

BEST PRACTICES IN DEVELOPING TRUANCY REDUCTION PROGRAMS

The National School Safety Center (1996) has identified five primary elements of a comprehensive community and educational strategy to combat truancy. They include:

- Involve parents/guardians in all truancy prevention activities.
- Ensure students face firm sanctions for truancy.
- Create meaningful incentives for parental responsibility.
- Establish ongoing truancy prevention programs in school.
- Schools should address the unique needs of each child and consider developing initiatives to combat the root causes of truancy.

Such initiatives include tutoring programs, added security measures, drug prevention initiatives, mentorship efforts, campaigns for involving parents/guardians in school attendance and referrals to social service agencies.

Educators should find new ways to engage students in learning, including such hands-on options as career academies, school-to-work opportunities and community service.

Schools should enlist the support of local business and community leaders to determine the best way to prevent and reduce truancy.

Involve local law enforcement.

Schorr (1997) has done extensive work with successful prevention models targeting at risk youth and families across the country. She concluded that highly effective prevention 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, preventative orientation, a clear mission and continue to evolve over time.
- Be well managed by competent and committed individuals with clearly identifiable skills.
- Have staff that 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.

OJJDP has issued a funding guideline for Title V Delinquency Prevention Programs that is based on four precepts:

- Prevention programs must be based on sound theory supported by positive or promising research results.
- Prevention programs must incorporate a system of data collection and analysis to evaluate program outcome and performance.
- Prevention efforts cannot be effectively directed by public agencies alone- a dedicated community coalition of citizens, private businesses, and public agencies must direct a collaborative effort which draws on public, private and volunteer resources.
- The program must operate pursuant to a comprehensive plan, which periodically assesses and prioritizes the risk factors in the community, which are associated with the development of delinquent behavior, and implements programs and strategies tailored to address the prioritized risk factors and enhance factors, which protect children from the effects of risk factors.