



NCSE | National Center for School Engagement

**Truancy Reduction Demonstration Projects
1999 to Present**

**REPORT
BY**

**Reduction Initiative Sites
And
The National Center for School Engagement**

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Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention
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Truancy Reduction Program - Rodeo, California

The Truancy Reduction Program in Rodeo, California is a school-based program at two schools in the John Swett Unified School District: Hillcrest Elementary and John Swett High School. Because the age group of the youth range from Kindergarten through 5th grade, and 9th through 12th grade, operationally the programs are very different. The attendance workers at both sites work with school officials to identify students with chronic truancy patterns. At the elementary school, parents are responsible for their child's attendance. When a student is referred to the positive attendance program for having excessive absences, the attendance worker contacts the parents. At the high school the student is responsible for getting to school and the initial contact is between the attendance worker and the youth. Parents from both schools are educated on the laws regarding attendance and the long-term consequences of truancy. During the initial meetings the attendance workers assess the causes and needs of the truant student and their family. Then services, support, and resources are provided to address truancy. As the youth progress through the program, incentive prizes are awarded for improved attendance.

Referrals for students who are identified as habitual truants and/or having excessive absences include Social Services, Probation, and Student Attendance Review Boards (SARB). When families are referred to the SARB, a meeting takes place with the parent, youth, school attendance worker, and a hearing officer. A contract that outlines the student's responsibilities for reducing truancy is made and signed by the youth and their family. The attendance workers make home visits and monitor the family to make sure they are in compliance with the plan. In addition, the attendance workers monitor attendance records, provide outreach and counseling, and make referrals to needed services.

Finally, to help break down barriers that prevent youth from attending school, the Sheriff's Department, through the COPS grant, has an on-site deputy assigned to both schools.

State Attorney's Office - Jacksonville, FL

The State Attorney's office has provided a pre-court diversion program for several years for truant youth and their families. When families are referred to the program, a meeting takes place with the parent, youth, school attendance social worker, and a hearing officer. A contract is made that includes plans for reducing truancy, services, and community supports. A case manager makes home visits and monitors the family and compliance with the plan. Two case managers have been added to monitor attendance at 30 schools and make sure that statute driven interventions take place at the school level.

Suffolk County Probation Department: Yaphank, New York

The mission of the Truancy Reduction Project in the South Country Middle School is to significantly reduce and prevent truancy using a multi-agency approach. A probation officer housed in the school acts as a truancy case manager who assesses and

addresses the underlying causes of chronic truancy. In addition to case management for the chronically truancy youth, there are currently two school-wide interventions in place. The first is BEST (Be Educated Stop Truancy), which uses rewards and positive peer reinforcement rather than sanctions to improve attendance and school engagement. The three components focus equally on the individual and the school community. Teams of five in each homeroom compete monthly for incentives for the group with best attendance. This forges alliances among students, encouraging them to support each other. In addition, each individual student with perfect attendance enters a drawing for prizes. Youth with perfect attendance for 3 months are invited to watch a movie during school. Students with marked improvement are recognized along with their parents at an informal breakfast with school staff. Finally, a V .I. P lunchroom has been established for students with perfect attendance the previous month. Youth are able to listen to music and receive additional incentives.

The second school-wide program is the Truancy Homeroom, where students with five absences are placed for two weeks. During that time, an informational letter is sent to parents, and students attend a truancy workshop and view a video about truancy. If attendance improves, the student returns to homeroom. If not, the student stays with the probation officer and an intervention plan is created. If there continues to be a problem, the student is placed in the truancy reduction program and the family receives case management.

Gulfton Truancy Reduction Demonstration Project - Houston, TX

The Gulfton Truancy Reduction Demonstration Project works to reduce incidence of truancy and associated juvenile delinquency among high-risk, ninth grade youth who reside in Houston's Gulfton community and attend Robert E. Lee High School. The program's overriding purpose is to educate the community about truancy and the need to prevent truant behavior, provide early identification, assessment and intervention with truant youth and their families, and improve juvenile and parental accountability for truancy by providing immediate and meaningful consequences.

King County Superior Court - Seattle, WA

The King County Superior Court truancy reduction project consists of a multi-tiered approach to families involved in the truancy petition process of the Juvenile Court.

Attendance Workshops. At the time of the filing of a truancy petition, families are invited to participate in a community-based attendance workshop in lieu of proceeding directly to the formal court process. This targeted intervention is two and a half hours long and covers the rights and responsibilities for schools, parents and youth under Washington State truancy law, small group discussion about what intervention efforts have worked and not worked, and contract development by the parent and youth. Students may be ordered to appear in court if attendance does not improve.

Case Managers. A case manager may be assigned to work with a family to identify and access community-based and school-based services by the court commissioner at any point in the formal, legal process of a truancy petition. Case managers help families access family counseling services, including a dedicated Functional Family Therapy program, wrap-around services, individual counseling, mentoring and advocacy services.

Community Truancy Boards. Consultation and training services are offered to schools and school districts in King County for the development of community-based, volunteer-staffed truancy boards. These boards, through the use of a stipulated agreement, may take the place of the first, formal hearing in Juvenile Court on a truancy matter. They take advantage of the skills and expertise of community members to act as mediators and facilitators in the creation of an agreement between the youth, parent and school in an effort to address the underlying reasons for the truant behavior.

Contracted Services. King County Superior Court contracts for truancy intervention services with community agencies in an effort to improve community and school response to truancy. Currently, Auburn Youth Resources provides truancy intervention services to truant youth identified by the Auburn and Enumclaw School Districts.

SafeStreets Campaign - Tacoma, WA

The Tacoma truancy project targets one Tacoma middle school that has demonstrated high numbers of truancy filings. The school is located within the Empowerment Zone of Tacoma and serves a very diverse student and community population. Many of the families connected to this school are non-English speaking. A team consisting of school staff and community resource representatives meets each week to review those students referred to the team for truancy, among other programs. The counselor located at that school site convenes the team. Students are referred after the regular school staff has exhausted all educational resources. Interventions usually include a connection to an appropriate community resource (e.g. language translation, mentoring, tutoring, family therapy, etc.) The student's progress is monitored by the team.