



# An Ounce of Prevention

Neighborhood & Community Services  
Prevention Unit

Issue 3: August/Sept 2015

## Improving School Attendance in Fairfax County

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**We hope you will join us on Monday, September 21, for a Community Dialogue on School Attendance, at the Fairfax County Government Center.** Addressing multi-dimensional issues requires broad participation.

Across Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS), average daily attendance is very high. But it drops off as students age, and there are slight disparities among demographic groups. Among twelfth graders, 93 percent of Asian, black, and white students are in attendance daily. But 92 percent of Hispanic and low income students and 91 percent of Limited English Proficiency students are in attendance. The more pressing issue, though, is chronic absenteeism. According to the Code of Virginia, once a student has 6 unexcused absences in a year, the school principal must notify the student's parents, remind them of compulsory education laws, and make plans for better attendance. In the 2013-14 school year, over 16,000 students had more than five unexcused absences. Over 4,500 had between 10 and 20 unexcused absences, and over 2,000 had more than 20.

Truancy exists in the context of interactions among child, community, family, and school domains. Its causes and consequences are varied. Rarely is chronic absenteeism an issue of a student just not wanting to go to school. Mental health problems, poverty, domestic violence, substance use, and bullying are among the multiple risk factors that often accompany truancy. Truancy can lead to multiple poor outcomes for youth, including dropping out of school, low financial security, relationship problems, poor health, and delinquency.

Additional negative outcomes affect schools, families, and communities.

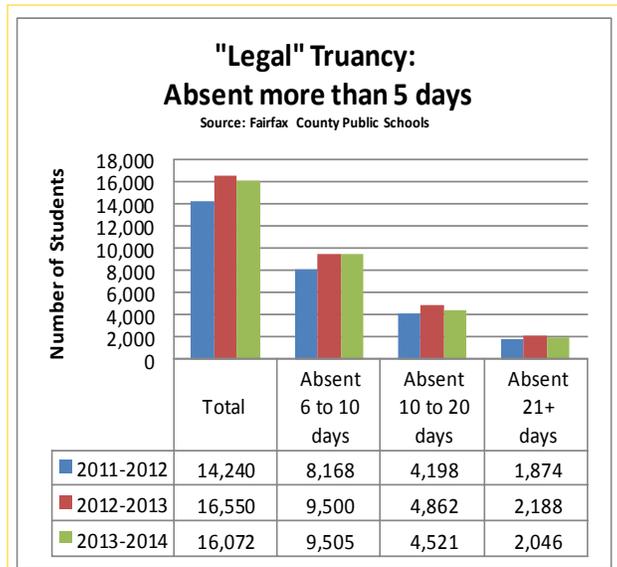
Although national research highlights the multi-dimensional causes and issues associated with truancy, interventions still tend to focus on individual child. They tend to emphasize strategies such as remedial education, individual counseling, enhanced enforcement, and punishment. Proven strategies, however, are multi-modal and feature strong collaboration among schools, families, and community institutions.

Fairfax's experience has proven this point. With 15 school attendance officers to cover the entire county, FCPS's resources to devote to truancy are strained. Juvenile justice responses are limited by law, and court involvement rarely results in positive outcomes for truant students. Responses to truancy in Fairfax County have typically been limited and inconsistent.

Public and private entities in Fairfax, though, have begun to implement promising practices in a variety of settings. To move the needle on chronic absenteeism, however, the most effective practices must be identified and brought to scale. Additional stakeholders from multiple sectors need to get involved to help prioritize this issue and focus on solutions.

To that end, Fairfax County and FCPS are hosting a **Community Dialogue on School Attendance, to be held on**

**September 21 at the Fairfax County Government Center**, at which stakeholders can come together to identify comprehensive strategies we can implement to improve attendance. The Vera Institute, a well-regarded non-profit at the forefront of identifying policy and programmatic solutions to truancy, will provide consultation and resources at the event. **We hope you will join us, and invite your colleagues, partners, and others who want to help ensure that all children and youth in Fairfax achieve success in school. For more information on the event and to register, please visit [www.bit.ly/ffxattends](http://www.bit.ly/ffxattends)**



### Inside this Edition:

- Trauma-Informed Community Network
- Impact of Cigarette Taxes
- Medical Care for Children Partnership
- Messaging Tools: The Equitable Growth Profile of Fairfax County
- Substance Use Trends
- Fighting the Stigma of Mental Illness

## New Trauma-Informed Community Network Brings Providers Together

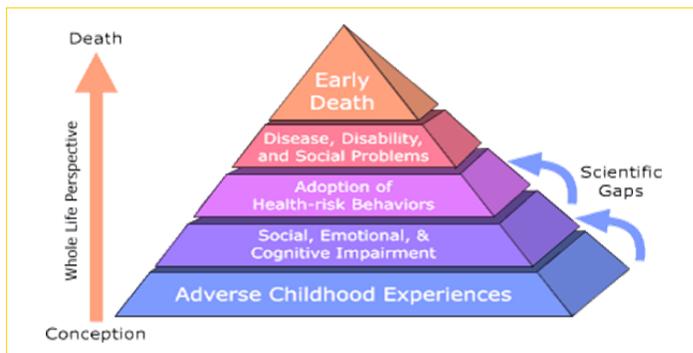
Chrissy Cunningham, Prevention Specialist, NCS

The Trauma-Informed Community Network (TICN) was formed to coordinate a multiagency, multidisciplinary effort around the implementation of trauma-informed care within Fairfax County human services agencies and their partners. The network grew out of the work of the partnership for a Healthier Fairfax’s Trauma-Informed Care Team, which is a working group of the larger Promoting Mental Health Team. As the team started to develop ideas for promoting training and technical assistance related to trauma-informed care, they discovered that many other agencies, departments, and systems were also developing their own efforts around this topic. To better coordinate all of those efforts, learn from one another, and ultimately even help save resources and time, the team started planning the creation of a network to bring all of those working on the issue together.

The idea of forming a network was met with a lot of enthusiasm, and there were over 30 people in attendance at the first meeting in May. Current network membership comprises broad representation from county human services agencies, as well as both public and private partners. Initial network goals include the creation of a graphic representation of existing resources and services, promotion of the latest knowledge and evidence-based interventions related to trauma-informed care, and human services workforce development. Network members are already making important connections to facilitate things like joint trainings, and increased awareness of existing resources.

Fairfax County’s TICN is at least the third such network in the state, and has been able to draw upon the expertise and

resources of groups undertaking similar efforts in other jurisdictions. If you are interested in learning more about the network, please contact Chrissy Cunningham at 703/324-5509 or [Christina.Cunningham@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:Christina.Cunningham@fairfaxcounty.gov).



*Conceptualized by the ACE Pyramid, the CDC’s Adverse Childhood Experiences Study demonstrates how ACEs are strongly related to development and prevalence of risk factors for disease and health and social well-being throughout the lifespan.*

If you are interested in scheduling a **Trauma Awareness Training** for a group of eight or more, the Partnership for a Healthier Fairfax’s Trauma-Informed Care Team is currently offering 90 minute sessions for non-clinical direct service staff. The training will help participants learn to recognize the signs of trauma, to understand how the effects of trauma might impact the people they work with, and to know their role in working with people affected by trauma. To request training, please contact Chrissy Cunningham at 703/324-5509 or [Christina.Cunningham@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:Christina.Cunningham@fairfaxcounty.gov).

## Research Highlight: Impact of Cigarette Taxes on Youth Smoking

Tobacco taxes have long been cited as among the strongest policy interventions against smoking. In this new analysis of data for 1991-2013, however, the authors conclude that the relationship between taxes and youth smoking appears to have weakened. It is hypothesized that the pre-2005 taxes and other anti-smoking initiatives may have “discouraged all but the most price-insensitive youth from experimenting with tobacco.” Additionally, when state-level trends are

included in the analysis, the relationship nearly disappears. [Editor’s Note: This may show the value of taxes, not alone, but as a part of a broader and more comprehensive anti-tobacco initiative.]

Hansen, B., et al. *Cigarette taxes and youth smoking: Updated estimates using YRBS data.* NBER Working Paper No. 21311. June 2015. <http://www.nber.org/papers/w21311>

## Things You Should Know About: Medical Care for Children Partnership

The Medical Care for Children Partnership offers low-income families a reduced-cost health care program for children up to age 10. Children may be able to receive MCCP medical care if their parents meet income guidelines and do not have access to affordable health insurance (through an employer, Medicaid, or the Affordable Care Act). While MCCP is not health insurance, it does provide a safety net for those who do not

qualify for other programs. Run by Fairfax County Department of Family Services in partnership with Northern Virginia Family Service, MCCP relies on collaboration with the medical and business communities. The [MCCP Foundation](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dfs/ss/mccp/mccp-families.htm) helps raise money and identify providers. Visit <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dfs/ss/mccp/mccp-families.htm> for more information.



## Messaging Tools

Every issue, we will feature messaging that you can use to share prevention resources available in Fairfax County. Feel free to, without attribution, use these messages in your outreach efforts.

### This Month's Resource: *The Equitable Growth Profile of Fairfax County*

#### Newsletter Article

#### Report Highlights Economic Impacts of Inequities

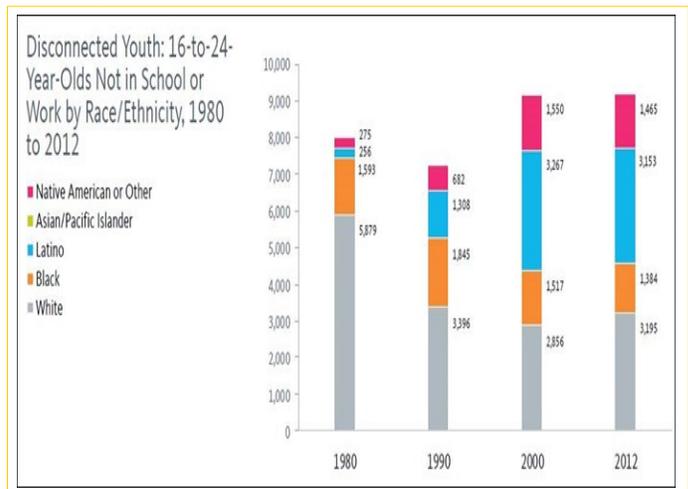
Across the country, long-standing inequities in income, wealth, health, and opportunity have reached unprecedented levels. And while many have been affected by these conditions, persons of color have felt the greatest pains as the economy has shifted. This is true, even in Fairfax County.

Recently, the non-profit [PolicyLink](#) and the [Program for Environmental & Regional Equity](#) at the University of Southern California, in partnership with County and community leaders, completed the [Equitable Growth Profile of Fairfax County](#), providing a look at where we are currently and a discussion of opportunities and strategies for advancements. The report can be summed up in one sentence from its foreword: "While Fairfax County's socioeconomic data tends to be extremely positive overall, not all residents are prospering."

The report argues that "stronger and more equitable growth is the key to the county's future prosperity." In fact, Fairfax County's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) would have been \$26.2 billion higher in 2012 if there were no racial disparities in income. Recognizing equity as "the superior growth model," the report includes six key suggestions:

- Create pathways to good jobs for workers facing barriers to employment;
- Bridge the racial generation gap;
- Integrate immigrants into the county's economy;
- Build communities of opportunity throughout the county;
- Ensure education and career pathways for all youth; and
- Foster diverse civic participation and leadership.

The full report is available at <http://bit.ly/1GK1Flu>. It includes a wealth of data, features key existing strategies already in place, and a strong call to action to promote equitable opportunities for all Fairfax residents.



Source: PolicyLink

#### Facebook Post

Understanding the racial, ethnic and economic disparities we face is a critical step towards building a stronger, more inclusive county. The Equitable Growth Profile of Fairfax County, available at <http://bit.ly/1GK1Flu>, examines how well all residents are accessing the resources and opportunities they need to fully participate and thrive in the local economy. It also features six strategies driven by equity. #equitymatters

#### Tweets

Educational levels of Fairfax's Latino immigrants aren't keeping up with employer demands. #equitymatters <http://bit.ly/1GK1Flu>

Fairfax's GDP in 2012 would've been \$26.2 B higher if racial gaps in income had been erased. #equitymatters <http://bit.ly/1GK1Flu>

Six key strategies to increase economic growth while promoting equity in Fairfax: <http://bit.ly/1GK1Flu> #equitymatters



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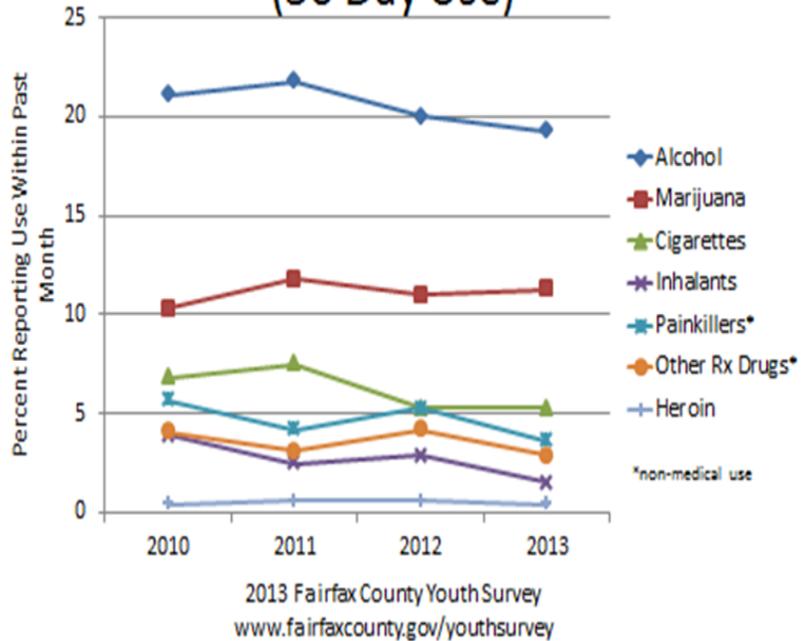
Twitter:

@ffxyouththrive

Subscribe to An Ounce of Prevention
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prevention

Substance Use Trends
(30 Day Use)



The prevalence of most substance use among Fairfax 8th, 10th, and 12th graders tends to be declining or remaining quite low. The notable exception is marijuana, the use of which has seen a slight increase over the past four years. Use of alcohol has declined, with fewer than 1 in 5 youth reporting having consumed alcohol in the past month, but it remains the most commonly used substance.

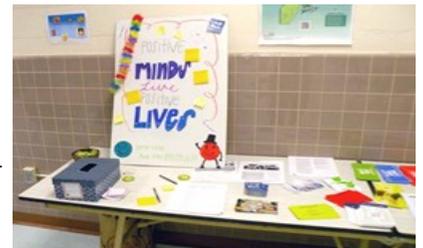
Fighting Stigma — CSB awards mini-grants to six youth-led projects

Excerpted from Fairfax— Falls Church Community Services Board, http://1.usa.gov/1HvOqFm

The Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board (CSB) has awarded mini-grants for six projects, all planned and led by young people, which aim to reduce the stigma associated with mental health issues among their peers.

"The purpose of the program is to empower and educate our youth, so that they know how to recognize a mental health concern in themselves or someone else, and won't hesitate to get help," says Jamie MacDonald, Director of CSB Wellness, Health Promotion, and Prevention Services.

The six grants were awarded to: Falls Church High School Safe Place Club, Gum Springs Computer Clubhouse, Josh Anderson Foundation, Madison Matters (Madison High School), Quander Road School, and Washington Christian Counseling Institute Youth Council. Read about each of their projects at http://1.usa.gov/1HvOqFm.



"Positive Minds Live Positive Lives"



Fairfax County is committed to nondiscrimination on the basis of disability in all county programs, services and activities. Reasonable accommodations will be provided upon request. For more information, call 703-324-4600, TTY 711.

