a desired change in school attendance.

Truancy Reduction Alliance to Contact Kids (TRACK)

Brooklyn, NY

www.brooklynnda.org/track/track.htm

Program includes seven truancy centers.

Outcome: Only 6% of students processed at a TRACK center are picked up a second time. 79,645 students have been processed since the program started in 1999.

Parent Education and Involvement

Features

Parents learn and practice identification, prevention, and intervention strategies through parent information forums or parent conferences.

Parents also attend support groups where they receive emotional and practical support and practice implementing newly acquired skills and techniques.

Examples

School Attendance Motivation Enhancement

<http://truants.org/>

Program educates parents and offers online classes for students that satisfy their punishments for truant behavior, as part of the Dallas Challenge Truancy Enforcement Center model. The first tier of truant behavior requires parent/child attendance at truancy workshops.

Outcome: Based upon sample data, only 4% of students return to the TEC on new contempt charges. Moreover, less than 12% of the students enter the system on new delinquency charges one year or more after their successful discharge from the TEC.

The Parent Project

www.parentproject.com

Information on Minidoka County for details at

www.parentproject.com/minidoka.html.

Program is a curriculum that has been used in over 30 states by a variety of entities including probation, police departments, religious organizations, schools, and youth organizations.

Outcome: Project has reduced juvenile crime by 1/3 in some areas.

Attorney/Mentor Projects

Features

- A volunteer attorney is assigned to the case when a truancy petition is filed at court.
- The attorney represents the child at court on all truancy-related hearings, and continues to advocate for the child after court involvement ends.

Example

The Truancy Intervention Project

Active in 19 counties in Georgia, main site in Atlanta

www.truancyproject.org

Outcome: The program touts a 77% success rate since its 1992 inception, based on the number of youth who do not return to Juvenile Court after participating.

Truancy Court

Features

Truancy Court is usually held at the school where a judge, who is acting in either an official, or ex officio, role, presides.

When a problem is identified at the session, the Truancy Court, school administrators, and guidance counselors work together in helping to find a solution. They connect the student to testing, counseling, or any other service that may help increase the student's academic success. Some school districts offer tutoring.

The students' guidance counselors or truancy case managers inform the court of a student's weekly progress.

Examples

Judges in Schools Program

25th Judicial District, North Carolina

Program involves pre-court involvement with a judge at school and weekly intervention for 8-12 weeks with the entire family.

Outcome: Over 80% of all students have increased their attendance, school attachment (extracurricular activities), and school achievement (grades).

Rhode Island Family Court Stop Truancy Outreach Program

www.courts.state.ri.us/truancycourt/

Program works in 33 communities, in more than 150 schools.

Outcome: During the 2001-2002 and 2002-2003 school years, an average of 77% of participants increased their attendance rates and 63% of participants improved their academic grades.

Mediation

Features

- Parents are invited to a mediation session after parental notifications fail to improve their children's attendance.
- A trained mediator (volunteers, employees of the court, or nonprofit mediation centers) conducts a mediation, which is attended by the student's parent and teacher.
- During the mediation session, stakeholders identify the root causes of truant behavior and agree on a plan of action.
- The school is responsible for follow-up actions.

Example

Ohio Truancy Prevention Through Mediation Program

<http://disputeresolution.ohio.gov/courtcommunity.htm>

Facilitated, problem-solving program that takes place in the school. The invitation to mediate is extended to the student and parent at a very early stage of truant behavior.

Outcome: For mediated students, those with both classifications of "mild" and "severe" absence problems showed improved attendance immediately following the mediation, as well as at the 20, 40, and 60-day mark. See full reports by county on website.

Mental Health Models

Features

- This type of program seeks to identify unaddressed mental health needs as root causes for truant behavior.
- Case managers/social workers link youth and families to mental health services in the community, train school staff to identify mental health issues, and work to engage the whole family in the treatment process.
- The program may provide short-term follow-up to support engagement in treatment and reduction of future crises or truant behavior

Examples

Operation Save Kids

Mississippi

National Center for School Engagement

www.schoolengagement.org/truancy-prevention-registry/index.cfm?fuseaction=programinfo&displayprogramid=249

Program consists of individual, group, and family therapy for students that have unexcused absences from school.

Outcome: The number of truancy petitions filed has decreased and referrals to school attendance officers have decreased, but the program is still working on data analysis as to actual school attendance improvement.

School-Focused Diversion Project for Youth with Mental Health Needs

Seattle, WA, Center for Children and Youth Justice

www.ccyj.org/initiatives/projects/mental-health-and-juvenile-justice/

Program works in conjunction with the MacArthur Foundation's "Models for Change" juvenile justice reform initiative.

Outcome: To be determined.

Tuancy Reduction and Prevention Program (TRAPP)

Nevada

<http://thebridgecenter.net/trapp.aspx>

Program modeled from a SAMHSA (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration) Best Practices Exemplary Model Program. The process begins with a referral, home visit, and an evaluation by a case manager. The child is given evaluations for substance abuse, behavioral health, family, social, and/or educational issues. After this process, the program offers services including tutoring, counseling, family therapy, and substance abuse therapy.

Outcome: To be determined.

Youth Courts

Features

- Youth are referred to court by school officials or police officers, amongst other community members.
- A panel of youth jurors, or perhaps a volunteer youth judge, may hear a variety of minor juvenile justice and status offenses, and determine sentencing, which can include participation in services, performing community service, and/or nontraditional consequences, such as writing apology letters or essays.
- The court and the youth make an agreement. If the youth breaks the agreement he or she may be referred to juvenile or family court.

Examples

Independence Youth Court

Missouri

<http://www.ci.independence.mo.us/municourt/youthcourt.aspx>

Program uses youth prosecutors and defense attorneys in the court process, which is supervised by adult volunteers. It has served as a model for other youth courts since 1986.

Outcome: One study found that 9% recidivism for teen court participants, versus 28% of comparison youth.

Reach for Youth Teen Court

Indiana

www.reachforyouth.org/teen.asp

Nationwide directory of youth courts: www.youthcourt.net

Program is one of the oldest and largest teen courts in country.

Outcome: The ten-year recidivism rate is 15%, which is less than the rate of recidivism for comparison youth.

Current Truancy Initiatives in Connecticut

School and Community Teams

New Britain Consolidated

Joseph Vaverchak
School District
Attendance Officer
New Britain Consolidated School District
860-827-2246
vavercha@csgdnb.org

New Haven Public Schools

Dee Speese-Linehan
Dropout Prevention/Truancy
New Haven Public Schools
203-946-7443
Dee.Speese-Linehan@new-haven.k12.ct.us

New London Public Schools

Christina Carver
Director of Special Services
New London Public Schools
860-447-6010
carver@newlondon.org

Waterbury Public Schools

Sofia Flamengo
Truancy Prevention Specialist
Waterbury Public Schools
203-573-5015
sflamengo@waterbury.k12.ct.us

STEP Program

Cynthia Rutledge
Director of Education
Bureau of Juvenile Services
Department of Children and Families
860-550-6570
Cynthia.Rutledge@ct.gov

Naugatuck High School

Janice Saam
Truancy Review Board
Associate Principal
Naugatuck High School
203-720-5299
saamj@naugy.net

Manchester School Attendance Review Board

Heidi Macchi
Manchester Board of Education
860-670-7904
HMacchi@ci.manchester.ct.us

Milford Central Truancy Board

Susan Kelleher
Milford Board of Education
203-783-3410
skelleher@milfordedu.org

Court Models

Truancy Court Prevention Project

(Partnership with CCA, Village for Families and Children,
Capitol Region Education Council, and Judicial Department)
Hannah Benton, Attorney
Center for Children's Advocacy
860-570-5327
hbenton@kidscounsel.org

Waterbury Regional Childrens' Probate Court/Truancy Clinic

Probate Court Judge Thomas Brunnock
860-231-2442
Thomas.Brunnock@jud.ct.gov

Law Enforcement Model

Hartford Police Department School Truancy Program

Chief Daryl Roberts
City of Hartford Police Dept.
860-522-4888
policechief@hartford.gov

Mental Health Model

School Refusal Program

Kikke Levin-Gerdner
Director of Education
The Webb Schools
Institute of Living
School Refusal Program
860-545-7000
klevingerdner@harthosp.org

Juvenile Review Board Model

The following JRBs handle FWSN cases:

- AHM (Andover, Hebron, Marlborough):
Joel Rosenberg (860) 228-9488
- Berlin: Doug Truitt (860) 828-7059
- Bloomfield: Pat Maneggia (860) 242-1895
- Bridgeport: Sharon Stoyer (203) 366-4364
- Bristol: Eileen M. McNulty (860) 314-4690
- Cromwell: Ann H. France (860) 632-3448
- East Hartford: Cephus Nolen (860) 569-5630
- Enfield: Jean Haughey (860) 253-6380
- Farmington: Robert Marsh, Jr. (860) 675-2390
- Granby: Kerry Ann Kielbasa (860) 844-5351
- Guilford: Lyne Landry (203) 453-8047
- Haddam/Killingworth: Cheryl Chandler (860) 345-7498
- Hamden: Susan Rubino (203) 777-2610
- Housatonic: Cynthia Bianchi (860) 824-4720
- Madison: David Melillo (203) 245-5645
- Manchester: Erica Bromley (860) 647-5214
- Mansfield: Patricia Michalak (860) 429-3319
- Meriden: Denise Keating (203) 630-4225
- Milford: Lisa Diamond-Graham (203) 783-3253
- New Britain: Christopher Montes (860) 826-3366
- New Canaan: Anthony Philips (203) 594-3080
- Newington: Ken Freidenberg (860) 665-8660
- Newtown: Beth Agen (203) 270-4335
- Old Saybrook: Larry Freundlich (860) 395-3190
- Orange: John Ulatowski (203) 891-2157
- Portland: Mary Pont (860) 342-6758
- Rocky Hill: Lori Stanczyc (860) 258-2718
- Shelton: Julie Penry (203) 924-7614
- South Windsor: Joann Moriarty (860) 648-6361
- Tolland: Nancy Dunnn (860) 871-3610
- Torrington: Jaimee Smith (860) 496-0356
- Tri-Town Youth: Gail Onofrio (860) 526-3600
- Vernon: Alan Slobodien (860) 870-3557
- Waterbury: Kelly Cronin (203) 573-0264
- West Hartford: Pat Doherty (860) 521-8035
- Wilton: Colleen Fawcett (203) 864-6241
- Winchester: Susan Peck (860) 379-0708
- Windham: Patricia Calvo (860) 423-4534
- Windsor: Mary-Liz Sullivan (860) 298-9976

City Youth Services Bureaus

PASS Program

Terri Drew
Director
Stamford Youth Services Bureau
203-977-0829
tdrew@ci.stamford.ct.us

PLUS Program

Denise Keating
Manager
Meriden Youth Services Division
203-630-4225
dkeating@ci.meriden.ct.us

Other

CBA/CBF Truancy Intervention Project

Melissa Stachelek
Coordinator
860-832-8000
TruancyProject@clcct.org