

MINUTES OF THE HOUSE CORRECTIONS AND JUVENILE JUSTICE COMMITTEE

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Ward Loyd at 11:00 AM on February 13, 2004 in Room 241-N of the Capitol.

All members were present except:

- Representative Sidney Carlin – Excused
- Representative Eric Carter – Absent
- Representative Jeff Goering - Excused.

Committee staff present:

- Jill Wolters, Revisor of Statutes Office
- Jerry Ann Donaldson, Legislative Research Department
- Nicoletta Buonasera, Legislative Research Department
- Connie Burns, Committee Secretary

Conferees appearing before the committee:

- Denise Everhardt
- Candy Shively

Others attending:

- See Attached List.

HB 2320 – Dispositions for children in need of care because of truancy

Chairman Loyd opened the continued hearing on **HB 2320**.

Commissioner Denise Everhart, Juvenile Justice Authority, appeared before the committee to provide information on the issue of truancy. Children not attending school are considered under the “child in need of care” umbrella, which currently falls under the authority of the Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services for case administration. The JJA involvement with truants is through the Juvenile Intake and Assessment Services and funding of a number of truancy prevention programs throughout the state. It should be noted that truancy is considered a status offense. If youth found to be truant are detained or otherwise treated as a juvenile offender with no other criminal charge, the state could be found to be in violation of federal regulations and subject to financial penalty for violating this mandate. (Attachment 1)

The Commissioner attached the following truancy related information:

- Juvenile Intake and Assessment Services’ (JIAS) statistical data on school attendance
- JJA Prevention/Intervention grants for truancy prevention programs
- Communities That Care sample data
- Research article from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) and the U.S. Department of Education
- An article from the Fall 2003 edition of the JJA Focus newsletter, highlighting truancy diversion programs in Wyandotte County.

The JJA included some technical considerations regarding the proposed language for the Committee to consider when the bill is worked.

Candy Shively, Deputy Secretary of SRS, appeared to provide information on SRS policies regarding children not attending school and truancy programs in the state of Kansas. For a child age 7 – 12 years, a report of non-school attendance requires a family based assessment by SRS to determine what intervention or services are needed to the factors causing the truancy. Children 13 –17 years of age are

reported directly to the county or district attorney. Kansas communities have responded to truancy concerns with a variety of programs. Some counties have used family or mental health services while other counties have used the legal system to address truancy. (Attachment 2)

Pat Baker, Kansas Association of School Boards, supplied additional written information for the committee. (Attachment 3)

Chairman said that a subcommittee would be appointed to further look at this issue.

HB 2319 – Unlawfully hosting minors consuming alcoholic liquor or cereal malt beverages
SB 197 – Alcoholic beverages; furnishing to and consumption by persons under age 21

Chairman reopened the debate on HB 2319 and SB 197 and reminded the committee the motion that was made. (Attachment 4)

Representative Kassebaum made a motion to accept the subcommittee report. Representative O'Malley seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Representative Dillmore made a motion to move SB 197 out favorably. Representative Crow seconded the motion.

Representative Owens moved to amend by striking subsection (e) lines 41 – 43 page 1 and page 3 lines 2 – 6. Representative Pauls seconded the motion. Motion fails.

Representative Pauls made a motion to strike the word “minor” and insert appropriate language. Representative Dillmore seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Representative Owens made a motion to make language consistent on page 1 section (e) and page 3 line 5. Representative Kassebaum seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Chairman Loyd moved that page 4 section (a) line 33 insert owned or procured. Representative Dillmore seconded the motion. Motion was with drawn.

Representative Pauls moved that page 4 section (a) line 33 insert owned, occupied, or procured. Representative Dillmore seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Representative Yoder moved to make language consistent on page 3 section (b) with furnishing statute. Representative Owens seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Representative Dillmore made a motion to move SB 197 as amended favorably for passage. Representative O'Malley seconded the motion. The motion carried.

HB 2621 – Crime of harming, disabling or killing a game warden dog.

Representative Pauls made a motion to move HB 2621 out favorably. Representative Dillmore seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Chairman Loyd opened the floor for consideration of action on HB 2693, but because a necessary balloon is not ready withdrew the request.

HB 2575 – Reporting of abuse; ministers

Representative Dillmore moved that the committee remove HB 2575 from the table. Representative Crow seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Representative Dillmore made a motion to move HB 2575 as amended for passage. Representative Crow seconded the motion. The motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:38 PM. The next meeting is February 16, 2004.

Juvenile Justice Authority



HOUSE CORRECTIONS & JUVENILE JUSTICE COMMITTEE

House Bill 2320 – Truancy Disposition

February 11, 2004

Denise L. Everhart, Commissioner

House Corrections & Juvenile Justice Committee
House Bill 2320
February 11, 2004

Chairman Loyd and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today and provide information to you on the issue of truancy.

Children not attending school are, by statute K.S.A. 38-1502(b), considered under the "child in need of care" umbrella, which currently falls under the authority of the Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services (SRS) for case administration. The Juvenile Justice Authority's (JJA) involvement with truants is through the Juvenile Intake and Assessment Services (JIAS), and we also fund a number of truancy prevention programs throughout the state, as identified by local communities. It should be noted that truancy is considered a status offense, and if youth found to be truant are detained or otherwise treated as a juvenile offender with no other criminal charge, the state would be in violation of federal regulations and subject to financial penalty for violating this mandate.

Attached to this document is the following truancy related information:

- Juvenile Intake and Assessment Services' (JIAS) statistical data on school attendance.
- JJA Prevention/Intervention grants for truancy prevention programs.
- Communities That Care sample data.
- Research article from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) and the U.S. Department of Education.
- An article from the Fall 2003 edition of the JJA Focus newsletter, highlighting truancy diversion programs in Wyandotte County.

Commentary on House Bill 2320

While I take this opportunity to offer a few comments on the possible effect of HB 2320, the Juvenile Justice Authority does not appear today as either a proponent or opponent of this legislation.

The following are some technical considerations regarding the proposed language for the Committee to consider as you work this bill:

1. Although the proposed language of this bill clearly provides that, "[A] violation of the compulsory attendance laws of this state shall not constitute the commission of a criminal act," (*see* p.1, lns. 25-26), the dispositional alternatives include, "[P]lacing the child under a house arrest program administered by the court pursuant to K.S.A. 21-4603(b) (*see* p. 9, lns. 19-23) (emphasis added). The term "house arrest" is also used in new Section 4, p. 11, ln. 6, when referencing "valid court orders."

K.S.A. 21-4603(b) is found in the criminal code for adult offenders, and contains sentencing alternatives for convicted adult offenders. Utilizing this language and dispositional alternative sends a mixed message about the "penalty" for violation of the compulsory attendance laws. Rather than using language from the adult criminal code, it appears that another phrase, such as curfew, might be better suited to convey the point that the child is "home-bound" and has certain limitations and boundaries on where s/he can be and when.

2. The language contained in new Section 4, p. 11, lns. 20-43, through p. 12, lns. 1-15, essentially mirrors its counterpart provisions in K.S.A. 38-1568, concerning a child for whom a "no run warning" has been entered. Of concern to us is the use of the same rationale for supporting virtually identical actions when dealing with both truant and runaway children. In the case of the runaway child, there is a rational and supportable basis for issuing an *ex parte* order placing the runaway in a locked facility prior to the preliminary hearing--history and experience indicates it is highly likely that the runaway child's appearance cannot be assured in the absence of such an order.

Such a rationale does not necessarily hold true in the case of a truant child. In the absence of an extraordinary set of facts, placing the child with his or her parents or other legal guardian and issuing an order to appear and respond to truancy allegations can most likely secure a truant child's appearance in court.

Also of concern is language providing that if the child contests the facts asserted in the application alleging failure to abide by a valid court order to attend school in a CINC case, the court may order the child to remain in a secure facility for up to 72 hours pending an evidentiary hearing if: a.) the court finds there is probable cause to believe the valid court order was violated, and b.) doing so is necessary to protect the child or to assure the child will appear at the truancy hearing.

It is unclear what danger the court is to protect the child from, and in the absence of information suggesting that the child is also a runaway, mere school attendance problems do not suggest it is likely that the child will not appear in court if ordered.

3. There appears to be no minimum age limit contained in this proposed legislation (Section 2., K.S.A. 2002 Supp. 38-1502(a)(6)(A) and (B) refer only generally to children over 14 and under 14), meaning that it is entirely possible that a child as young as age 5 or 7 might be subject to its provisions. (*See, e.g.*, p. 1, ln. 41, and p. 2, ln. 5). It is certainly preferable to deal with such young children via alternative available methods. While it would seem reasonably understood that the younger children are unlikely to be dealt with using this provision, the apparent public policy statement contained in this legislation is to the contrary.

4. The provisions contained in Section 2, p. 1, lns. 42-43, and p. 2, lns. 1-11, provide that the court need not determine a child to be a child in need of care where the court finds the child "is not attending school due to circumstances that include, but are not limited to, threats directed toward such child, fear of personal safety or the presence of an environment that causes the child to be frightened." It is unclear what remedy is available to the court when dealing with a child who is truant because of fear.

Certainly, steps must be taken to deal with truant children. However, the welfare of the child is of primary importance under the Code. Given the scarcity of secure care facilities and that these limited resources are generally completely exhausted by the particularly vulnerable children who are persistent runaways, we should work together with to identify steps that can be taken to address the problem of truant children as well as the reasons they are truant, rather than punish the child with placement in a locked facility.

Thank you for your time and for your consideration.

Denise L. Everhart
Commissioner

JUVENILE INTAKE AND ASSESSMENT SERVICES (JIAS)
Statistical Data on School Attendance

These records were culled from JIAS records entered between July 1, 2003 and February 5, 2004. The query asked to bring up records that were noted with "school attendance problems" and/or "truancy petition filed" and/or any mention of truancy in the narrative. Of 4,180 records that returned, some were multiple records on the same youth (the youth had gone through JIAS more than one time during this time period). After deleting the name-redundant records, 3,455 non-duplicated youth remained on the list. For the purpose of this project, no effort was made to distinguish between youths considered to be juvenile offenders and those considered children in need of care. With 3,455 of 4,180 JIAS youth identified with school attendance issues, for a total of 83 percent.

A query of the same parameters during the period January 1, 2002 and February 5, 2004 resulted in a total of 17,511 returned records; if it can be assumed that 17 percent of those are subsequent records of youth who are already in the system, only 2,977 records would be deleted, resulting in 14,534 Kansas youth for whom attendance problems have been noted over the two-year period. No effort was made to quantify reasons for expulsions and/or suspensions, but it appears as though a great many were due to fighting.

In a query of records on juvenile offenders in the JJA's four juvenile correctional facilities on February 6, 2004, the Juvenile Correctional Facility System (JCFS) found that of 493 juvenile offenders, 151 of their records indicated prior truant activity (30 percent). It is important to note that the JCFS information is relatively new. As one of our superintendents wrote, "staff would have to go through every offender file... and read the social history to find out which ones had a problem with truancy (prior to commitment to the JCF). Even then, some of the information in that social history is only as good as the source it comes from...." While there is no hard and fast information on truancy rates of our offenders, the superintendent believes that 75- to 85 percent of offenders did not attend school on a regular basis, and that an actual study were to be done on this, the percentage would be much higher.

Grants to Programs Designed to Combat truancy

	FY 2000	FY 2001	FY 2002	FY 2003
1st Judicial District				
Youth Achievement Center	\$21,952.70	\$49,070.00	\$23,734.6	\$32,746.82
3rd Judicial District				
CASA Truancy Case Management		\$36,890.00		
FSG Staying in School		\$27,000.00		
School Attendance Coalition		\$14,795.21		
School Attendance Project - Highland Park High School				\$13,170.00
Students Staying in School	\$46,507.00			
Truancy Case Management			\$36,292.50	\$35,479.00
4th Judicial District				
Remain in School K-12 (RISK)		\$22,000.00	\$33,000.00	
USD 290 Truancy Reduction Program			\$24,000.00	
6th Judicial District				
Student Truancy & Absentee Reduction Program (STAR)			\$49,732.27	\$48,407.18
7th Judicial District				
KU Truancy Prevention and Diversion Program			\$7,738.00	\$7,475.00
Truancy and Diversion	\$3,284.00	\$6,568.20		
9th Judicial District				
HMCCC Truancy Program		\$32,461.00		
Truancy Program			\$59,813.66	\$78,506.00
11th Judicial District				
PSU Truancy Diversion Counseling (CR)			\$30,233.77	\$37,049.21
Truancy Counseling Program (CH)		\$12,600.00	\$7,200.00	\$7,200.00
Truancy Diversion Tracking	\$24,131.00			
Truancy Diversion/ Tracking (CR)		\$31,071.75		
Truancy Prevention (LA)		\$15,000.00	\$18,000.00	\$18,000.00
14th Judicial District				
Truancy Immediate Intervention Program		\$81,177.87	\$85,669.50	\$99,938.72
Truancy Prevention Program	\$16,919.00			
16th Judicial District				
Project D.I.V.E.R.T. Truancy Prevention			\$43,000.00	\$35,352.00
Truancy	\$17,146.00	\$35,793.00		

Grants to Programs Designed to Combat truancy

	FY 2000	FY 2001	FY 2002	FY 2003
18th Judicial District				
Community Truancy Immunization Project	\$175,409.00	\$421,290.00	\$400,897.00	\$697,485.00
Truancy Media Campaign		\$174,000.00	\$128,243.00	
19th Judicial District				
Truancy Program		\$48,114.36	\$59,497.00	\$47,869.30
20th Judicial District				
JD Project S.T.A.Y.	\$11,831.50			
28th Judicial District				
Salina Truancy Prevention			\$21,157.27	\$21,344.47
St. Francis Truancy Program		\$7,500.00	\$11,000.00	\$7,448.55
29th Judicial District				
Project Redirect - Pre Adjudication				\$169,470.00
Truancy Diversion	\$67,361.50	\$174,493.00		
Wyandotte County Truancy Diversion Program				\$190,108.00
30th Judicial District				
So. Cent. I Ks Community Corrections (SCKCC) Truancy Prog.	\$6,895.00	\$22,387.50	\$13,790.00	\$13,093.15
Sumner County Truancy Program	\$8,525.00	\$17,050.00	\$23,982.74	\$23,380.62
31st Judicial District				
Truancy & Attendance		\$48,226.00	\$111,883.00	
Truancy Prevention Program			\$125,605.00	\$191,830.37

Grants to Programs Designed to Combat truancy

JAIBG 2003

8th Judicial District Community Service Work Program	\$ 22,425.00	Truancy Program
20th Judicial District Community Corrections	\$ 33,811.00	Project Stay

Title II Challenge Grants 2003

20th JD	20th JD School Truancy Alternative for Youth (STAY)	\$43,963.00
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Title II Grants 2003

1st JD	Leavenworth County Attorney's Office – School Attendance Enforcement Prog.	\$43,112.00
3rd JD	Shawnee Co. School Attendance Coalition – Liaison Project	\$42,330.00
6th JD	Sixth JD Community Services – Student Truancy & Absentee Reduction	\$22,464.00
11th JD	SE KS Edu. Foundation – Cherokee C. Truancy and Mentoring Program	\$70,975.00

Title V Grants 2003

19th JD	Cowley County Youth Services – Truancy Program	\$40,500.00
21st JD	Riley County – Truancy Monitor	\$26,606.00

Communities That Care data - Finney

Domain: Peer Individual **Type:** Risk Factor **Scale:** Favorable Attitudes Towards Antisocial Behavior

Question: How wrong do you think it is for someone your age to: stay away from school all day when their parents think they are at school?

Response: NOT WRONG AT ALL

Total Scores

Year	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Finney County Data		8.40	6.04	5.59	5.25	3.97	3.62	4.70	4.70
Kansas Data		7.40	6.39	5.64	5.34	4.47	4.85	4.40	4.50

6th Grade Scores

Year	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Finney County Data		6.10	3.33	3.60	2.06	1.41	0.99	3.00	1.50
Kansas Data		2.10	2.22	1.70	1.15	0.82	1.35	1.20	1.40

8th Grade Scores

Year	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Finney County Data		8.50	7.25	5.92	5.88	3.74	3.66	4.90	5.20
Kansas Data		6.60	6.24	4.85	4.56	3.55	3.82	3.50	4.00

10th Grade Scores

Year	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Finney County Data		9.00	6.51	7.66	7.88	7.00	5.06	8.30	7.10
Kansas Data		10.30	8.87	8.33	7.83	6.55	7.43	6.60	6.20

12 Grade Scores

Year	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Finney County Data		11.40		6.55	7.54	5.05	6.89	2.80	8.50
Kansas Data		12.20	9.45	8.94	8.85	8.11	8.37	7.70	7.80

Communities That Care data - Finney

Domain: School **Type:** Risk Factor **Scale:** Little Commitment to School

Question: During the LAST FOUR WEEKS how many whole days of school have you missed: because you skipped or ""cut""?

Response: At least once

Total Scores

Year	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Finney County Data	11.17	11.30	14.30	10.50	11.82	14.02	9.24	14.30	19.80
Kansas Data	9.99	10.50	11.11	10.50	10.44	10.29	10.35	9.70	19.10

6th Grade Scores

Year	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Finney County Data	5.77	7.12	5.50	4.87	7.13	9.53	5.25	8.60	18.00
Kansas Data	4.45	4.30	5.98	6.00	4.86	5.47	5.95	5.80	16.90

8th Grade Scores

Year	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Finney County Data	12.65	7.91	5.30	9.21	10.34	8.93	8.32	10.20	23.80
Kansas Data	7.35	8.00	9.10	8.09	8.18	7.70	8.01	7.80	18.60

10th Grade Scores

Year	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Finney County Data	17.50	14.72	19.70	16.12	15.22	21.97	11.65	20.10	18.50
Kansas Data	12.75	12.80	13.42	12.53	12.96	12.14	12.62	11.40	19.10

12 Grade Scores

Year	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Finney County Data	10.15	18.06		20.00	21.70	23.00	15.56	28.50	18.50
Kansas Data	18.31	19.60	18.03	17.20	17.55	17.79	17.20	15.40	23.20

Communities That Care data - Geary

Domain: Peer Individual **Type:** Risk Factor **Scale:** Favorable Attitudes Towards Antisocial Behavior

Question: How wrong do you think it is for someone your age to: stay away from school all day when their parents think they are at school?

Response: NOT WRONG AT ALL

Total Scores

Year	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Geary County Data		6.90	4.09	3.95		3.53		4.00	3.60
Kansas Data		7.40	6.39	5.64	5.34	4.47	4.85	4.40	4.50

6th Grade Scores

Year	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Geary County Data		2.80	2.36	1.40		0.72		0.50	1.10
Kansas Data		2.10	2.22	1.70	1.15	0.82	1.35	1.20	1.40

8th Grade Scores

Year	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Geary County Data		6.90	4.40	3.23		2.88		4.30	4.80
Kansas Data		6.60	6.24	4.85	4.56	3.55	3.82	3.50	4.00

10th Grade Scores

Year	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Geary County Data		10.80	7.09	10.40		5.97		10.30	4.40
Kansas Data		10.30	8.87	8.33	7.83	6.55	7.43	6.60	6.20

12 Grade Scores

Year	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Geary County Data		14.30	3.39	9.09		8.23		3.90	8.20
Kansas Data		12.20	9.45	8.94	8.85	8.11	8.37	7.70	7.80

Communities That Care data - Geary

Domain: School **Type:** Risk Factor **Scale:** Little Commitment to School

Question: During the LAST FOUR WEEKS how many whole days of school have you missed: because you skipped or ""cut""?

Response: At least once

Total Scores

Year	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Geary County Data	14.51	13.10	11.50	8.05		13.08		11.00	18.10
Kansas Data	9.99	10.50	11.11	10.50	10.44	10.29	10.35	9.70	19.10

6th Grade Scores

Year	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Geary County Data	6.05	4.31	5.60	2.95		4.60		5.90	14.80
Kansas Data	4.45	4.30	5.98	6.00	4.86	5.47	5.95	5.80	16.90

8th Grade Scores

Year	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Geary County Data	10.24	8.79	7.40	5.08		4.46		7.30	15.20
Kansas Data	7.35	8.00	9.10	8.09	8.18	7.70	8.01	7.80	18.60

10th Grade Scores

Year	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Geary County Data	23.01	17.94	25.00	20.35		25.21		22.10	21.10
Kansas Data	12.75	12.80	13.42	12.53	12.96	12.14	12.62	11.40	19.10

12 Grade Scores

Year	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Geary County Data	34.79	41.73	36.20	26.99		32.94		26.90	38.80
Kansas Data	18.31	19.60	18.03	17.20	17.55	17.79	17.20	15.40	23.20

Communities That Care data - Miami

Domain: Peer Individual **Type:** Risk Factor **Scale:** Favorable Attitudes Towards Antisocial Behavior

Question: How wrong do you think it is for someone your age to: stay away from school all day when their parents think they are at school?

Response: NOT WRONG AT ALL

Total Scores

Year	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Miami County Data		8.40	7.58	9.33	5.02		4.48	5.00	4.20
Kansas Data		7.40	6.39	5.64	5.34	4.47	4.85	4.40	4.50

6th Grade Scores

Year	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Miami County Data		1.60	2.24	1.29	2.40		1.92	1.80	0.90
Kansas Data		2.10	2.22	1.70	1.15	0.82	1.35	1.20	1.40

8th Grade Scores

Year	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Miami County Data		3.50	8.33	9.46	4.24		1.92	2.80	2.70
Kansas Data		6.60	6.24	4.85	4.56	3.55	3.82	3.50	4.00

10th Grade Scores

Year	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Miami County Data		13.70	7.69	13.54	5.92		6.56	9.00	4.10
Kansas Data		10.30	8.87	8.33	7.83	6.55	7.43	6.60	6.20

12 Grade Scores

Year	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Miami County Data		17.10	13.46	15.72	6.79		9.03	6.70	7.90
Kansas Data		12.20	9.45	8.94	8.85	8.11	8.37	7.70	7.80

Communities That Care data - Miami

Domain: School **Type:** Risk Factor **Scale:** Little Commitment to School

Question: During the LAST FOUR WEEKS how many whole days of school have you missed: because you skipped or ""cut""?

Response: At least once

Total Scores									
Year	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Miami County Data	8.52	11.80	11.40	13.61	10.34		10.67	6.00	18.30
Kansas Data	9.99	10.50	11.11	10.50	10.44	10.29	10.35	9.70	19.10
6th Grade Scores									
Year	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Miami County Data	6.19	3.58	5.70	2.95	6.76		5.84	4.60	18.40
Kansas Data	4.45	4.30	5.98	6.00	4.86	5.47	5.95	5.80	16.90
8th Grade Scores									
Year	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Miami County Data	4.00	7.41	8.10	14.67	9.50		10.13	6.10	14.40
Kansas Data	7.35	8.00	9.10	8.09	8.18	7.70	8.01	7.80	18.60
10th Grade Scores									
Year	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Miami County Data	7.45	15.84	15.00	16.76	11.12		11.00	5.20	17.00
Kansas Data	12.75	12.80	13.42	12.53	12.96	12.14	12.62	11.40	19.10
12 Grade Scores									
Year	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Miami County Data	17.65	21.79	19.20	21.30	11.89		17.62	8.60	23.30
Kansas Data	18.31	19.60	18.03	17.20	17.55	17.79	17.20	15.40	23.20

Communities That Care data - Saline

Antisocial Behavior

Question: How wrong do you think it is for someone your age to: stay away from school all day when their parents think they are at school?

Response: NOT WRONG AT ALL

Total Scores									
Year	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Saline County Data			8.08	6.58	4.63	4.82	3.90	3.70	4.80
Kansas Data		7.40	6.39	5.64	5.34	4.47	4.85	4.40	4.50
6th Grade Scores									
Year	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Saline County Data			2.49	0.61	0.72	0.44	1.25	1.00	1.80
Kansas Data		2.10	2.22	1.70	1.15	0.82	1.35	1.20	1.40
8th Grade Scores									
Year	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Saline County Data			8.59	4.47	3.79	2.31	2.70	2.40	4.40
Kansas Data		6.60	6.24	4.85	4.56	3.55	3.82	3.50	4.00
10th Grade Scores									
Year	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Saline County Data			12.18	10.51	8.01	5.82	4.57	4.90	6.40
Kansas Data		10.30	8.87	8.33	7.83	6.55	7.43	6.60	6.20
12 Grade Scores									
Year	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Saline County Data			11.23	12.69	7.95	11.96	7.78	6.80	7.60
Kansas Data		12.20	9.45	8.94	8.85	8.11	8.37	7.70	7.80

Communities That Care data - Saline

Domain: School **Type:** Risk Factor **Scale:** Little Commitment to School

Question: During the LAST FOUR WEEKS how many whole days of school have you missed: because you skipped or ""cut""?

Response: At least once

Total Scores

Year	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Saline County Data	7.60		11.10	8.84	7.54	8.18	7.65	6.10	15.70
Kansas Data	9.99	10.50	11.11	10.50	10.44	10.29	10.35	9.70	19.10

6th Grade Scores

Year	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Saline County Data	3.45		6.90	5.00	5.55	5.28	8.21	4.80	16.30
Kansas Data	4.45	4.30	5.98	6.00	4.86	5.47	5.95	5.80	16.90

8th Grade Scores

Year	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Saline County Data	5.10		8.00	4.73	5.97	6.96	6.97	4.00	14.80
Kansas Data	7.35	8.00	9.10	8.09	8.18	7.70	8.01	7.80	18.60

10th Grade Scores

Year	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Saline County Data	11.88		13.60	10.57	9.86	7.48	5.78	6.60	13.90
Kansas Data	12.75	12.80	13.42	12.53	12.96	12.14	12.62	11.40	19.10

12 Grade Scores

Year	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Saline County Data	12.35		16.40	17.11	10.04	13.75	10.52	9.70	18.30
Kansas Data	18.31	19.60	18.03	17.20	17.55	17.79	17.20	15.40	23.20

Communities That Care data - Sedgwick

Domain: Peer Individual **Type:** Risk Factor **Scale:** Favorable Attitudes Towards Antisocial Behavior

Question: How wrong do you think it is for someone your age to: stay away from school all day when their

Response: NOT WRONG AT ALL

Total Scores									
Year	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Sedgwick County Data		7.40	6.13	4.77	5.80	4.52	4.58	4.20	4.30
Kansas Data		7.40	6.39	5.64	5.34	4.47	4.85	4.40	4.50
6th Grade Scores									
Year	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Sedgwick County Data		1.30	2.44	1.30	0.87	0.25	1.26	1.70	1.60
Kansas Data		2.10	2.22	1.70	1.15	0.82	1.35	1.20	1.40
8th Grade Scores									
Year	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Sedgwick County Data		8.80	5.30	4.03	5.07	2.88	2.94	3.10	4.40
Kansas Data		6.60	6.24	4.85	4.56	3.55	3.82	3.50	4.00
10th Grade Scores									
Year	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Sedgwick County Data		11.30	9.16	8.19	7.99	6.12	7.41	6.30	5.80
Kansas Data		10.30	8.87	8.33	7.83	6.55	7.43	6.60	6.20
12 Grade Scores									
Year	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Sedgwick County Data		8.20	7.03	6.24	9.23	7.96	8.52	6.80	7.50
Kansas Data		12.20	9.45	8.94	8.85	8.11	8.37	7.70	7.80

Communities That Care data - Sedgwick

Domain: School **Type:** Risk Factor **Scale:** Little Commitment to School

Question: During the LAST FOUR WEEKS how many whole days of school have you missed: because you

Response: At least once

Total Scores

Year	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Sedgwick County Data	10.53	10.40	11.20	10.69	12.03	12.57	12.27	9.40	22.00
Kansas Data	9.99	10.50	11.11	10.50	10.44	10.29	10.35	9.70	19.10

6th Grade Scores

Year	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Sedgwick County Data	1.90	3.78	4.90	6.14	5.53	4.47	6.55	5.20	20.40
Kansas Data	4.45	4.30	5.98	6.00	4.86	5.47	5.95	5.80	16.90

8th Grade Scores

Year	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Sedgwick County Data	7.63	9.68	8.20	7.36	7.43	7.92	8.16	6.80	21.00
Kansas Data	7.35	8.00	9.10	8.09	8.18	7.70	8.01	7.80	18.60

10th Grade Scores

Year	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Sedgwick County Data	15.70	11.71	14.50	13.68	14.52	14.02	15.39	11.40	22.30
Kansas Data	12.75	12.80	13.42	12.53	12.96	12.14	12.62	11.40	19.10

12 Grade Scores

Year	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Sedgwick County Data	15.89	18.32	17.00	18.53	20.89	22.05	22.84	17.40	27.00
Kansas Data	18.31	19.60	18.03	17.20	17.55	17.79	17.20	15.40	23.20

Communities That Care data - Shawnee

Domain: Peer Individual **Type:** Risk Factor **Scale:** Favorable Attitudes Towards Antisocial Behavior

Question: How wrong do you think it is for someone your age to: stay away from school all day when their parents think they are at school?

Response: NOT WRONG AT ALL

Total Scores									
Year	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Shawnee County Data		8.40	7.72	6.91	5.51	5.20	5.09	4.60	4.10
Kansas Data		7.40	6.39	5.64	5.34	4.47	4.85	4.40	4.50
6th Grade Scores									
Year	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Shawnee County Data		1.10	1.58	0.96	1.73	1.20	1.59	1.30	1.00
Kansas Data		2.10	2.22	1.70	1.15	0.82	1.35	1.20	1.40
8th Grade Scores									
Year	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Shawnee County Data		3.70	7.72	6.37	4.77	4.40	3.67	3.80	3.80
Kansas Data		6.60	6.24	4.85	4.56	3.55	3.82	3.50	4.00
10th Grade Scores									
Year	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Shawnee County Data		9.60	12.50	10.48	7.67	7.70	8.80	7.60	6.10
Kansas Data		10.30	8.87	8.33	7.83	6.55	7.43	6.60	6.20
12 Grade Scores									
Year	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Shawnee County Data		17.80	11.03	11.68	9.63	9.30	7.69	8.70	8.50
Kansas Data		12.20	9.45	8.94	8.85	8.11	8.37	7.70	7.80

Communities That Care data - Shawnee

Domain: School Type: Risk Factor Scale: Little Commitment to School

Question: During the LAST FOUR WEEKS how many whole days of school have you missed: because you skipped or ""cut""?

Response: At least once

Total Scores									
Year	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Shawnee County Data	11.00	10.60	10.40	11.83	12.62	12.80	12.86	9.10	19.60
Kansas Data	9.99	10.50	11.11	10.50	10.44	10.29	10.35	9.70	19.10
6th Grade Scores									
Year	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Shawnee County Data	4.13	3.58	5.80	5.15	5.98	6.70	6.33	4.50	16.40
Kansas Data	4.45	4.30	5.98	6.00	4.86	5.47	5.95	5.80	16.90
8th Grade Scores									
Year	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Shawnee County Data	8.21	8.29	10.40	10.05	9.70	10.20	8.05	8.80	19.40
Kansas Data	7.35	8.00	9.10	8.09	8.18	7.70	8.01	7.80	18.60
10th Grade Scores									
Year	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Shawnee County Data	12.74	12.09	12.60	14.04	15.28	14.90	18.59	11.50	21.50
Kansas Data	12.75	12.80	13.42	12.53	12.96	12.14	12.62	11.40	19.10
12 Grade Scores									
Year	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Shawnee County Data	23.42	16.21	14.40	19.69	24.76	23.20	21.85	14.20	23.90
Kansas Data	18.31	19.60	18.03	17.20	17.55	17.79	17.20	15.40	23.20



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Truancy Reduction: Keeping Students in School

Myriam L. Baker, Jane Nady Sigmon, and M. Elaine Nugent

Truancy, or unexcused absence from school, has been linked to serious delinquent activity in youth and to significant negative behavior and characteristics in adults.¹ As a risk factor for delinquent behavior in youth, truancy has been found to be related to substance abuse, gang activity, and involvement in criminal activities such as burglary, auto theft, and vandalism (Bell, Rosen, and Dynlacht, 1994; Dryfoos, 1990; Garry, 1996; Huizinga, Loeber, and Thornberry, 1995; Rohrman, 1993).

Much of the work in the area of developmental pathways to delinquency shows that these behavioral problems often are followed by progressively more serious behavioral and adjustment problems in adulthood, including an increased propensity for violent behavior (Bell, Rosen, and Dynlacht, 1994; Dryfoos, 1990; Kelley et al., 1997). Further, adults who were frequently truant as teenagers are much more likely than those who were not to have poorer health and mental health, lower paying jobs, an increased chance of living in poverty, more reliance on welfare support, children who exhibit problem behaviors, and an increased likelihood of incarceration (Bell, Rosen, and Dynlacht, 1994; Dryfoos, 1990; Hawkins and Catalano, 1995; Ingersoll and LeBoeuf, 1997; Rohrman, 1993).

Left unaddressed, truancy during the preteen and teenage years can have significant negative effects on the student, schools, and society. It is important to identify promising strategies to intervene with chronic truants, address the root causes of truancy, and stop youth's progression from truancy into more serious and violent behaviors.

This Bulletin highlights some of the major research findings regarding the problem of truancy and demonstrates why it is important that schools and communities work to prevent and reduce its incidence. It also discusses Abolish Chronic Truancy (ACT) Now and the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention's (OJJDP's) Truancy Reduction Demonstration Program (TRDP) and the TRDP evaluation.

Overview of the Truancy Problem

Every day, hundreds of thousands of youth are absent from school; many are absent without an excuse and deemed truant. Although national data on truancy rates are not available (in part because no uniform definition of truancy exists), many large cities report staggering rates of truancy and chronic absenteeism.² Some large cities report that unexcused absences can number in the thousands

A Message From OJJDP

Each school day, hundreds of thousands of students are missing from their classrooms—many without a bona fide excuse.

Left unchecked, truancy is a risk factor for serious juvenile delinquency. Truancy's impact also extends into the adult years where it has been linked to numerous negative outcomes. Consequently, it is critical to identify strategies that intervene effectively with youth who are chronically truant and that interrupt their progress to delinquency and other negative behaviors by addressing the underlying reasons behind their absence from school.

This Bulletin provides an overview of the problem of truancy; describes the correlations of family, school, economic, and student factors with truancy; notes truancy's role as a predictor of delinquency, including juvenile daytime crime; and tallies truancy's social and financial impacts.

Two OJJDP-funded projects are featured: the ACT Now program operated by the Pima County Attorney's Office in Arizona and the Truancy Reduction Demonstration Program, a partnership with the Executive Office for Weed and Seed and the Safe and Drug-Free Schools Program.

Truancy is an early warning sign for future problems and should not be ignored. This Bulletin should assist our efforts to give it the attention it requires.

on certain days (Heaviside et al., 1998). In Detroit, MI, for example, school attendance officials investigated 66,440 complaints of chronic absenteeism during the 1994–95 school year, and in Chicago, IL, the average 10th grader missed 6 weeks of instructional time during the 1995–96 school year (Garry, 1996; Roderick et al., 1997). A national review of discipline issues in schools conducted in 1996–97 found that public school principals identified student absenteeism, class cutting, and tardiness as the top discipline problems in their schools (Heaviside et al., 1998).

In general, the proportion of truancy cases handled in juvenile court is relatively small. However, the juvenile justice system is increasingly serving as the final stop for truants and as a mechanism for intervening with chronic truants. Recent statistics available on the extent of truancy cases in juvenile court clearly demonstrate how important it is for schools and communities to confront this issue. In 1998, truancy accounted for 26 percent of all formally handled status offense cases, representing an 85-percent increase in truancy cases in juvenile court since 1989 (from 22,200 cases in 1989 to 41,000 cases in 1998) (Puzzanchera et al., forthcoming).

A closer look reveals that the number of petitioned truancy cases around the country is about evenly divided between boys and girls and that whereas the majority of petitioned truancy cases involve 15-year-olds, there have been petitioned cases involving boys and girls as young as 10 (Puzzanchera et al., forthcoming).



Correlates of Truancy

Preliminary findings from OJJDP's evaluation of TRDP (see page 9) confirm previous findings that, in general, the correlates of truancy fall into four broad categories:

- ◆ **Family factors.** These include lack of guidance or parental supervision, domestic violence, poverty, drug or alcohol abuse in the home, lack of awareness of attendance laws, and differing attitudes toward education.
- ◆ **School factors.** These include school climate issues—such as school size and attitudes of teachers, other students, and administrators—and inflexibility in meeting the diverse cultural and learning styles of the students. Schools often have inconsistent procedures in place for dealing with chronic absenteeism and may not have meaningful consequences available for truant youth (e.g., out-of-school suspension).
- ◆ **Economic influences.** These include employed students, single-parent homes, high mobility rates, parents who hold multiple jobs, and a lack of affordable transportation and childcare.
- ◆ **Student variables.** These include drug and alcohol abuse, lack of understanding of attendance laws, lack of social competence, mental health difficulties, and poor physical health.

Although not mentioned specifically, the community significantly influences the occurrence of truancy as well. Community factors are folded into the above four areas. For example, economic conditions and differing culturally based attitudes

toward education are also important factors in the community.

Predictor of Delinquency

Truancy has been clearly identified as one of the early warning signs that youth are headed for potential delinquent activity, social isolation, and/or educational failure. Several studies have established lack of commitment to school as a risk factor for substance abuse, delinquency, teen pregnancy, and dropping out of school (Bell, Rosen, and Dynlacht, 1994; Dryfoos, 1990; Huizinga, Loeber, and Thornberry, 1995; Rohrman, 1993). Decades of research have also identified a link between truancy and later problems such as violence, marital problems, job problems, adult criminality, and incarceration (Dryfoos, 1990; Catalano et al., 1998; Robins and Ratcliff, 1978; Snyder and Sickmund, 1995).

More recent studies, such as OJJDP's Program of Research on the Causes and Correlates of Delinquency,³ indicate that truancy may be a precursor to serious violent and nonviolent offenses and that the connection between truancy and delinquency appears to be particularly acute among males (Kelley et al., 1997). In addition, findings from OJJDP's Study Group on Very Young Offenders indicate that chronic truancy in elementary school is linked to serious delinquent behavior at age 12 and under (Loeber and Farrington, 2000).

Juvenile Daytime Crime

In several jurisdictions, law enforcement officials have linked high rates of truancy to daytime burglary and vandalism (Baker, 2000). Before TRDP started, for example, police in Tacoma, WA (one of OJJDP's TRDP sites), reported that one-third of burglaries and one-fifth of aggravated assaults occurring between 8 a.m. and 1 p.m. on weekdays were committed by juveniles. In Contra Costa County, CA (another TRDP site), police reported that 60 percent of juvenile crime occurred between 8 a.m. and 3 p.m. on weekdays. These daytime juvenile crime rates were a primary reason that sites began implementing TRDP.

Social and Financial Impact

Students with the highest truancy rates have the lowest academic achievement rates, and because truants are the youth most likely to drop out of school, they have high dropout rates as well (Dynarski

and Gleason, 1999). The consequences of dropping out of school are well documented. School dropouts have significantly fewer job prospects, make lower salaries, and are more often unemployed than youth who stay in school (U.S. Department of Education, 1993). According to a recent report from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2001:2), "6.0 percent of workers with a high school diploma were in poverty [in 1999], considerably lower than the proportion of those who had not completed high school (14.3 percent)." High school dropouts are also more likely to depend on welfare, experience unstable marriages, and serve time in prison than those who complete their schooling (Snyder and Sickmund, 1995; U.S. Department of Education, 1993).

The financial impact of truancy and the dropouts that result can be measured in a number of ways:

- ◆ Less educated workforce.
- ◆ Business loss because of youth who "hang out" and/or shoplift during the day.
- ◆ Higher daytime crime rates (in some cases).
- ◆ Cost of social services for families of children who are habitually truant.

Truancy, however, has an even more direct financial impact on communities: the loss of Federal and State education funding.

OJJDP's Response to Truancy

OJJDP is committed to identifying what works in preventing and reducing truancy and has supported numerous truancy initiatives and evaluations, two of which are described in the sections that follow: ACT Now—a prosecutor-led program in Pima County, AZ—and TRDP.

The ACT Now Program

The Pima County Attorney's Office (PCAO) in Arizona is among the many prosecutors' offices nationwide that have recognized truancy as a significant problem and designed alternatives to adjudication by intervening with truants to prevent subsequent delinquent and criminal behavior.

Pima County, located in the southeastern portion of Arizona, is the second most populous county in the State, with an estimated population of more than 780,000 people. More than half of the population

lives in Tucson, the county seat. Between 1991 and 1995, Pima County's truancy rates were among the highest in the State, accounting for more than 50 percent of the State's chronic truantries (Bernat, 1996). In addition to high truancy rates, Pima County's juvenile arrest rates were higher than the State average (National Center for Juvenile Justice, 1996). Statistics also showed that in 1993, 8,720 juveniles were referred to the Juvenile Court Center, and between 1993 and 1996, the number of referrals increased approximately 23 percent, to 10,773. Since 1993, the most frequent type of referral (accounting for roughly one-quarter of all referrals) has been for status offenses, which include truancy.⁴

During 1993 and 1994, a statewide working group in Arizona focused attention on youth crime and developed recommendations for prevention and early intervention. To address truancy and youth crime, the group recommended approaches that focus on the root causes of poor school attendance, such as lack of parental control due to insufficient parenting skills, child abuse or neglect in the home, and family instability. The group also suggested that requiring parents to ensure that their children are supervised and holding parents accountable would increase school attendance and decrease juvenile crime. The working group's recommendations resulted in an amendment to the State compulsory school attendance law to include criminal sanctions for parents or guardians who do not ensure that their children attend school.

To address key risk factors associated with youth crime—poor school attendance and truancy—one of the working group members, PCAO's deputy county attorney, initiated the development of a PCAO truancy diversion program. Armed with the new law that strengthened the enforcement of the existing compulsory school attendance statute by creating criminal fines and penalties for parents, PCAO formulated its truancy plan to include three key elements:

- ◆ Enforcement of the mandatory attendance law by holding parents accountable.
- ◆ Provision of a diversion program that offers services to address the root causes of truancy.
- ◆ Sanctions for parents and youth for continued truancy or failure to complete the diversion program successfully.

Critical to the truancy program's success would be the active participation of school districts, local schools, law enforcement offices, and community agencies, all of which have some responsibility for educating, providing services to, assisting, or intervening with youth.

Armed with a vision, a concrete plan, and printed materials, PCAO invited more than 100 key stakeholders to convene and discuss the problem of truancy. The traditional response to truancy in the county had been to process the youth through the juvenile court, which often resulted in diversion with no consequences. As a result, school administrators had lacked confidence in the process and welcomed the new law and the new strategy for addressing truancy. With the interest and support of school administrators, PCAO moved forward with its program for the 1994–95 school year. The program, Abolish Chronic Truancy (ACT) Now, became a cooperative effort among PCAO, the schools, law enforcement, and community organizations/agencies that provide services to youth and families.

During the initial stages, no community agency was available to partner with PCAO to provide case management or services to truant youth and their families. Thus, in the first program year, PCAO received referrals directly from schools and coordinated the diversion program. A community-based nonprofit agency, the Center for Juvenile Alternatives (CJA), was established in spring 1995 in Pima County to provide an alternative to the institutional detention of status offenders, to take on case management responsibilities for the ACT Now program, and to provide services as part of the program to youth and their families. During the latter half of 1995, CJA became firmly established, and ACT Now became a fully coordinated interagency response to truancy.⁵

As envisioned, ACT Now was to create and implement a sound, uniform enforcement plan that would not require significant investment of resources. The expressed purpose of the program was to return the habitually truant minor to school through the coordination and cooperation of participating schools, prosecution, law enforcement, and CJA. ACT Now is grounded in the philosophy that a breakdown in parental supervision has occurred, resulting in truancy, curfew violations, and juvenile involvement in a wide range of criminal and other unacceptable behaviors. The program design consists of several steps:

- ◆ Participating schools monitor attendance closely and, after the first unexcused absence, send a letter to parents advising them of the potential for prosecution.⁶ The letter states that the school is working in close cooperation with PCAO's Truancy Enforcement Program and that if the youth has at least three unexcused absences, his or her attendance record will be forwarded to the program.
- ◆ After the third unexcused absence, a truancy referral form with identifying data and other background information, the youth's official attendance record, and a notarized affidavit certifying the unexcused absences are sent to CJA.⁷
- ◆ Upon referral, parents are notified that they may be subject to misdemeanor prosecution and their child to filing of a truancy petition in juvenile court. Parents are offered the opportunity to participate in a diversion program and are asked to contact CJA.
- ◆ Upon contacting CJA, parents or guardians are offered a deferred prosecution diversion program and asked to sign a written contract outlining terms of the agreement.
- ◆ The parents who accept deferred prosecution are referred to community agencies that provide access to counseling, parenting skills classes, and support groups for the youth and parents. Referrals are made based on CJA's psychosocial evaluations of truants and their families to determine the root causes of the truancy.
- ◆ Successful adherence to the terms of the deferred prosecution contract by parents results in case dismissal.⁸

Process and Implementation Outcomes

In 1996, OJJDP awarded a grant to the American Prosecutors Research Institute (APRI) to conduct an evaluation of ACT Now. Full evaluation results, documenting both the implementation process and program outcomes, are found in *Abolish Chronic Truancy Now Diversion Program: Evaluation Report* (Sigmon, Nugent, and Engelhardt-Greer, 1999).⁹

APRI's process evaluation documented the planning, implementation, evolution, and operation of ACT Now from the time the program was initiated through the 1997-98 school year. Evaluation results indicate that, while the program's

American Prosecutors Research Institute

The American Prosecutors Research Institute (APRI) is a nonprofit research and program development resource that provides prosecutors with training and curriculum development, technical assistance, and consultation services and also produces publications and conducts research. Since its inception in 1984, APRI has become a vital resource and national clearinghouse for information on the prosecutorial function and has supplied the field with interdisciplinary responses to the complex problems of crime and delinquency. For more information, visit APRI's Web site at www.ndaa-apri.org/apri/Index.html.

purpose—to prevent chronic truancy by holding parents accountable and offering deferred prosecution along with services—has held constant since its inception, the program's operation evolved significantly in its first 2 years, resulting in improved practice and expanded reach. The following components of the ACT Now program appear to have contributed to its successful implementation:

- ◆ Clearly stated goals and objectives that address a problem of concern to community stakeholders and provide a basis for a program in which communities can participate.
- ◆ Consistent written guidelines on program procedures, including sample letters to parents (in both English and Spanish) and referral forms.
- ◆ Annual training for key school administrators who can discuss program goals and procedures; provision of CJA and PCAO contacts who can answer school administrators' questions about referrals throughout the year.
- ◆ Clear delegation of the development of an attendance policy and the determination of when a student is truant to school officials.
- ◆ Establishment of a minimum number of absences before a student is referred to CJA, while recognizing local school decisionmaking in determining when a referral is appropriate.
- ◆ Use of a new source of leverage in responding to truancy (the threat of parental prosecution) and a consistent response when schools refer parents of truant students to CJA after a minimum of three unexcused absences.
- ◆ A coordinated response that includes services to address the underlying causes of truancy.
- ◆ Allocation of CJA and PCAO staff, who work cooperatively with schools and law enforcement agencies in coordinating a communitywide response to truancy.
- ◆ Enforcement of attendance statutes to send a consistent message to parents and youth regarding the seriousness of truancy.
- ◆ Effective use of media coverage of the program and its associated truancy



sweeps to increase the community's awareness of truancy, its consequences, and efforts to combat it.

Two key shortcomings of the program were identified. First, at the time of the evaluation, the program had not implemented a consistent method for providing timely feedback to schools about the status of their referrals to CJA and the intervention's outcome or whether a case was being prosecuted. Second, the computerized database and case tracking system originally envisioned by PCAO did not materialize, and the collection of data to track cases and monitor program outcomes and effectiveness was not fully implemented until fall 1997. Although the program has taken steps to address both issues, evaluators recommended continued improvement in these two areas. Conscientious followthrough with all program participants is required for the program to be effective in the future.

The successful cooperation and collaboration among agencies involved in the program have contributed significantly to the program's success and represent an unintended consequence of its implementation. As a result of these activities, community stakeholders have developed new links that will serve as the basis for future joint activities of benefit to the community.

Evidence of Effectiveness

APRI focused on answering several key questions about the program's effectiveness by collecting data on attendance rates (year-end attendance), number of truanancies and dropouts, referrals to CJA and PCAO, services provided to youth and their families, and successful program completion/case disposition. A sample of four participating school districts was selected for a more indepth analysis of service delivery outcomes in the 1997-98 school year and attendance/truancy patterns over time. The key questions (and findings) of this evaluation follow.

What impact has ACT Now had on school response to truancy and reporting practices? The number of truancy referrals has increased steadily (from 46 in the 1994-95 school year to 332 in the 1997-98 school year) as has the number of schools making referrals to ACT Now. Data indicate that since the program's pilot phase in 1995-96, program awareness has increased and truancy reporting has improved. In the years prior to full program implementation (1994-95 and

1995-96), there were few truancy referrals. During this time, schools made referrals directly to PCAO, and the policy of systematic dissemination of information to referring schools was not yet in place. When ACT Now became fully operational and reporting procedures were formalized, the number of schools reporting truanancies (and the ratio of schools that reported to those that participated) increased substantially. This increase is a strong indication of school administrators' confidence in the program and reflects significant change in reporting processes.

How does the threat of prosecution affect whether parents ensure that their children attend school? Evaluators looked at two measures to determine the answer to this question: (1) the number of advisory letters sent to parents compared with the number of subsequent referrals to CJA; and (2) PCAO prosecution of parents. APRI hypothesized that if the process has an effect on parental accountability, the number of referrals should be less than the number of advisory letters sent to parents, indicating that action had been taken to address the truancy. Participating schools countywide sent a total of 2,870 advisory letters to parents or guardians of truant youth between 1995 and 1998. During the same period, schools made 1,118 referrals to CJA based on the parents' or guardians' failure to address truancy, a number substantially less than the number of advisory letters sent. Thus, the threat of prosecution prompted 61 percent of parents or guardians to take corrective action. When the effect on parental response is examined by school year, however, a marked decrease is seen between the 1995-96 and 1996-97 school years—in 1995-96, 86 percent of parents took corrective action, as compared with only 21 percent in 1996-97. This variation over time can be attributed to a number of changes that were occurring in the program.

The decrease in the number of advisory letters sent by schools and in subsequent program referrals between the 1995-96 and the 1996-97 school years can be linked to the fact that ACT Now had not yet been formalized in 1995-96. Also, the 1995-96 school year was the first year that schools referred truanancies directly to CJA rather than PCAO. CJA offered very little outreach to the schools during this time to explain their role or to build confidence among school administrators in the procedures. Both factors may account for the decrease in parental response in the 1996-97 school

year. After the program procedures were more clearly articulated to school administrators, the number of advisory letters sent and parental response to the letters increased.

Truants whose parents failed to address the attendance problem or participate in the ACT Now program were referred by CJA to PCAO for prosecution. Between 1994 and 1998, PCAO handled 674 truancy cases. The number of such defendants increased over time, from 50 in 1994-95 to 372 in 1997-98. Between the 1995-96 and 1996-97 school years, the number of defendants increased 171 percent (from 68 to 184); similarly, a 102-percent increase in the number of defendants occurred between the 1996-97 and 1997-98 school years (from 184 to 372). Overall, nearly 65 percent of the cases represented truants between ages 13 and 15, and 22 percent involved truants between ages 10 and 12. The youngest truants, ages 6 to 9, represented approximately 11 percent of the cases.

Using prosecutorial discretion, PCAO did not file charges in all 674 cases. An analysis of PCAO truancy case processing by school year shows that the majority of cases were closed with no disposition, primarily because a parent or guardian could not be located. More than half of the cases were closed in school years 1994-95 and 1995-96. By the 1996-97 school year, the number of cases closed without PCAO action decreased, and more parents were prosecuted, specifically:

- ◆ In school year 1994-95, 27 percent of cases were prosecuted.
- ◆ In school year 1995-96, 23 percent of cases were prosecuted.
- ◆ In school year 1996-97, 41 percent of cases were prosecuted.
- ◆ In school year 1997-98, 41 percent of cases were prosecuted.

Of those cases that were not closed by PCAO, the majority resulted in guilty pleas, and of those that were resolved through a bench trial, 98 percent were found guilty. The most commonly imposed sanctions included community service or a \$200 fine. In ACT Now's initial phase (during the 1994 to 1996 school years), almost half of those prosecuted (42.9 percent) were sentenced to perform community service and slightly more than one-third (35.7 percent) were fined.

By the 1996-97 school year, the range of sanctions had expanded to include higher

fines—between \$300 and \$500—suggesting a stronger attempt by the juvenile court and PCAO to hold parents accountable. In fact, during this period the number of parents/guardians who took corrective action to address the truancy before being referred for prosecution increased substantially. Fewer community service sanctions and more sentences of unsupervised probation and payment of fines were imposed. One explanation for the change in types of sanctions imposed is that the community service option did not work as originally planned. Under the initial program plans, schools were to develop community service projects at the school for parents to complete as part of their sentence. Schools were reluctant and, as a result, few developed such projects. Anecdotal information gathered during site visits and through telephone interviews indicates that because the community service concept did not work as planned, it was phased out as a sentencing option.

Are truant youth and their parents or guardians receiving adequate services to address the root causes of the truancy?

CJA conducts an intake assessment before making any service referrals. Services are tailored to the specific needs of truant youth and their families to address the root causes of truancy in addition to other factors related to family social and physical health. Services range from assessments to evaluations to counseling to living assistance. In the 1995–96 school year, CJA staff made only 197 service referrals, but by the following school year, the number of referrals had increased to 593.¹⁰ The majority of referrals were for counseling, intensive case management services, and participation in the ACT Well class, a 6-hour program designed to provide information to youth and parents and help them build skills to prevent truancy. The increase in referrals continued in the 1997–98 school year; the majority of the 714 referrals made were for intake assessment followed by other services, such as counseling, case management, and conflict resolution.

To further assess service delivery, additional individual-level data were collected for the four school districts in the evaluation sample. In the 1997–98 school year, the first year individual-level data were available, 394 youth from the four school districts included in the evaluation were referred to CJA. CJA recommended services for more than half of all the youth

referred. Services were recommended only for those youth whose parents responded either to the first or second CJA advisory letter (57 percent).

Of the parents who did not respond to the letters, more than one-third were referred for parental prosecution. For others of these parents (roughly 10 percent), the case was closed and no recommendations were made because the parents or youth could not be located or had moved, the youth was in an out-of-home placement, the youth was being home schooled, or the school withdrew the referral. Of the youth who were referred to services, 79 percent successfully completed the program and the charges were dismissed. As shown in the table below, parental response to the first letter from CJA is a strong predictor of successful program completion.

Preliminary evidence suggests that the provision of services has a lasting effect on subsequent truancy and parental supervision. In the 1997–98 school year, only 33 of the 394 youth (8 percent) referred from the four school districts in the sample were recidivists, suggesting that ACT Now and related services have an effect on truancy.¹¹ Ideally, tracking youth individual-level data to assess prior performance in the program would provide a further indication of the strength of the relationship between successful program completion and recidivism. However, the data available for this evaluation were insufficient for such indepth analysis.

How has the number of truanancies and dropouts changed during the program?

Two variables were used to assess changes in truancy and dropout rates: school reports of the number of truanancies and the cumulative number of dropouts. Data were collected from PCAO and the four sample school districts for the 1996–97 and 1997–98 school years to determine

whether the number of truanancies had changed.¹²

Each school district showed a decrease in the number of truanancies between the 1996–97 and 1997–98 school years, ranging from a decrease of 64 percent in the largest school district to 4 percent in the smallest. The truancy rate for the largest district in the sample originally had been among the highest in the State, and thus the observed decrease is dramatic.

Another measure of the program's effectiveness was the examination of recidivism. Because truancy data on individuals were unavailable, APRI used the number of dropouts as a proxy variable for subsequent, chronic truant behavior (i.e., recidivism). If ACT Now is effective in addressing chronic truancy, there should be a decrease in the number of dropouts relative to the number of truanancies being reported. Such a finding would provide initial support for the hypothesis that ACT Now is effective in breaking the cycle of truancy before it leads to dropping out of school. With the exception of the two smaller school districts, both of which experienced a slight increase in the number of dropouts, the cumulative number of truanancies and dropouts decreased from the 1996–97 to the 1997–98 school year. In addition, the largest decrease in dropouts correlated with the largest decrease in truancy rates.

Although these figures suggest that ACT Now is effective in reducing chronic truancy and school dropouts, no further concrete conclusions can be drawn from these data because the number of truanancies reported does not equal the number of youth who have been truant. Truancy data on individuals are necessary to determine whether the proportion of dropouts to truants has changed over time. Moreover, without individual truancy and dropout data, it is impossible to make

Relationship Between Parents' Response to Letters and Completion of Program (1997–98 School Year)

Response to Letter	Program Successfully Completed		Program Not Completed		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
First	119	86.2	19	13.8	138	100
Second	34	73.9	12	26.1	46	100
Total	153	83.2	31	16.8	184	100

Note: Chi-square=3.737; p=0.05.

concrete statements about the relationship between truancy and dropping out of school.

Overall Assessment

ACT Now has developed into an institutionalized response to truancy in Pima County. The schools, law enforcement, PCAO, service providers, and the local media see the program as an integral part of the community's efforts to address truancy and associated problems that put youth at high risk of serious delinquent behavior.

Overall, ACT Now has become a new source of leverage for schools to respond to truancy and has allowed for a more consistent response when schools make referrals to CJA. Critical to this process was the establishment of a minimum number of absences before a referral was made and a recognition of local schools' decision-making authority in determining when a referral is appropriate. In addition, the relationships built among the schools, law enforcement, the juvenile court, and PCAO are an important program outcome.

The outcome evaluation supports APRI's finding that ACT Now has resulted in a coordinated response to truancy that is embraced by the schools, law enforcement, the prosecutor, and the courts. This response is evidenced by the number of truancy sweeps, CJA referrals, services provided to youth and their parents, parental prosecutions, guilty pleas, and the increasing monetary sanctions imposed. ACT Now also appears to have an effect on parental accountability and school attendance.

This evidence, however, must be interpreted carefully, as it is based primarily on aggregate data. Individual data on truant students, parents, and recidivism would provide stronger evidence. In addition, information from parents regarding their perceptions of the ACT Now program and its impact on their supervision of school attendance would further enhance the current evaluation's findings.

Truancy Reduction Demonstration Program

In 1998, OJJDP, the Executive Office for Weed and Seed, and the U.S. Department of Education's Safe and Drug-Free Schools Program initiated a demonstration grant program for truancy reduction.¹³ In

developing the structure of their truancy reduction effort, OJJDP and its partnering agencies relied on lessons learned from and key principles of other truancy and risk prevention initiatives that have shown promising results.

A comprehensive, collaborative model that targets the reduction of risk factors associated with incidence of truancy was suggested by the Youth Out of the Education Mainstream (YOEM) Initiative¹⁴ and is further supported in the literature (Catalano et al., 1998; Dryfoos, 1990; Morley and Rossman, 1997; Schorr, 1997). The models that show the most promise, not only of reducing truancy, but also of affecting its risk factors, include several key components:

- ◆ Parental involvement.
- ◆ Meaningful sanctions or consequences for truancy.
- ◆ Meaningful incentives for school attendance.
- ◆ Ongoing school-based truancy reduction programs.
- ◆ Involvement of community resources (e.g., law enforcement).

Based on her extensive work with successful prevention models targeting at-risk youth and families across the country, Schorr (1997) concludes such programs must:

- ◆ Be comprehensive, flexible, responsive, and persevering.
- ◆ View children in the context of their families.
- ◆ Deal with families as parts of neighborhoods and communities.
- ◆ Have a long-term, preventive orientation and a clear mission and continue to evolve over time.
- ◆ Be well managed by competent and committed individuals with clearly identifiable skills.
- ◆ Have staff who are trained and supported to provide high-quality, responsive services.
- ◆ Operate in settings that encourage practitioners to build strong relationships based on mutual trust and respect.

One of the most important elements of any effective prevention effort is the existence of a collaborative partnership of public agencies, community organizations, and concerned individuals that interact

with and provide services to truant youth and their families. OJJDP's Comprehensive Strategy for Serious, Violent, and Chronic Juvenile Offenders highlights the critical need for this collaboration: "Comprehensive, communitywide prevention requires collaboration and resource sharing. In most communities, barriers must be broken down and collaborative bridges built among and within agencies, organizations, and groups with responsibility for addressing juvenile delinquency" (Howell, 1995:26). For example, schools need to interact more effectively with community organizations (businesses, senior organizations, local government, social services organizations, health agencies, and civic organizations) to achieve their educational goals. Such collaboration needs to exist within the school system as well—among teachers, administrators, teaching assistants, special education teachers, parents, and students (Howell, 1995).

TRDP Demonstration Sites

In 1998, OJJDP solicited applications from communities that were engaged in integrated, communitywide plans to reduce truancy. Applicants were required to outline a comprehensive program that included four major components:

- ◆ A continuum of services to support truant youth and their families.
- ◆ System reform and accountability.
- ◆ Data collection (from schools, agencies, courts) and evaluation.
- ◆ A community education and awareness program that addresses the need to prevent truancy and intervene with truant youth.

In 1999, OJJDP awarded funds to eight sites, a mixture of Weed and Seed and non-Weed and Seed sites (one, Georgia, declined to apply for continuation after the first year). The seven remaining sites are diverse in geography, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and community-based leadership. Common to the truant population at all sites is the high representation of minority students and families and of students and families living in poverty.

Sites received either \$50,000 or \$100,000 per year for 3 years. The disparity in funding was due to the assumption that the Weed and Seed sites (funded at \$50,000) would need less money for start-up and planning because the program would exist within the local Weed and Seed effort. While the demonstration

Colorado Foundation for Families and Children

The Colorado Foundation for Families and Children (CFFC) is a private, non-profit organization that promotes the health, education, and well-being of children and families through research, program development, and evaluation of promising community-based activities. CFFC accomplishes this by assisting in the formation of partnerships between governmental and private entities to support the community implementation of effective practices. In addition to evaluating TRDP, CFFC oversees the evaluation of several truancy projects in Colorado. For more information, visit CFFC's Web site at www.coloradofoundation.org. For information about CFFC's evaluation of TRDP, visit www.coloradofoundation.org/nationaltruancyproject.

sites/programs listed below were being chosen, OJJDP selected the Colorado Foundation for Families and Children (CFFC) as the national evaluator of this project.

Department of Health and Human Services/Weed and Seed Office, Contra Costa County, CA. Contra Costa County is building on its Weed and Seed efforts to implement a program targeting ninth grade students with a history of chronic truancy and their families. An onsite probation officer will deliver the intervention by assessing families and youth and referring them to appropriate resources within the school and community.

State Attorney's Office, Jacksonville, FL. The State Attorney's Office provides a precourt diversion program for truant youth and their families. The school district refers families to the program when chronic truancy has not been solved by school-based intervention. Following the referral, a hearing is conducted with the parent, youth, school attendance social worker, and volunteer hearing officer. A contract is negotiated that includes plans for reducing truancy and accessing services and community supports. A case manager makes home visits and monitors the family's compliance with the plan. In the fall of 2000, a school-based component

was added to address prevention and early intervention at two elementary schools, where an onsite case manager monitors attendance and provides early outreach.

Clarke County School District (Weed and Seed site), Athens, GA. Clarke County's Reducing Truancy in Middle Grades program employed a case manager who worked directly with students at two middle schools to identify youth with five or more unexcused absences. The case manager made home visits, called parents, and facilitated parent-teacher conferences to assess the causes of truancy. The case manager provided referrals to community-based resources and some direct services to families. In addition, students and families who did not respond to the program's case management approach were summoned to appear before an attendance panel. This site declined to apply for continuation after the first year and is no longer participating in TRDP.

University of Hawaii, Honolulu, HI. The University of Hawaii is building on a previous program to prevent truancy in the Wai'anae area. Attendance officers in two elementary schools work to provide early outreach to young students and their families when absences become chronic. Community resources are used to address the issues that may prevent youth from attending school regularly. In addition, the schools work with the Honolulu police department to provide Saturday truancy workshops for youth with chronic truancy problems and their families.

Suffolk County Probation Department (Weed and Seed site), Yaphank, NY. Suffolk County's South Country Truancy Reduction Program, which builds on community policing efforts, targets elementary and middle school students who have illegal absences. A probation officer monitors attendance in collaboration with school personnel, facilitates access to school and community-based services needed by the student and family to establish regular school attendance, and observes attendance and other school-based indicators to ensure that the student's attendance and engagement at school are improving. A similar model is in existence at the local high school.

Mayor's Anti-Gang Office (Weed and Seed site), Houston, TX. The Mayor's Anti-Gang Office placed an experienced case manager in one high school to identify students with chronic truancy patterns. Through home visits and school-based supports, students and their families are provided with services, support, and resources to address truancy. The program also works with community police officers, who provide a "knock and talk" service for youth and their families when truancy continues to be an issue. The officers assess family functioning and deliver information about the law and truancy outcomes; they also issue the official summons to court for a truancy petition.

King County Superior Court, Seattle, WA. After a truancy petition is filed, families have the option of attending



an evening workshop, participating in a community truancy board hearing, or proceeding to court on the charges. The workshop includes education about truancy law and outcomes and facilitates planning between the parent and youth for addressing the cause of truancy. Community truancy boards composed of local community members hear the case, develop a plan for use with the youth and family, and monitor compliance with the stipulated agreement. In the fall of 2000, a school-based component was added to address prevention and early intervention.

Safe Streets Campaign (Weed and Seed site), Tacoma, WA. The Tacoma truancy project is based in one middle school where an onsite coordinator monitors attendance and connects youth and their families with community resources to address the underlying causes of truancy. This program works in tandem with law enforcement officials and a truancy center, to which truant youth are delivered and then assessed after pickup by community police officers.

The National Evaluation

The goal of the evaluation of TRDP is to describe the process by which inter-agency community-based coalitions develop, implement, and sustain effective truancy reduction efforts. Sites work with the national evaluator to accomplish the goals of the evaluation. By design, these efforts are intended to build on the community's strengths: its service organizations, social support agencies, businesses, parents, youth, and religious organizations. In addition, programs should enhance the awareness of the community, policymakers, and stakeholders that truancy prevention and reduction are necessary components of systemic support to keep youth in school and out of the juvenile justice system.

The evaluation has two main components: determining whether the programs reduce truancy and describing the role and processes of the community-based collaboratives driving the local programs. The collaboratives' processes also are being evaluated to help other sites in their implementation plans.

The design for program evaluation is multimodal. As sites implement their programs and begin to serve students and families, numeric and descriptive data are

collected. Indicators for success evaluated across all sites include school attendance, school discipline, and academic achievement. Each site has been empowered to further tailor its individual evaluation to track additional outcomes that may be of local interest. For example, some sites are questioning participating students and families about their awareness of existing public outreach efforts to determine the efforts' efficacy in reaching the target audience.

A survey was administered early in program implementation to assess the type of information and level of detail that would be available from individual sites. This survey directly informed the empirical data collection strategy planned. Individual-level, schoolwide, and communitywide data on the following elements were requested:

- ◆ **Individual-level:** Demographics of the targeted students and their families and targeted students' school attendance, academic achievement, discipline incidents, and so forth.
- ◆ **Schoolwide:** Special education rates, data regarding free and reduced-price lunches, school completion/promotion rates, attendance rates, discipline statistics (e.g., suspension, expulsion, office referrals), academic achievement information, and dropout rates.
- ◆ **Communitywide:** Truancy petitions filed and cases heard (including breakdown by age, ethnicity, gender, and grade level of truant youth), daytime crime data (including arrests, gang activity, and commitments of youth to secure detention facilities), probation and diversion data, comparable data from a control group (i.e., another school), and other data involving issues such as substance abuse, child welfare, and mental health.

All sites may not have all of the data available; however, most key correlates and indicators are available to inform the evaluation.

Program Context

To date, contextual data describing the schools and communities in which the programs are situated indicate that primary correlates with truancy and school disengagement include poverty, low academic achievement, high mobility (e.g.,

moving from home to home, school to school), high rates of school discipline, and overrepresentation of special education eligibility.

Of the data elements requested, only attendance rates, eligibility for free and reduced-price lunches, and special education rates were reported reliably. These data are provided in figure 1. Because school districts and States vary in the way such data are collected and counted, the consistency in measures across sites is not yet clear.

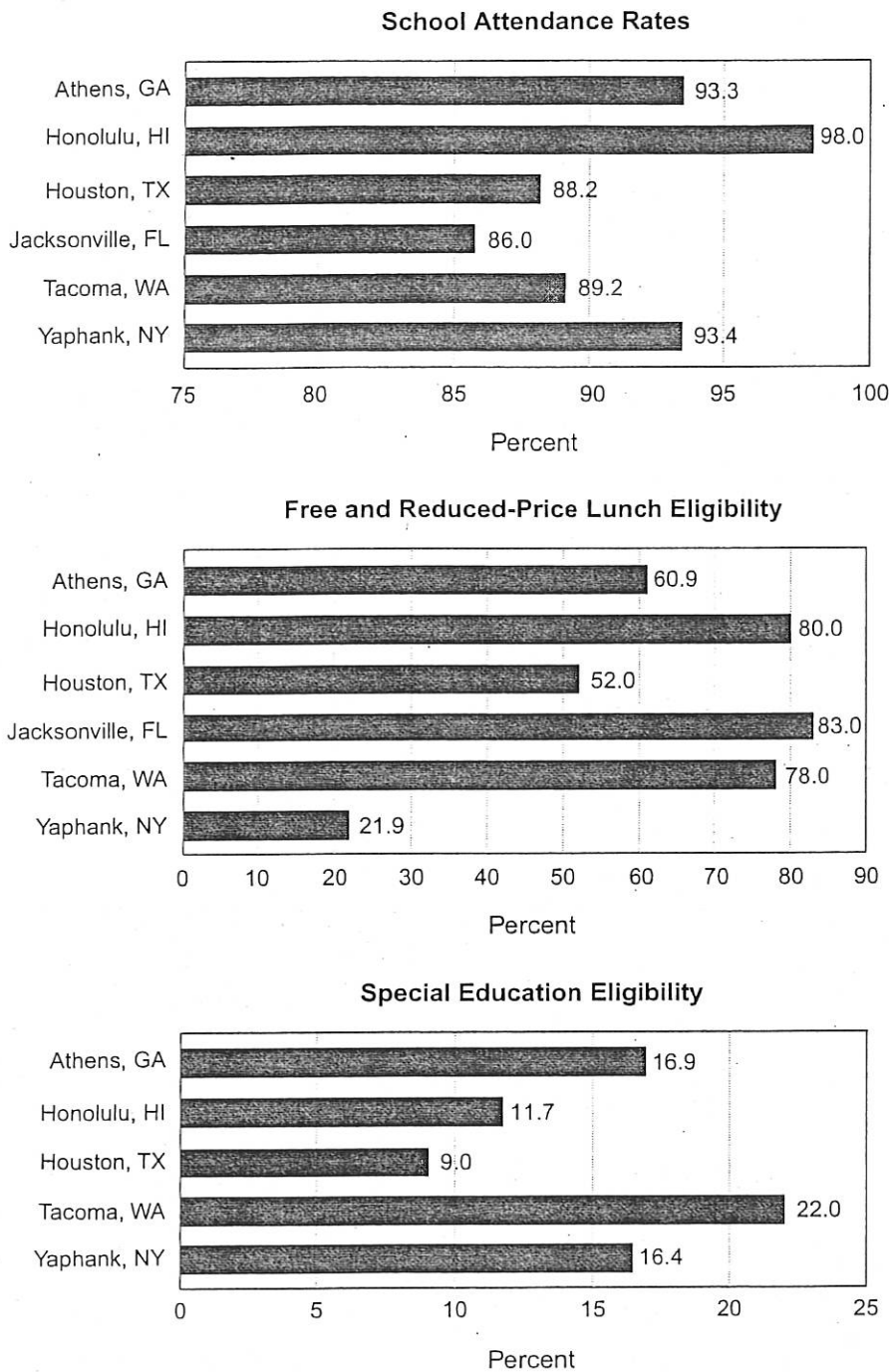
As an early activity in the evaluation, sites were asked to complete a logic model for their programs, identifying the targeted strengths and needs of the students, families, schools, and community. Sites used the model to frame the flow of needs assessment, program strategies, measurable milestones, and ultimate results. "Youth to be in school and succeeding" was unanimously identified as the expected result of the sites' truancy programs. Each site used the same logic model template to frame its assessment and plan. Because each site serves a different community and different target population, the strengths, needs, strategies, and milestones may differ from site to site. Figure 2 summarizes the commonalities found across sites (see page 11).

The Community-Based Collaboratives

The evaluation of community-based collaborative groups depends on multiple methods to gather information: a survey entitled *Working Together: A Profile of Collaboration* (Omni Institute, 1992), one-on-one telephone interviews, onsite group interviews, and site-based observations. The information collected during the first year is considered a baseline and will help evaluators understand the context in which each program exists.

Working Together measures the perceptions of group members in five key areas: context, structure, membership, process, and results. Survey results are intended to be used as a springboard for action planning. Evaluators administer the instrument annually and inform each site of the results on a yearly basis. During the first year that *Working Together* was administered, evaluators received 82 completed surveys (about 11 surveys

Figure 1: School-Based Context of TRDP



Note: Data unavailable for Contra Costa County, CA, and Seattle, WA. Special education data unavailable for Jacksonville, FL.

from each of the 7 participating sites). Representatives from law enforcement, courts, schools, mental health agencies, and community-based organizations

completed the surveys. Figure 3 (page 12) shows that, on average, sites rated their performance and success in each area fairly high, with some differences.

Telephone interviews, which will be held annually, were conducted with participants from six sites in the first year.¹⁵ A total of 24 interviews—approximately 4 per site—were completed with representatives from law enforcement, schools, courts, and community-based organizations who were active in the community-based groups. The interviews assessed participants' awareness of the local causes and correlates of truancy, their perceptions of the presence of needed partners in the collaborative task force, the state of inter-agency collaboration, and the need for policy change.

Interviewees all indicated their communities had been working on truancy issues for at least 2 years. As they reported, the causes of truancy, in general, fell into four broad categories: family factors, school factors, economic influences, and student variables (see page 2 for a more detailed discussion of these factors).

Interview respondents were asked to identify who should be the collaborative's key members (see figure 4, page 12). The majority identified law enforcement, youth services, juvenile justice agencies, schools, social services, and community-based organizations as important key members. Although very few mentioned parents, youth, the faith community, businesses, and social organizations, these individuals and organizations are also key members of truancy collaboratives.

Respondents were then asked if all needed partners identified above were at the table. The majority indicated that all necessary stakeholders were present (see figure 5, page 12); some realized they were missing important members of the community—typically identified were the faith and business communities.

Onsite interviews, which will be held annually, suggested that many of the collaboratives were unclear about their group vision or mission and hence about their goals and necessary steps to achieve goals.

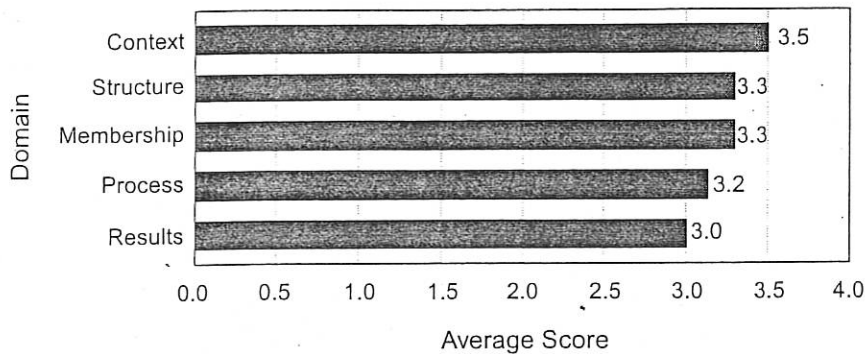
Site-based observations are still being compiled, as some sites were not operational at the time this Bulletin was written. In addition, the operational sites did not always understand the purpose of requests for site visits during which "typical" activities would be observed. Hence, these data are still being collected in some cases.

Specific issues regarding jurisdiction, funding, and the sharing of information

Figure 2: Logic Model for TRDP Evaluation

Family	School	Student	Community
Strengths			
Communication between school and home Knowledge of home Knowledge of family needs	Afterschool resources available Information-sharing established with other agencies	Knowledge of school environment Desire to be in school and succeeding	Strong agency collaboration Available resources Community center Tutorial services Community attendance panel Clear laws Political support
Needs			
<p>Basic</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing • Employment • Childcare • Transportation <p>Education and awareness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parenting skills • Value of education • Community resources • Importance of parental involvement at school • Truancy and attendance laws <p>Addressing cultural differences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Translation of services • Value of education <p>Treatment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental health assessment • Family counseling • Substance abuse intervention 	<p>Positive school climate</p> <p>Education and awareness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk factors for truancy • Process for truancy referrals • Early intervention/prevention <p>Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentoring • Tutoring • Counseling • Mediation • Alternative programs • Afterschool programs <p>Tracking and monitoring attendance</p> <p>Commitment by administration</p>	<p>Education and awareness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consequences of truancy law • Value of education • Available resources <p>Social/emotional skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adjustment to middle school/high school • Peer and family relationships • Coping strategies <p>Behavioral support</p> <p>Academic support</p> <p>Attachment to school</p>	<p>Service agency coordination</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Streamlined assessment and referral • Reduced duplication of services <p>Culturally appropriate practices</p> <p>Involvement of all community partners</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Police • Faith community • Business community <p>Education/awareness/mobilization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Truancy law • Value of education • Truancy risk factors • Process across agencies
Strategies			
Assessment Resource referral Counseling Education Parenting programs	Technical assistance and training Grants to support efforts Cross-agency training Development of districtwide attendance policy Development of afterschool programs	Assessment Referral Peer programs Truancy education Education about consequences Social work interventions	Development of mission statement Assessment of collaborative Training conference Public awareness campaign Establishment of a task force Community training
Milestones			
Improved access to services Improved involvement in child's education Improved employment Access to childcare and transportation Understanding of truancy process Improved parenting skills 1,000 families served	Awareness of risk factors More efficient referrals Community truancy boards in place Conference planned Training disseminated to schools Understanding of truancy system Increased program referrals Improved monitoring of attendance More available services	Improved peer and family relationships Decreased behavior referrals Improved attendance Improved academics Improved access to services Improved attachment to school	Mission and work plan identified Contract made with schools Conference held Community awareness enhanced Public service announcements distributed Improved involvement and valuing of youth

Figure 3: Results of Initial (First Year) Administration of Working Together

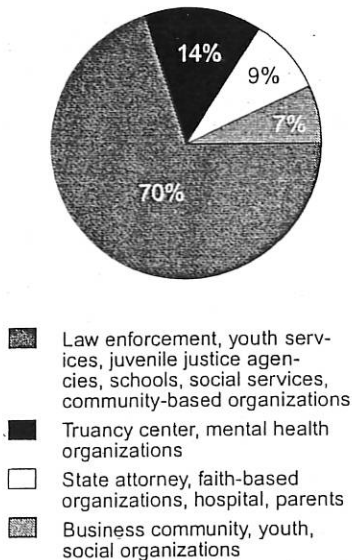


Note: n=82 responses. A score of 1=negative, 4=positive.

about youth and families are problematic for certain agencies and need to be dealt with from the start to enhance implementation of the program and the ongoing health of the coalition. As part of the planning process, collaboratives should identify the roles, responsibilities, and understandings among cooperating agencies and formalize agreements by using a

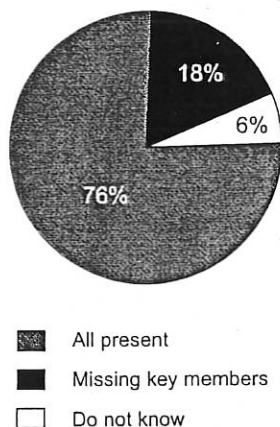
memorandum of understanding. In addition, the collaboratives require continuing education and need to be made aware of the importance of involving the community at large—particularly parents, youth, the faith community, and local businesses. Parents and youth are required to be involved, and the faith and local business communities are key for volunteer, financial, and in-kind support through services. CFFC (as national evaluator) offers facilitation and action planning services to collaboratives. Such activities can greatly

Figure 4: Partners Identified as Necessary to Reducing Truancy



Note: n=18 respondents.

Figure 5: Response to Question Regarding the Presence of Necessary Partners



Note: n=17 respondents.

benefit these and future projects that are seated within a collaborative and multi-agency setting; sites will be encouraged to use this service in the future.

Overall Assessment

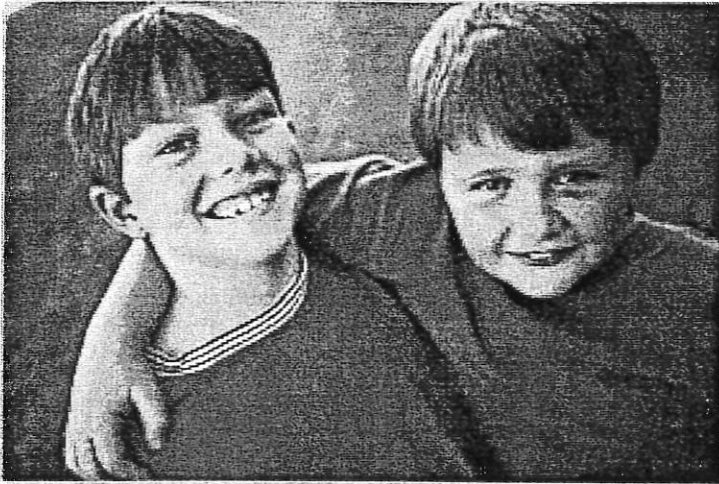
TRDP's first year has yielded a strong base of information to direct the program's further development. Almost all of the participating sites need much more time, support, and training than anticipated to facilitate a successful start, both in program implementation and development and in maintenance of the community-based collaboratives directing the program.

Access to data, particularly across system lines (e.g., schools, courts, law enforcement), continues to require evaluation staff assistance in a variety of ways. To ensure that the data collected are consistent across sites and that they reflect the context in which the program exists, ongoing contact is crucial—especially site-based support on at least a semiannual basis. The national evaluators can facilitate information sharing and formalized agreements that might not otherwise occur so readily.

In addition, implementing culturally appropriate practices and obtaining family involvement continue to be troublesome for the sites. OJJDP has encouraged sites to use resources that can assist in developing strategies for improving practices in these areas.

Early in the project, the evaluation revealed commonalities in structure and planning processes among the seven participating programs, such as the existence of an extensive startup period and a strong community collaborative. After examining initial outcome data, evaluators will make available implications for best practices in the fall of 2001. Evaluators are tracking outcome data that focus on five target areas: student demographics, family demographics, a needs assessment, a service plan, and quarterly outcomes. Specific outcomes being measured include improvement in attendance and academics and reductions in office referrals, suspensions, expulsions, and involvement with the juvenile justice department.

It is expected that the lessons learned from the diverse TRDP programs about establishing and maintaining effective community-based leadership and



interventions will guide future work by OJJDP and communities to prevent truancy.

Conclusion

Chronic truancy has long been identified as a key predictor for negative outcomes in education, employment, and social success. The correlates of chronic truancy continue to be holistic in nature and include family, school, economic, and student variables. Several promising programs are now in existence and, with the support of OJJDP, are making significant headway against the truancy problem.

Programs such as ACT Now and TRDP build on the strengths and resources within local communities to target truancy from a "carrot and stick" perspective. Students and families need both the incentive to attend school (the carrot) and meaningful consequences for chronic nonattendance (the stick). Truancy is a violation of State law as a status offense for the youth and educational neglect for the parent; addressing the underlying issues is necessary for long-term behavior change. Underlying issues that have been identified by these projects include family poverty, less education, substance abuse, cultural variation in the valuing of public education, and pressures on the youth to work and provide childcare for younger siblings.

Implementing a successful, sustainable truancy reduction project has its share of challenges, as illustrated by ACT Now and TRDP. Gaining consensus among schools to adopt a uniform definition of truancy and a standardized approach to

the increase in school absences is a significant challenge. In addition, gaining cooperation from diverse key community players, such as law enforcement, courts, social services, parents, and community-based organizations, can be a challenging and time-consuming task. Finally, implementing effective, data-driven methods for tracking both the occurrence of truancy and the impact of programs on key indicators of success is a struggle for many programs.

Endnotes

1. The definition of truancy is usually established by school district policy and may vary across districts. For the purposes of this Bulletin, truancy is generally defined as an unexcused absence from school or class (i.e., an absence without the proper approval of appropriate school officials).
2. Generally, absentee rates are highest in public schools in the inner-city where larger numbers of students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunches (Heaviside et al., 1998). (Higher truancy rates generally correlate with poverty; higher rates of free and reduced-price lunches are typically used as evidence of poverty.)
3. This series of long-term studies, which have followed thousands of at-risk youth in three cities for more than a decade, is designed to improve the understanding of serious delinquency, violence, and drug use by examining how youth develop within the context of family, school, peers, and community. For more details about this program, visit ojjdp.ncjrs.org/ccd.

4. Retrieved from the Web at www.sc.co.pima.az.us.

5. Seven school districts (not including the Tucson Unified School District) participate in ACT Now. Of these, the four most populous were selected to participate in the evaluation of ACT Now: Amphitheater, Sunnyside, Marana, and Flowing Wells. All four are located in the Tucson metropolitan area, and their total student enrollment represents approximately 77 percent of the Pima County public school students who are not enrolled in the Tucson Unified School District.

6. Because school attendance is monitored by an attendance clerk at each school, attendance clerks and local school administrators were key figures in program implementation.

7. The affidavit certifying the truant student's attendance record is a critical component of the prosecution strategy because it obviates the necessity of having school officials testify at court proceedings in each case. This plan represented a major inducement to school administrators, who did not relish the notion that staff time could be taken up with frequent court appearances.

8. Prior to the involvement of CJA, participating service providers were asked to submit information to PCAO verifying that referred parents had successfully completed the program and thus complied with the terms of the diversion agreement. Later, CJA monitored compliance with the terms of the diversion contract.

9. To order this publication, contact APRI's Research Unit at 703-549-4253 or visit its Web site, www.ndaa-apri.org/apri/Research_and_Development/Research_and_Development.html.

10. The number of referrals to various services does not represent the number of youth referred to such services. Youth often are referred to multiple services; however, referral data were only available in aggregate form, making it impossible to determine the actual number of youth who received services.

11. The 1997-98 school year marks the first year in which recidivism data were tracked.

12. Ideally, the evaluation would consider pretest truancy from the 1995-96 school year; however, reliable truancy data for that year were unavailable.

13. Weed and Seed is a community-based strategy combining law enforcement and human services to improve communities by reducing crime and revitalizing community involvement and resources. Weed and Seed requires an active and participating collaborative group, on which the grant program can theoretically build.

14. YOEM, which was a joint initiative of OJJDP and the Safe and Drug-Free Schools Program, U.S. Department of Education, focused on truants, dropouts, and youth who were fearful of attending school, suspended or expelled, or in need of help to become reintegrated into mainstream schools from juvenile detention and correctional settings.

15. The exclusion of two sites was due to site-based difficulties with startup and interviewee accessibility.

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Manual to Combat Truancy

July 1996

*Prepared by the U.S. Department of Education
in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Justice*

The Problem of Truancy in America's Communities

Truancy is the first sign of trouble; the first indicator that a young person is giving up and losing his or her way. When young people start skipping school, they are telling their parents, school officials and the community at large that they are in trouble and need our help if they are to keep moving forward in life.

Research data tells us that students who become truant and eventually drop out of school put themselves at a long term disadvantage in becoming productive citizens. High school dropouts, for example, are two and a half times more likely to be on welfare than high school graduates. In 1995, high school dropouts were almost twice as likely to be unemployed as high school graduates. In addition, high school dropouts who are employed earn much lower salaries. Students who become truant and eventually drop out of high school too often set themselves up for a life of struggle.

Truancy is a gateway to crime. High rates of truancy are linked to high daytime burglary rates and high vandalism. According to the Los Angeles County Office of Education, truancy is the most powerful predictor of juvenile delinquent behavior. **"I've never seen a gang member who wasn't a truant first,"** says California District Attorney Kim Menninger. Truancy prevention efforts should be a part of any community policing effort to prevent crime before it happens.

During a recent sample period in Miami more than 71 percent of 13 to 16 year-olds prosecuted for criminal violations had been truant.

In Minneapolis, daytime crime dropped 68 percent after police began citing truant students.

In San Diego, 44 percent of violent juvenile crime occurs between 8:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m.

While no national data on the extent of truancy exists, we know that in some cities unexcused absences can number in the thousands each day. In Pittsburgh, for example, each day approximately 3,500 students or 12 percent of the pupil population is absent and about 70 percent of these absences are unexcused. In Philadelphia, approximately 2,500 students a day are absent without an excuse. In Milwaukee, on any given school day, there are approximately 4,000 unexcused absences.

Combating truancy is one of the first ways that a community can reach out quickly to a disaffected young person and help families that may be struggling with a rebellious teenager. This guide seeks to offer parents, school officials, law enforcement agencies and communities a set of principles to design their own strategies to combat truancy and describes successful models of how anti-truancy initiatives are working in communities across the nation.

Users' Guide to Detering Truancy

Each school and each community need to decide which steps to take to reduce truancy. These decisions should be made with the active involvement of parents, educators, law enforcement personnel, juvenile and family court judges, and representatives from social service, community, and religious organizations.

The communities that have had the most success in deterring truancy not only have focused on improving procedures -- such as those that accurately track student attendance -- but each also has implemented a comprehensive strategy that focuses on incentives and sanctions for truants and their parents. Below are five primary elements of a comprehensive community and educational strategy to combat truancy.

1. Involve parents in all truancy prevention activities

Parents play the fundamental role in the education of their children. This applies to every family regardless of the parents' station in life, their income, or their educational background. Nobody else commands greater influence in getting a young person to go to school every day and recognizing how a good education can define his or her future.

For families and schools to work together to solve problems like truancy, there must be mutual trust and communication. Many truancy programs contain components which provide intensive monitoring, counseling and other family-strengthening services to truants and their families. Schools can help by being "family-friendly" and encouraging teachers and parents to make regular contact before problems arise. Schools may want to consider arranging convenient times and neutral settings for parent meetings, starting homework hotlines, training teachers to work with parents, hiring or appointing a parent liaison, and giving parents a voice in school decisions.

2. Ensure that students face firm sanctions for truancy

School districts should communicate to their students that they have zero tolerance for truancy. State legislatures have found that linking truancy to such items as a student's grades or driver's license can help reduce the problem. Delaware, Connecticut, and several other states have daytime curfews during school hours that allow law enforcement officers to question youth to determine if their absence is legitimate. In a few states, including New York, a student with a certain number of unexcused absences can be failed in his or her courses. A Wisconsin judge may, among other options, order a truant to attend counseling or to attend an education program designed for him or her.

3. Create meaningful incentives for parental responsibility

It is critical that parents of truant children assume responsibility for truant behavior. It is up to each community to determine the best way to create meaningful incentives for such parents to ensure that their children go to school. In some states, parents of truant children are asked to participate in parenting education programs. Some other states, such as Maryland and Oklahoma, have determined that parents who fail to prevent truancy can be subject to formal sanction or lose eligibility for certain public assistance. Communities can also provide positive incentives for responsible parents who ensure their child's regular school attendance. Such incentives can include increased eligibility to participate in publicly funded programs. Local officials, educators and parents, working together, can make a shared commitment to assume responsibility for reducing truancy -- and can choose the incentives that make the most sense for their community.

4. Establish ongoing truancy prevention programs in school

Truancy can be caused by or related to such factors as student drug use, violence at or near school, association with truant friends, lack of family support for regular attendance, emotional or mental health problems, lack of a clear path to more education or work, or inability to keep pace with academic requirements. Schools should

addresses the unique needs of each child and consider developing initiatives to combat the root causes of truancy, including tutoring programs, added security measures, drug prevention initiatives, mentorship efforts through community and religious groups, campaigns for involving parents in their children's school attendance, and referrals to social service agencies.

Schools should also find new ways to engage their students in learning, including such hands-on options as career academies, school-to-work opportunities, and community service. They should enlist the support of local business and community leaders to determine the best way to prevent and reduce truancy. For example, business and community leaders may lend support by volunteering space to house temporary detention centers, establishing community service projects that lead to after school or weekend jobs, or developing software to track truants.

5. Involve local law enforcement in truancy reduction efforts

In order to enforce school attendance policies, school officials should establish close linkages with local police, probation officers, and juvenile and family court officials. Police Departments report favorably on community-run temporary detention centers where they can drop off truant youth rather than bring them to local police stations for time-consuming processing. When part of a comprehensive anti-truancy initiative, police sweeps of neighborhoods in which truant youth are often found can prove dramatically effective.

Model Truancy Reduction Initiatives

Each community needs to determine how it will reduce and deter truancy. Below are descriptions of truancy programs being used in communities around the country which employ some or all of the elements described above.

Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Program elements: Parents, police, and the school system focus on the causes of truancy in the Truancy Abatement and Burglary Suppression (TABS) initiative in Milwaukee. Attendance is taken every period in all high schools. Local police officers pick up truant students and bring them to a Boys and Girls Club for counseling. Parents are called at home automatically every night if their child did not attend school that day. If the parent is not supportive of regular school attendance, then the district attorney is contacted.

Results: In a recent sample of students who went through the TABS process, 73 percent returned to school the next day, 66 percent remained in school on the 15th day, and 64 percent still are in school 30 days later. Since the TABS initiative began, daytime burglary in Milwaukee has decreased 33 percent, and daytime aggravated battery has decreased 29 percent. Aquine Jackson, Director of the Parent and Student Services Division of the Milwaukee Public Schools, says, "I think the TABS program is so effective because it is a collaboration among...the Milwaukee Public Schools, the Milwaukee Boys and Girls Clubs, the Milwaukee Police Department, and the County Sheriff, and because it is now a part of state statute that police officers can stop students on the street during school hours."

Rohnert Park, California

Program elements: The Stop, Cite and Return Program is designed to reduce truancy and juvenile crime in the community and to increase average daily attendance for the schools. Patrol officers issue citations to suspected truants contacted during school hours, and students are returned to school to meet with their parents and a vice principal. Two citations are issued without penalty; the third citation results in referral to appropriate support services.

Results: Due in large part to this initiative, the daytime burglary rate is 75 percent below what it was in 1979. Haynes Hunter, who has worked in different capacities on the issue of truancy in Rohnert Park for over 15 years, says the program is effective because it is a "high visibility" effort. "Being on the street, being in contact with the kids makes them aware of the fact that we care. We want them to get their education."

New Haven, Connecticut

Program elements: The Stay in School Program targets middle school students who have just begun to have problems. Targeted students go to truancy court, at which a panel of high school students question them and try to identify solutions. After court, youth and attorney mentors are assigned to each student for support. The student and the court sign a written agreement, and after two months, students return to the court to review their contract and report on their progress.

Results: Denise Keyes Page, who recruits and trains mentors for this initiative, says "This program works because it harnesses the power of peer pressure. Truants are judged and mentored by their peers, instead of just by adults who may seem distant and unconnected. Our program uses both the carrot and stick approaches, providing both supportive mentorship and real courtroom accountability to truant students. One of the evolving strengths of the program is that not only are we providing support to the truant, but we are serving as a resource to their parents."

Atlantic County, New Jersey

Program elements: The Atlantic County Project Helping Hand receives referrals from six Atlantic City and four Pleasantville elementary schools for youth in K through eighth grades who have five to 15 days of unexcused absences. A truancy worker meets with the youth and family to provide short-term family counseling, usually up to eight sessions. Referrals for additional social services are made on an as needed basis. If the family fails to keep appointments, home visits are made to encourage cooperation. Once a truancy problem is corrected, the case is closed and placed on an aftercare/monitoring status with contact made at 30, 60, and 90 day intervals to ensure that truancy does not persist.

Results: During the past school year, 84 percent of the students who participated in the Atlantic County program had no recurrence of truancy. Colleen Denelsback of project Helping Hand says that "our philosophy is one of early intervention, both at the age level and the number of unexcused absences. We stress that the earlier intervention takes place, the greater the chance for positive outcomes. Early intervention will prevent truancy and later delinquency."

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

Program elements: The THRIVE (Truancy Habits Reduced Increasing Valuable Education) initiative is a comprehensive anti-truancy program spurred by an ongoing community partnership of law enforcement, education, and social service officials. Police bring a suspected truant to a community-run detention center where, within one hour of arrival, officials assess the youth's school status, release the youth to a parent or relative, and refer the family to any needed social service agencies. Parents are notified by the district attorney of potential consequences for repeat behavior. Parents who harbor youth with 15 days of consecutive unexcused

Students are subject to misdemeanor charges.

Results: Since THRIVE's inception in 1989, the Oklahoma City Police Department reports a 33 percent drop in daytime burglary rates. Tom Steemen, the parent of a student who went through THRIVE, says, "The first I heard of the program was when my son was caught and taken to the center. I was real glad to know they had something like THRIVE." His son Ken, age 15, says, "THRIVE shook me up. I knew (while in the police car) just how wrong I was."

Norfolk, Virginia

Program elements: The Norfolk, Virginia school district uses software to collect data on students who are tardy, cut class, leave grounds without permission, are truant but brought back to school by police, or are absent without cause. Each school has a team composed of teachers, parents, and school staff that examines the data to analyze truancy trends. For example, a team may try to pinpoint particular locations where truant students are found during school hours and then place additional monitors in these locations. A team may also notice certain months when truancy is prevalent and then design special programs to curb truancy during those months.

Results: Ann Hall of the Norfolk Public Schools says, "Attendance has improved at all levels of schools since 1992 - two percent at the elementary and secondary levels. The overall district average is up one percent. This is significant in that legal attendance is at the 93rd percentile. Tighter attendance policies, grading practices, and teamwork have lead to this improvement...There are few, if any, teachers complaining that discipline and law violations are not being handled consistently through out the district. This is a marked improvement over the report that was made in the teacher satisfaction survey conducted in 1988."

Marion, Ohio

Program elements: The Community Service Early Intervention Program focuses on potential truants during freshman year. Referred students are required to attend tutoring sessions as directed, give their time to community service projects, and participate in a counseling program. In addition, students are required to give back to the Intervention initiative by sharing what they have learned with new students in the program and by recommending others who might benefit. Parental participation is required throughout the program. Upon completion of the six-week sequence, school records relative to truancy are nullified. If the student fails the program, formal court intervention is the next step.

Results: Of the 28 students who took part in the program this semester, 20 have improved attendance records and will pass freshman year. The eight who did not improve their attendance records either moved from the school district or were removed from the school for failure to meet attendance requirements. Misty Swanger, Community Educator for this initiative, saw a general improvement in the grades and behavior of the students. Executive Director Christine Haas says, "This program is a combination of early intervention and early attention. As long as the child knows that someone is watching out for them and taking an interest in them, they will not be truant. The attention factor is very important. It creates success." The intervention program has already identified 100 ninth grade students with truancy problems to work with in the coming year.

P, Arizona

Program elements: In Operation Save Kids, school officials contact the parents of students with three unexcused absences. Parents are expected to relay back to school officials steps they have taken to ensure their children regularly attend school. When students continue to be truant, cases are referred to the local district attorney. To avoid criminal penalty and a \$150 parent fine, youth are required to participate in an intensive counseling program, and parents must attend a parenting skills training program.

Results: Since Operation Save Kids began two years ago, daytime juvenile property crime rates have declined by 65 percent. Truancy citywide has been cut in half. "Look at today's truant, and you're looking at tomorrow's criminal," says Assistant City Attorney Terry Bays Smith.

Bakersfield, California

Program elements: A consortium of school districts in Kern County, California has formed the Truancy Reduction Program. Local schools reach out to youth with a history of truancy through parent contact, peer tutoring, and mentoring services. Persistently truant youth are referred to the County Probation Office. Probation officers visit parents at home one-on-one, check on the youth at school weekly, and in the majority of cases refer youth and their families to one or more needed social service agencies. The County Probation Office and local school continue to track the youth for a full year before making referral to the local District Attorney's Office.

Results: "The majority of graduates of the Truancy Reduction Program's first year no longer present a truancy problem," according to the Kern County Public Schools Coordinator, Steve Hageman. Over a fifth of that 1994 class had perfect school attendance records in the year following their participation.

Resources

The U.S. Department of Justice provides federal funding to states to implement local delinquency prevention programs, including programs that address truancy. Many of these programs address risk and protective factors. A large portion of the funding has come from the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act Formula Grants Program that is administered by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Office of Justice Programs. For more information contact the Juvenile Justice Clearinghouse, 1-800-638-8736.

Under a jointly-funded project, the Department of Justice and the Department of Education have developed a training and technical assistance project to help communities develop or enhance truancy prevention/intervention programs and programs that target related problems of youth out of the education mainstream. Training and technical assistance will be made available to 10 jurisdictions through a competitive application process in 1996. For more information contact Ron Stephens at the National School Safety Center, 805-373-9977.

For more information about the information presented in this guide, please call the U.S. Department of Education Safe and Drug Free Schools Office at 202-260-3954.

Prepared by the U.S. Department of Education with input from the U.S. Department of Justice and in consultation with local communities and the National School Safety Center.

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Truancy diversion program showing promise in Wyandotte

When considering the many benefits a child derives from school, education is only one item on a long list. There are countless opportunities for success in many arenas – not just academically but socially, emotionally, and in extracurricular activities as well – assessment of and attendance to special needs, nutrition through school lunch programs, and adult supervision, to name a few.

So what happens when a child is truant? What becomes of the kid who repeatedly decides to ditch class?

In Wyandotte County, skipping school is the quickest way to come under Sheryl Bussell's radar. An assistant district attorney with the 29th Judicial District Juvenile Division, Bussell prefers to think of herself as a force which will bring about a 25-percent reduction in the Kansas prison population by the year 2010.

Bussell found in research two indicators "that statistically are excellent predictors of who is going to be an offender of the law or become involved in substance abuse. If we can get those two things handled, we will significantly reduce our prison populations," Bussell said.

Most of the country is working on the "wrong end," Bussell said. "Rather than pull kids from the river, we need to work upstream, and make the guy stop who is pushing them in the river."

The river about which Bussell speaks is a criminal lifestyle, and truancy, the first of the two predictors of criminality*, is the first push into the water.

"The people in trouble now demand our attention, but somebody has to wrest attention away from them and see what causes it to be this way in the first place," she said. "We have to either start paying attention to what are the beginnings of what puts (people) in prison, or build more prisons."

Bussell arrived in Wyandotte County in July 1997, after having served Neosho County as county attorney for four years. While there, she worked with a team to develop a collaborative truancy program titled *At School, On Time, Ready to Work*, which was the recipient of the 1995 Bill Koch Community Safety Award.

"We started this program and had pretty good success," she said. "We found that by spending just \$3,000 on kids who would wind up in the system,

Continued on page 4

*The second statistical predictor of who is going to be an offender of the law or become involved in substance abuse is growing up in homes with domestic violence. Bussell said work in this area will be her next project.

Focus on Diversion

Truancy diversion program showing promise

continued from page 1

we could keep them out of the system. For the cost of placing one kid in foster care for a couple of months, we served all these kids and really had an impact."

"The issues are the same" in small and large communities, she said, "but it's a different scale."

She spent her first year in Wyandotte assessing what was being done and what wasn't.

"Schools weren't reporting truancy, because even if they took the time, nothing would happen. There was no communication back to them," Bussell said. She first developed a simple post card, which she sent to the schools to let them know what was happening. That increased reporting immediately.

The school district's security officer mails a letter to the parents of those who are reported for truancy for the first time, alerting them that their son or daughter's name has been turned in to the district attorney's office and letting them know both about the truancy program, and that court could be the next step.

Any parent who does not follow up on the letter and contact the program coordinator receives a home visit from the campus security officer, who personally reiterates the importance of participating in the program.

When parents contact the program coordinator, the family is enrolled in a four-session "class," through which participants learn not only about the importance of school attendance, but about possible consequences of future truancy. Among them, truants are fairly automatically considered to be children in need of care, and would thereby be assigned a caseworker and become embroiled in the court system.

After completion of the four class sessions, the students' attendance is monitored, with the students fully aware

that at any time during the school day, someone could be checking on them.

"The gross number of unexcused absent days of the kids who complete the four sessions is reduced by at least 85 percent in a given school year. We've started to see a reduction in daytime and then in nighttime crime," Bussell said. "And we're seeing fewer juvenile offender filings."

Indeed, according to the 2003 Kansas Kids Count Data Book, there was a 13-percent reduction in the number of juvenile court filings in Wyandotte County, as compared to the base years of 1997-01.

Data collected by the school district and DA's office indicate additional benefits. At Washington High School, which became actively involved with the truancy program from its inception, the dropout rate in 1998 was 20.5 percent and the graduation rate was 51.8 percent. In 2002, that school's dropout rate was reduced to only 4.8 percent, while 74.1 percent of seniors graduated.

"The 1997 county-wide graduation rate was only 55 percent - we wouldn't

put up with that in the country, and we will no longer put up with that in Wyandotte County," Bussell said. "These kids should have the same chance as all the other kids in the state."

Over the same time period, Wyandotte High School's attendance rates rose from 73.4 to 86.4, and both J.C. Harmon and F.L. Schlagle high school reported a 10-percent increase in their attendance rates.

"There is something between having success at school and experiencing success that impacts where a child will end up," Bussell said.

Only 20.3 percent of inmates in the custody of the Kansas Department of Corrections as of June 30, 2003, were high school graduates, according to Bill Miskell, KDOC spokesman.

"I know there are people out there who are hard working, have developed a strong work ethic, and are successful, who did not graduate from high school," Bussell said. "But if simply experiencing that success can help people avoid criminal behavior, we've got to focus on keeping children in school."

Not every student who is reported as a truant to Bussell's office is eligible to take part in the truancy diversion program. Any student who is already on probation for having committed an offense is required as a condition of probation to attend school, and would be thus reported to the probation officer. Similarly, Child-in-Need-of-Care petitions are filed on any truant student who has already been adjudicated as a juvenile offender. Students get one chance at the truancy diversion program; subsequent trancies result in the court system.

"One underlying assumption is that court time is a precious resource," Bussell said. "The only families about whom we want to file a petition in juvenile court are those whom we believe really need to see a judge."

"My thinking is that diversion is preventative. We may develop a separate strategy for those kids who don't get it the first time, but this is set up to prevent any occurrences of trouble in the future," she said.

Anyone who would like additional information about the truancy diversion program in Wyandotte County, or assistance in establishing a program in other communities is invited to contact Bussell, 913/573-8124.

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Kansas Department of

Social and Rehabilitation Services

Janet Schalansky, Secretary

For additional information contact:

House Corrections and Juvenile Justice Committee
February 11, 2004

Truancy Program Update

Integrated Service Delivery

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Kansas Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services
Janet Schalansky, Secretary

House Corrections and Juvenile Justice Committee
February 11, 2004

Truancy Programs Update

Representative Loyd and members of the committee, I am Candy Shively, Deputy Secretary with SRS. I appear today to provide information on SRS policies regarding children not attending school and truancy programs in the state of Kansas.

The Kansas Code for Care of Children [K.S.A. 38-1502(6)] as currently written, includes children who are not attending school as required by law (commonly referred to as "truancy") in its definition of "child in need of care". The statutes on compulsory school attendance [K.S.A 72 -1113] place responsibility with the schools for determining the validity of excuses for absences and require the schools to designate one or more employees as responsible for notifying SRS or the county/district attorney of un-excused non-attendance.

For a child 7 through 12 years of age, a report of non-school attendance requires a family based assessment by SRS to determine what intervention or services are necessary to ameliorate the contributing factors causing the truancy. Complaints of non-school attendance by an individual other than the person designated by the school to make such reports shall be accepted for assessment if the report contains information alleging the children may be in need of care for reasons in addition to school non-attendance. For non-attendance only, the reporter should contact the school directly.

Reports of non-school attendance of children age 13 through 17 years of age are reported directly to the county or district attorney. If a report is made to SRS for reasons of non-attendance only (there is no other allegation or suspicion that the child may be in need of care), the reporter may be asked to make the report to the county or district attorney or SRS may take the information and forward it to the county or district attorney. Such reports will not be assigned for investigation as SRS does not have authority to investigate these reports.

Kansas communities have responded to truancy concerns with a variety of programs. Some counties have used family or mental health services while other counties have used the legal system to address truancy.

One of the unique programs in Kansas is the Riley County *Get Smart Program*, developed by the Riley County attorney's office in partnership with the local SRS office. The voluntary intervention program for youth age 7 through 17 years, consists of an orientation meeting with the youth and their parents, home visits, one on one meetings with the youth, verification of attendance, and access to community based services. If no improvement is seen through the use of the program, a Child in Need of Care (CINC) petition may be filed by the county attorney's office. This program has been successful in preventing out of home placement in Riley county.

In Shawnee County a community planning team has been developed to address school attendance and truancy. Shawnee County projects include:

- School Liaison who serves as the point of contact for school districts, parents, and community service providers to receive information about truancy, school attendance policies and available community resources for at-risk students.
- Community Care Case Management services which provides clothing, drug/alcohol screenings and treatment, lice eradication, medical and mental health services, connections to financial aid, support services, including wake up calls to parents and transportation.
- School-Based Community Care Coalition which provides intensive case management services. The Coalition utilizes an incentive model and has targeted 120 at risk students with the purpose of increasing school attendance.
- Community Service Program for Suspended and Expelled Students which is beginning a pilot project this year to provide an alternative option for students who have long-term suspensions or are expelled from school. This program also includes a public awareness campaign about the importance of school attendance and the benefits of mentoring.

SRS has been active in supporting communities as they work with older youth who fall outside of SRS responsibility. An example of a program for older youth is offered in both Bourbon and Linn Counties. These counties have truancy court programs which are voluntary programs offered as an alternative to filing a CINC petition. These programs are based on teen courts in which the truant youth appears before a jury of

their peers. All participants are required to complete community services. The jury may assign the youth to a drug and alcohol awareness group or require the youth to complete a written report, view videos or other tasks. Participants have 90 days to complete their assigned sentence. Upon successful completion of the program, the case is dismissed and a CINC hearing in district court is avoided. Youth who serve as the jury bailiffs and clerks are solicited from the community and have to meet academic and other criteria to serve.

Truancy programs viewed as successful in other states have similar components to the programs in Kansas. One of the essential elements of a successful program includes maintaining student/parent involvement in all stages of truancy prevention activities. Other essential elements include involvement of school officials, social service agencies, volunteers and mentors, law enforcement and court systems.

Thank you for the opportunity to present this information on truancy programs. I will be happy to respond to questions.



February 13, 2004

Representative Ward Loyd, Chairman
House Committee on Corrections and Juvenile Justice

Re: Truancy

Dear Chairman Loyd:

Thank you for the opportunity to address the committee on February 11th. Following the hearing I had some additional thoughts regarding the broad issue of truancy. Please share this information with the committee and let me know how KASB can assist the Kansas Legislature in addressing this issue.

- ◆ When asked by Vice-Chair Owens about the reasons for the increase in truancy, I gave an incomplete and simplistic response. In addition to changes in the compulsory attendance age and the mandates for educating ALL students, several other factors have resulted in a near explosion in truancy:
 - ❖ Unlike 50, 40, 30 or even 20 years ago, many, many children are not in a situation where there is a responsible adult present when they leave for school or when they are expected to return. Part of this is attributable to changes in our society with more households having two working parents; part is because of the increase in single-parent households.

It may also be interesting to ask if changes in public policy at both the Federal and State level have had an impact. The "Welfare Reform" of the late 1980s and the 1990s required recipients of public assistance to secure employment. This was generally supported by both political parties. The idea of helping people become economically self-sufficient while reducing public costs was seen in a positive light. Most of those affected by this reform were single mothers. Do we need to ask ourselves whether this led to more households with un-supervised children which, in turn, led to more truancy? I don't think it is a far stretch to wonder if, for every dollar we saved in Aid to Families with Dependent Children, we have spent \$2 in the Criminal and Juvenile Justice systems?

- ❖ The demographics of our student population is changing and will continue to change. The numbers of children whose native language is not English; the number of special education students and the number of students determined to be “at risk” are all increasing. At the same time, while total student enrollment is remaining fairly stable, we are decreasing the numbers of teachers, counselors, social workers, nurses and school psychologists working with those students. Under present fiscal circumstances that trend will probably continue.

Anecdotally, more school counselors tell us they spend most of their time reviewing test data and fulfilling paperwork requirements rather than working with students.

Attached are some figures showing some of the data on the changes occurring.

- ◆ It was also asked if we had suggestions for a solution. We have suggestions worth trying. What works in Wichita won't work in Wichita County; what works in Johnson County won't work in Johnson City. What works with gifted children who are bored won't work with disabled children who are troubled. What works with suburban middle-income white children won't necessarily work with poor children who speak no English.

So, we need a range of options for communities to try. Those communities include schools, social services agencies, law enforcement, courts, county and district attorneys.

- ❖ Look to other areas of the law to think innovatively. We address vehicular homicide through our criminal justice system with all the procedures and safeguards that entails. But we control most of our traffic problems with a less formal, less complicated system. Fines, traffic (truancy?) courts, warning tickets, signage. Specific, direct and immediate consequences are the result of traffic infractions. Rather than make every adjudication of truancy a long, complicated process, couldn't we handle many of them more expediently? We control noxious weeds, unsightly lots, etc. through a system of notice followed by the government taking care of the problem and billing you. Our courts and counties do a good job of serving “legal papers” for all manner of reasons. Can we find our children and quickly return them to schools?
- ❖ Are truant officers worth trying? Currently, law enforcement may pick up children and take them to school. This is seldom a priority. Should it be someone's priority? Is it possible to give others, including school officials this power?
- ❖ We should continue and encourage those programs that are successful at preventing truancy. Sharing that information is vital. We should abandon programs that don't work but just involve people getting together to “talk about the problem.”
- ❖ As those first aware of truancy, schools must be given some authority to enforce school attendance rather than just reporting to other agencies and waiting to see what they do.

- School employees should be able to require (rather than request) that parents meet with school officials. Failure to do so should result in consequences for parents/guardians rather than students.
 - In cases where a CINC or juvenile offender proceeding is occurring, schools should be involved in recommendations for disposition. This occurs in some judicial districts and is helpful-it needs to go further
- ◆ Current processes are not all bad and should not be totally abandoned. They could be streamlined, especially when truancy is the only issue and is not accompanied by other abuse or neglect or delinquent behavior. What is needed are additional tools that can be quickly put into action to get our children back to school.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input.

Sincerely,

Pat Baker

PB/vy

3-14

	USDs	2002-03 FTE Enr	Superintendents	Associate/ Assistant Superintendents	Administrative Assistants	Principals	(Total School Bldgs in Kansas)	Assistant Principals	Directors/ Supervisors of Special Education	Directors/ Supervisors of Health
2000-01	304	445,918.9	278.5	98.4	45.4	1270.3	1,415	485.0	113.7	11.8
2001-02	304	443,650.1	278.0	101.0	40.0	1273.8	1,410	480.5	113.5	14.3
2002-03	303	442,812.8	274.3	94.7	40.1	1254.9	1,414	473.0	120.5	10.0

	Directors/ Supervisors of Vocational Education	Instructional Coordinators Supervisors	Other Directors/ Supervisors	Other Curriculum Specialists	Practical Arts/ Vocational Education Teachers	Special Education Teachers	Pre-K Teachers	Kinder- garten Teachers	Other Teachers	Library Media Specialists
2000-01	27.9	105.9	170.8	111.5	1,025.0	3,434.4	261.2	1,167.9	26,325.3	1,002.4
2001-02	23.3	136.4	192.4	121.0	1,093.2	3,518.8	326.3	1,199.4	26,380.8	974.9
2002-03	23.2	118.3	189.6	117.5	1,113.7	3,504.6	336.3	1,199.6	25,952.2	950.1

	School Counselors	Clinical/ School Psychol-ogists	Nurses	Speech Pathologists	Audiologists	Social Work Services	Reading Specialists/ Teachers	Others	Total
2000-01	1,166.5	368.6	452.7	509.0	13.5	250.3	528.0	544.5	39,768.5
2001-02	1,172.7	369.3	446.0	518.3	9.4	276.2	565.5	340.1	39,965.1
2002-03	1,141.2	341.9	448.8	495.8	8.7	184.4	532.3	401.1	39,326.8

Changing Student Needs and Enrollment Patterns:

	1998-99	1999-00	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03
At-Risk Students	108,732	107,248	109,650	113,881	123,069
BI-Lingual Contact Hours	43,392.7	50,752.2	58,496.2	63,785.7	67,768.1
BI-Lingual Weighted FTE	1,445.8	1,692.1	1,950.3	2,126.3	2,259.0
Special Ed Students	72,877	74,534	76,255	76,338	78,566

1960's Consolidation: How Much Money Did We SAVE?

	1965-66	1966-67	1967-68
Number of Districts	1,303	340	336
Enrollment: 1-12	497,628	497,972	479,829
% increase from prior year		0.07%	-3.64%
Total Operating Budgets	\$ 242,771,703	\$ 256,542,290	\$ 275,566,108
% increase from prior year		5.67%	7.42%
Per Pupil Expenditures	\$ 487.86	\$ 515.17	\$ 574.30
% increase from prior year		5.60%	11.48%

KANSAS LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH DEPARTMENT

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February 6, 2004

To: House Committee on Corrections and Juvenile Justice
From: Subcommittee on HB 2319 and SB 197
Re: Committee Meeting

The Subcommittee on HB 2319 and SB 197, composed of Representative Kevin Yoder, Chairman, Representative Jeff Goering, and Representative Nile Dillmore, met on February 4, 2004, at 3:30 p.m. in Room 245. Both bills deal with alcoholic beverages and minors.

Conferees who appeared before the Committee included the following:

Proponents

Tom Burgess, Wichita Police Department
Eric Sartorius, Overland Park Municipal Court

Opponents

Ron Hein, Kansas Restaurant and Hospitality Association
Rebecca Rice, Kansas Licensed Beverage Association

After the hearing, the Subcommittee unanimously voted to do the following:

- Amend HB 2319 on line 14 by inserting the word "intentionally" after "is" and before "permitting";
- Amend HB 2319 on line 18 by striking "21" and inserting "18";
- Amend HB 2319 further by deleting lines 19 through 24; and then
- Roll HB 2319 into SB 197 on page 3, after line 11; and
- Delete new section 3.

39347(2/6/4(9:56AM))

House Corr & JJ
Attachment 4

2-13-04



WICHITA POLICE DEPARTMENT

TO: House Corrections and Juvenile Justice Committee

FROM: Norman D. Williams, Chief of Police

SUBJECT: Wichita Police Department Response to Senate Bill 197 and House Bill 2319 – Alcohol for Minors

DATE: February 3, 2004

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide a response to Senate Bill 197 and House Bill 2319 – Alcohol for Minors. Senate Bill 197 will assist the Wichita Police Department and other law enforcement agencies as we address the issue of underage alcohol consumption.

Over the past years the Wichita Police Department has placed an emphasis on eliminating underage drinking in our community. In an effort to address underage alcohol consumption, the Wichita Police, in collaboration with community agencies and citizens, developed and implemented the JUDGE (Juvenile Underage Drinking Group Education/Enforcement) Program. The JUDGE program goals are:

- Educate the public on underage alcohol consumption issues
- Proactive enforcement of underage alcohol consumption

House Bill 2319 will be especially helpful in our efforts to hold individuals accountable who own the premises, i.e. parents, neighbors, guardians, etc., who are responsible for allowing their premises to be used for alcohol consumption by minors.

The Wichita Police Department is a proponent of Senate Bill 197 and House Bill 2319, as these bills will be an asset as we strive to eradicate underage alcohol consumption in our community. Legislative efforts such as these will have a positive impact on the quality of life throughout our community and the State of Kansas.

Your assistance is appreciated.

Norman D. Williams
Chief of Police

HEIN LAW FIRM, CHARTERED

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Phone: (785) 273-1441

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Ronald R. Hein

Attorney-at-Law

Email: rhein@heinlaw.com

Testimony Re: SB 197 and HB 2319
House Corrections and Juvenile Justice Sub-Committee
Presented by Ronald R. Hein
on behalf of
Kansas Restaurant and Hospitality Association
February 4, 2004

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee:

My name is Ron Hein, and I am legislative counsel for the Kansas Restaurant and Hospitality Association. The KRHA is the Kansas professional association for restaurant, hotel, lodging and hospitality businesses in Kansas.

KRHA supports the concept and intent of SB 197 and of HB 2319. However, we have concerns about how broad the language is worded, and specifically regarding how the wording could be interpreted to include criminal liability for lodging facilities and restaurants. The current language raises questions as to whether a hotel would be held responsible for a minor drinking in a hotel room, and what steps must be taken by the hotel owner or staff to insure that consumption by a minor is not occurring on the premises.

We appreciate the fact that the language in the current bill requires some knowledge on the part of the owner of the premises. However, the question pursuant to the language in SB 197 is whether or not "such person knew that such use would occur". The grey area would result around what actions occurred, who saw them, and what "knowledge" might then be charged back against the owner of the premises. For instance, if an 18 year old rents a hotel room, should the property owner be charged with knowledge that drinking will occur? Does it alter the factual situation if the hotel room is leased on prom night? Is the factual situation altered if the employee at the hotel sees multiple other people entering the hotel room?

I could cite other examples, but I think my message is that constructive knowledge from different factual situations presents the greatest threat of legislation such as this. Another threat relates to the doctrine of *respondeat superior*, and whether or not the owner of the premises is going to be charged with constructive knowledge of observations made by staff at the hotel. Once again, given the factual situation above, is the fact that an employee witnesses activity sufficient to constitute knowledge by the owner of the premises? What happens if the employee doesn't pass on the information to the owner and the owner has no actual knowledge?.

House Corrections and Juvenile Justice Sub-Committee
SB 197 and HB 2319, consumption of alcohol by minors
February 4, 2004
Page 2

The obvious solution would be to make this legislation clearly applicable only to the person who leases the hotel room or restaurant party room, and not to hold the owner of the hotel or the owner of the restaurant liable for the actions of the people who actually utilize the premises and who actually permit the consumption of alcohol by a minor.

In light of these concerns, we would appreciate it if this legislation could be modified to exempt lodging facilities which are leased in the ordinary course of business and other facilities leased in the ordinary course of business where the owner of the premises is not the person responsible for serving alcohol or cereal malt beverages.

Thank you very much for permitting me to testify, and I will be happy to yield to questions.