

Improving School Attendance: Recommendations for Developing a Plan of Action

A Report to the Fairfax County
Successful Children and Youth Policy Team

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In December 2014, the Fairfax County Successful Children and Youth Policy Team (SCYPT) endorsed holding a Community Dialogue on School Attendance. The purpose of the dialogue, which was held in September 2015, was to identify stakeholders' perceptions of factors impacting school attendance in Fairfax County and ideas for potential solutions. The SCYPT agreed to, upon learning the results of the dialogue, convene a task force to develop and oversee implementation of an action plan designed to decrease the incidence and negative impacts of school absenteeism in Fairfax. To that end, this report relies on the feedback from participants at the dialogue and a review of evidence-based and promising practices from across the country to recommend a framework for an action plan.

It is recommended that the task force use the Attendance Works model for improving attendance outcomes to ensure the Strategies for Communities and the Key Ingredients for Systemic Change are adequately addressed through the action plan strategies. These elements include:

Strategies for Communities:

- A. Recognize Good and Improved Attendance
- B. Engage Students and Parents
- C. Monitor Attendance Data and Practice
- D. Provide Personalized Early Outreach
- E. Develop Programmatic Response to Barriers

Key Ingredients for Systemic Change:

- A. Positive Messaging
- B. Actionable Data
- C. Capacity Building
- D. Shared Accountability

It is recommended that the action plan include strategies that address the following key themes:

1. Consistent cross-system attendance policy and practice;
2. Tiered interventions;
3. Early intervention;
4. Access to vocational education, career preparatory and GED programs;
5. Transitions back to school;
6. Out-of-school time opportunities;
7. Transportation;
8. Team-based approach;
9. Personalized connections and support;
10. Service access and connections;
11. Public awareness and social messaging; and
12. Data quality.

It is also recommended that the task force follow the XQ Super School Project (<http://xqsuperschool.org/>), which is engaging students and stakeholders across the country to “reimagine high school,” and has the potential to identify innovative strategies for increasing student engagement at the population level.

It is recommended that data be used to continually assess disparities in attendance-related outcomes and that considerations for increasing equity be included in all action plan strategies.

The SCYPT should charge the task force with developing an action plan that addresses these recommendations and outlines resource and policy needs, to be presented to the SCYPT for feedback and endorsement.

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Background

Across Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS), average daily attendance is very high. But it drops off as students age, and chronic absenteeism threatens the futures of thousands of Fairfax County youth each year. According to the code of Virginia, once a student has 6 unexcused absences in a year, principal must notify parent, remind of compulsory education laws and make plan 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 interaction among child, community, family, and school domains. Its causes and consequences are varied. 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. An effective approach to the issue must address all four domains. Strategies must be “multi-modal” and build on proven interventions.

Fairfax County has had limited and inconsistent responses to truancy, but has begun to implement promising practices in schools, juvenile justice, and other settings. A broader, more inclusive and comprehensive, approach is necessary to build upon these promising practices and ensure a holistic strategy.

To begin to identify the elements of such an approach, Fairfax County and FCPS hosted a Community Dialogue on School Attendance on September 21, 2015. Over 200 stakeholders attended, helping to identify strategies to address chronic absenteeism and truancy. The event was kicked off by Board of Supervisors Chairman Sharon Bulova, School Board Chairman Pat Hynes, County Executive Ed Long, and FCPS Chief of Staff Marty Smith. These elected and appointed officials discussed the community-wide implications of absenteeism and demonstrated their united commitment address the attendance issue.

Mary Ann Panarelli, the Director of Intervention and Prevention Services for FCPS, gave an overview of attendance data and efforts in Fairfax. She was followed by Vidhya Ananthakrishnan of the Vera Institute, who presented best practices, and Jodi Martin of the Clark County (WA) Juvenile Court, who shared how their county has effectively addressed truancy. The slides from these presentations can be viewed online at <http://bit.ly/ffxattends>. Participants then attended breakout sessions to discuss strategies to implement in Fairfax. Sessions were organized by five topic areas: Ensuring Compliance, Fostering Organizational Change and Development, Mobilizing the Community, Providing Opportunities, and Reaching Out/Social Intervention. Input received during the breakout sessions is presented in Appendix A.

Purpose of this Report

At the same time it endorsed the idea of the community dialogue, the Fairfax County Successful Children and Youth Policy Team agreed to, upon learning the results of the dialogue, convene a task force to develop and oversee implementation of an action plan designed to decrease the incidence and negative impacts of school absenteeism in Fairfax. To that end, this report relies on the feedback from participants at the dialogue and a review of evidence-based and promising practices from across the country to recommend a framework for an action plan.

The recommendations presented here are not intended to be a fully developed action plan. Furthermore, they should not be considered to be all-inclusive. However, based on the Prevention Unit’s review of community stakeholder input and national best practices, the recommendations should provide a basis for developing an effective and comprehensive action plan.

Recommendations for Action Plan Development

A Framework for Action

Attendance Works is a national initiative focused on the improvement of school attendance-related outcomes. They promote a model of improving attendance that relies on school-based solutions combined with systems change.

Strategies for Communities¹:

- A. Recognize Good and Improved Attendance: Schools and communities should send clear messages that convey the importance of attending school every day, and recognize attendance through incentives and contests.
- B. Engage Students and Parents: Schools should provide a welcoming environment and enriching learning opportunities.
- C. Monitor Attendance Data and Practice: Schools and communities should examine attendance and absenteeism trends to identify intervention opportunities and assess the scope of problems.
- D. Provide Personalized Early Outreach: Prior to the need for legal and other mandated intervention, schools and communities should work directly with students and families who are beginning to miss too much school, in order to identify and address barriers to attendance.
- E. Develop Programmatic Response to Barriers: Schools and communities should implement (or increase access to) specific programs and services that address the most common barriers to school attendance.

Key Ingredients for Systemic Change:

- A. Positive Messaging: School attendance should be encouraged through messaging that conveys its importance and the availability of opportunities and supports to help families overcome barriers to attendance.
- B. Actionable Data: Data should drive decisions by being disaggregated, timely, and accessible to decision-makers. It should provide insight into not only the prevalence of absenteeism, but its underlying factors.
- C. Capacity Building: Schools and community partners should have an understanding of chronic absenteeism, barriers to attendance in their communities, how they can be engaged in solutions, and how they can access tools and resources to ensure their engagement is effective.
- D. Shared Accountability: Chronic absenteeism should be included in accountability systems and performance management plans, and must be recognized as an outcome that can be affected only by sustained involvement from key sectors and stakeholders throughout the community.

¹ The Attendance Works model calls this category “Strategies for School Sites.” Recognizing that this work cannot be effective with only schools implementing change (and we actually don’t believe that Attendance Works supports that notion), we have changed the category to the more-inclusive “Strategies for Communities.”

While an action plan may or may not use the Attendance Works model as a framework for developing and organizing strategies, it is recommended that the task force use the model at least as a “checklist” to ensure the Strategies for Communities and the Key Ingredients for Systemic Change are adequately addressed through the action plan strategies.

Strategies for Action

Input from community stakeholders shared during the breakout sessions at the Community Dialogue was compiled and categorized by the Neighborhood and Community Services Prevention Unit. There was a large amount of commonality across the breakout groups, resulting in suggestions that could be categorized under a number of topics; this lightly edited feedback is presented in Appendix A. The feedback was further grouped into a set of themes for action that are in accordance with national best practices. An annotated list of best practices, including links to sources and more information, is presented in Appendix C.

A common theme across not just all breakout groups, but across recommended strategies and interventions, was about awareness of resources. Many lamented their (and others’) lack of awareness of the resources, services, and programs available. Some recommendations, even some echoed among multiple participants and breakout groups, were to implement strategies that are already in place. Examples listed below certainly include some of these recommendations. Given their prominence in the discussions at the Dialogue, it is important that the final action plan address them, even if the strategy is to implement new strategies to communicate the availability of such resources to partners, stakeholders, and the public.

Additionally, the plan may prioritize certain strategies and key policy decisions (e.g., should interventions with younger students be prioritized over those with older students?), and should factor in different approaches for older and younger students.

It is recommended that the action plan include strategies that address the following key themes.

Examples of potential strategies are listed for each theme.

- 1. *Consistent cross-system attendance policy and practice:*** The definitions of an unexcused absence and what constitutes truancy should be consistent system-wide. Follow-up policies should, regardless of school site and leadership, be consistently solution-oriented and strength-based to improve effectiveness and reduce inequities in enforcement.

Examples:

- A policy to define tardiness and responses to tardiness will reduce the current ability of students to “work the system” and not be held responsible for missing class.
- Varying definitions and interpretations of “excused” absences and consequences for absenteeism allow some parents and students to “work the system,” promulgating disparate consequences for some families.
- Consistent roles, responsibilities, and qualifications of positions across the system would help partners know who is doing what.
- Consistent use of assessment and screening tools across locations and systems should lead to more consistent and appropriate implementation of interventions.

2. **Tiered interventions:** Schools and juvenile justice systems should exhaust all options to keep a student enrolled in school and living in the community. A tiered system of consequences for truancy, implemented consistently across the system, should seek to build on a student’s motivations, and not punish the student by taking away activities and other elements of school that could serve to keep the student attached. Interventions should be evidence-based or otherwise grounded in best practice. When state or other legislation does not support the implementation of best practices, proposed changes should be advocated for.

Examples:

- Check and Connect is a student engagement intervention that pairs students with in-school mentors who systematically monitor the students’ performance and recommend and implement timely interventions when needed.
- Many FCPS schools have implemented interventions. One example is the Student Achieving Model (SAM) at Annandale High School, which is based on the pyramid response intervention, and provides levels of support and structure based on individual students’ needs.
- Restorative Justice, and other court diversion programs, provide youth with an opportunity to accept responsibility for their actions, while learning and growing from the experience without having to carry a juvenile justice record. Attendance Circles, currently implemented in some schools, represent a similar, non-court associated, approach.

3. **Early intervention:** Early identification of poor attendance patterns will provide opportunities to engage students and families before these patterns become problematic. An increased focus on identifying the root causes of absenteeism at the elementary level will provide opportunities to put the needed supports and services in place in time to change the student’s attendance trajectory moving forward.

Examples:

- Head Start programs emphasize the importance of attendance starting at the pre-school level by implementing attendance-related policies. Other methods – such as Neighborhood School Readiness Team – help increase parents understanding of the importance of school attendance, even for young children.
- Resource fairs, like those held at Annandale and Lee High Schools, and other family engagement strategies that provide opportunities for parents to learn about available community resources, can target elementary school families.
- Elementary school “welcome walks” feature school staff going into communities to meet families before the school year begins.
- Data collection methods can include information on partial day absences and other indicators of truancy risk that currently create opportunities for students to miss significant instructional time before being identified as truant. Intervening at this stage has the potential to prevent more serious truancy patterns from developing.

4. **Access to vocational education, career preparatory and GED programs:** Access to alternatives to the traditional general education curriculum should be simplified and increased. Current barriers, as identified by Dialogue participants, include competitive/limited placement available

for desired vocational tracks, high entrance standards that struggling students are unable to meet, complicated application processes, and over-emphasis on test scores.

Examples:

- Employment/internship opportunities between business and schools (including academies, nontraditional schools, and nontraditional career readiness academies) can expand the number of opportunities available.
- More flexible access to attain a GED – for example, allowing part-time school/part-time work – would make the GED more attainable.
- Alternative diploma structures, apprenticeships, and alternative schools are among ways to engage students who are not engaged in the traditional high school environment.

5. **Transitions back to school:** Plans need to be in place for students re-entering the school day after a period of prolonged absence. Often students are so overwhelmed coming back to school, due to feeling too far behind their classmates, that they end up missing more school despite intervention efforts. Having a plan in place that will allow a student to catch up on their missed work in addition to a support group (made up of adults and peers) can help address these issues.

Examples:

- FCPS high schools have System of Support Advisors (commonly referred to as “SOSAs”) to help students get caught up and transition back to full attendance.
- Peer-to-peer buddy or mentoring programs can provide peer support and positive reinforcement for school engagement and attendance.
- Return to Learn is a reintegration model currently in development by FCPS. Plans should be in place to reintegrate students back to school. An immediate emphasis on work missed may lead to more missed school, as the new workload may seem too much. A phased approach could ease workload until a student is caught up.
- Youth leadership opportunities and student activities that mesh with students’ interests and skills can be critical supports for maintaining interest and engagement in school.
- Support groups of caring adults can provide reinforcement and motivation on an ongoing basis. Such groups need not only be teachers or school officials; use of community leaders should be considered.

6. **Out-of-school time opportunities:** Issues related to school attendance are primarily addressed through school-based interventions. Providing out-of-school time opportunities to children and youth can also support and encourage school attendance by keeping children and youth engaged and motivated and progressing toward academic goals. Considerations must be made to eliminate barriers to participation, such as accessibility, affordability, among other factors.

Examples:

- Out-of-school services, including mentoring, recreational activities, and mental health support for children and youth with trauma – all available through numerous public and private, and non-profit providers throughout the county (although gaps may be present) – can support in-school interventions.

- Supporting mentoring programs and expanding their hours beyond just school hours increases participation for both youth and parents.
- Sports organizations can provide opportunities to increase youth participation in sports, especially for youth who might not qualify for other school-based sports due to school attendance requirements.

7. *Transportation:* Transporting children to and from school can also be a factor that affects school attendance for children who do not live within walking distance from their schools. Providing alternative ways to transport children who miss their school bus may help improve attendance.

Examples:

- Expanding the radius around a school for which transportation is provided for kindergarten students can increase the number of students able to attend.
- The Fairfax Connector is piloting free rides for middle and high school students.

8. *Team-based approach:* Multi-disciplinary, which can be internal school committees (e.g., featuring teachers, administrators, social workers, etc.) or broader to include representatives of multiple agencies and sectors, teams are currently used to address cases that are considered to be critical. Using this approach with more families has the potential to better identify and address the underlying causes of attendance issues and to connect students and families to available supports in the community.

Examples:

- There are currently several different monthly multiagency team meetings that take place. These meetings could be used as a forum for identifying shared cases and engaging community organizations to ensure a more holistic approach to intervening with the family.
- Policies and practices (e.g., information sharing protocols, standardized team structures and protocols) can facilitate communication between community organizations and schools to monitor students who are at risk, and to ensure a more comprehensive response and shared accountability. Bringing community organizations in as part of the team also has the potential to help those organizations better identify current gaps in service, and to develop appropriate responses to those gaps through the pooling of resources and expertise.

9. *Personalized connections and support:* Opportunities should be increased to connect at-risk students with caring and engaged adults to reinforce for the students that attendance matters to academic progress, and that the student is valued by the school and broader communities. Every student should have a positive adult role model to encourage and develop future-focused expectations with them.

Examples:

- The Student Achieving Model (SAM) at Annandale High School offers individualized support and guidance that students need.
- Check and Connect utilizes adult mentors who provide data monitoring, personalized interventions, and family engagement.

- Peer mentoring (whether within schools or between schools and age groups) opportunities can bolster older students' sense of purpose and value and encourage both members of the pair to be in school.
- Youth leadership opportunities (e.g., clubs, peer mediation, leadership classes) that don't necessarily include only high-achieving students, but also students facing academic and/or social challenges, can promote youth voice and connection to school.
- Positive behavioral approaches, such as Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports and Kids At Hope provide a positive framework that values children and youth.

10. *Service access and connections:* When absenteeism is, as is commonly the case, a symptom of conditions and circumstances such as physical or mental illness, domestic violence, poverty, or another “non-academic” issue, any successful intervention will depend on the student and family’s ability to access a variety of services. Social workers, probation officers, and many other providers across systems are consistently doing this, but lack consistent and available information and processes for making referrals and connections.

Examples:

- Guides that provide information on local programs and resources, including eligibility requirements and how to access them, can provide school staff and other community-based providers with an awareness of what is available.
- Regional Change Team meetings, facilitated by Neighborhood and Community Services, provide opportunities for provider organizations in each region of the county to work together and become aware of each organizations’ resources and services.

11. *Public awareness and social messaging:* Strategies should be developed to increase community awareness of the importance of school attendance. Starting at the pre-school level and extending out into the business community, everyone needs increased understanding of the impact of truancy. Two important parts of an effective awareness campaign will be an emphasis on what “good attendance” actually looks like (because good attendance is not the same as *perfect* attendance), and attempts to destigmatize mental illness and help youth and families feel comfortable seeking help when confronted with mental health problems.

Examples:

- A public awareness campaign that reaches families, students at all grade levels, and the community at large, could highlight how poor school attendance impacts everyone, and include messages that recognize a variety of cultural barriers that contribute to poor school attendance.
- Children and youth could be incentivized to utilize social media and positive peer pressure to educate their peers on the importance of school attendance. The Supreme Teen Street Team, in the Mount Vernon area, developed a video and conducted outreach on the importance of school attendance.
- Social media, fact sheets, and easily navigable and accessible websites could promote information and opportunities like the Fairfax Connector free rides to students program.
- Rewarding or praising parents when their children have good or improved attendance helps to recognize and value attendance.

12. Data quality: Data collection should be sufficiently detailed to provide information to decision-makers regarding appropriate intervention and prevention strategies. Data review and sharing should include stakeholders who can help develop and implement comprehensive approaches. (Again, definitions of “good” attendance will be critical.)

Examples:

- Data systems that track student attendance behavior across years and schools can lead to more targeted and earlier interventions.
- Disaggregated data can identify disparities and lead to interventions that take cultural norms and practices into account.

It is also recommended that the task force follow the XQ Super School Project (<http://xqsuperschool.org/>), which is engaging students and stakeholders across the country to “reimagine high school,” and has the potential to identify innovative strategies for increasing student engagement at the population level.

Ensuring a Focus on Equity

Racial equity should be neither an afterthought nor a strategy unto itself. As highlighted in the Equitable Growth Profile of Fairfax County, nearly 10,000 Fairfax youth ages 16 to 24 are “disconnected,” not in school or work. The large majority of these youth are people of color, and immigrant youth face particular barriers. **It is recommended that data be used to continually assess disparities in attendance-related outcomes and that considerations for increasing equity be included in all action plan strategies.** For example, barriers to engagement and system navigation can be very different for immigrant families than for non-immigrants, and strategies must address the needs of both groups.

Conclusion and Guidance to the Task Force

The recommendations included in this report are not prescriptive, nor are they complete. The task force appointed by the SCYPT – which should include a variety of stakeholders from multiple sectors and levels – will need to engage in further discussions with stakeholders, best practices research, and mapping of the current system and services in place. The “Every Student, Every Day: A Community Toolkit to Address and Eliminate Chronic Absenteeism”

(<http://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/chronicabsenteeism/toolkit.pdf>) provides a useful guide to developing a plan to address chronic absenteeism.

These recommendations do, however, provide a framework for developing a thorough and comprehensive plan that addresses the needs and concerns identified in Fairfax County. A common theme of cross-system meetings in Fairfax is a lack of awareness of available resources and opportunities. Fully engaging the community around the identified framework and themes will help bring together these resources to promote school attendance.

Finally, there are some final key considerations for the task force:

- Resources (including fiscal and human capital) remain limited, and in all likelihood, there will have to be selective implementation of the proposed strategies. Prioritized recommendations,

or recommendations presented with proposed prioritization criteria, could help final decision-makers in allocating resources and providing direction.

- There are overlap and vagueness among the recommendations listed in this report. These recommendations should be seen as guidance for an action plan, not a draft action plan in and of themselves.
- Some of the ideas presented in this report are already being implemented in Fairfax County, or reflect an unawareness of the actual policies and procedures in place. However, there remains a perception among engaged stakeholders and partners that these gaps persist. The task force should not dismiss recommendations if they are deemed to already be in place; instead strategies should be developed to improve awareness and understanding.
- It is anticipated that proposed strategies and actions will need to be implemented at various levels, including (but not limited to) specific sites (e.g., schools), systems (e.g., FCPS, state juvenile justice), and legislative (e.g., state). Proposed actions should be clear regarding who would be responsible for implementation.
- Staffs within both FCPS and Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court have been working on developing interventions and intervention models (and some, as explained earlier, are already being implemented). This work should be integrated into the multi-disciplinary task force's development of the action plan.

Feedback provided by participants in the Dialogue breakout groups was categorized by topic area and is presented here. In most cases, duplicative ideas were consolidated; this list is presented in no particular order and does not account for frequency of suggestions. Differences in note-taking styles accounts for discrepancies in how feedback is worded. While some light editing was done to ensure a degree of clarity, this should be considered “raw data” that is closest to a transcript of the discussions held during the breakout sessions.

Information for Professionals

- A uniform resource packet or web page on each school’s site that details special programming for at-risk students would assist case managers, probation officers in referring at-risk students to these opportunities. They struggle to be aware of the diverse programs available at various school sites.
- Each Systems of Support Advisor (SOSA) to prepare an annual guide to student supports at each school, to be distributed to case workers, probation, etc. This could also be a page on the school’s website.
- Creating and disseminating an inventory of supporting agencies and organizations that can assist children and families and are trained to implement evidence-based programs to assist the community.
- One page fact sheet of what is already being done
- System mapping of what we have in place

Alternative Education

- Some truancy occurs because the traditional academic setting doesn’t meet students’ diverse needs. Students who most need GED and vocational educational programs have trouble accessing them due to high entrance requirements and other obstacles. Entrance to these programs should be made simpler and less competitive.
- Need easier access to the GED, allowing part time school, part time work. Requirements have gotten more stringent and it’s not the viable option it used to be.
- The traditional academic track is not for everyone. We need options (alternative diploma structures, apprenticeships, etc.) to engage all students

Programs and Interventions

- Programs like Annandale high school’s SAM program offer the individualized support and guidance that students need, and similar programs should be more broadly implemented. <http://www.fcps.edu/AnnandaleHS/Programs/SAM.html>
- Same day parent notification of absences-at 10am and 6pm
- System of Support Advisors (SOSA) at High School level
- Check and Connect – Evidenced-based Attendance Program
 - Mentoring and goal setting to student
 - Family component – calls home to praise good attendance, check when student misses classes
 - Strong data monitoring and evaluation components
- Restorative Justice Attendance Circles - Welcome students in morning, set and discuss goals and accountability
- Neighborhood Networks: truancy is one of the eligibility factors

- Reunification work in Fam/School Partnerships office to assist with educational gaps or learning disabilities
- Newcomers School at Stuart
- More community/faith-based engagement for tutoring, educational supports needed
- Provide out-of-school support, including mentoring, recreational activities, and mental health support for children and youth with trauma.
- Through mentorship programs, community organizations can help children plan for their future and set personal goals.
- Encourage volunteer opportunities for youth to mentor younger children.
- Raise youths' voices by creating and supporting youth leadership opportunities that don't necessarily include only high-achieving students, but also students facing academic and/or social challenges.
- Educate immigrating children about our education system and orient them how navigate it, while also helping them adjust to changes.
- Assist in raising parents' awareness about the importance of school attendance, and educating them of consequences of school absence for the child, their peers, and the school system.
- Using a strengths-based and culturally competent approaches, encourage parents and help them understand their role in ensuring everyday school attendance, and shifting cultural mindsets from sending school-age youth to work to sending them to school, and/or traveling for long periods of time during the school year. (Facilitate traveling during out of school months.)
- Create parent mentorship/support programs, especially for parents who may feel isolated or disconnected.
- Community organizations and businesses can support school attendance by helping to identify children out of school during school hours.
- Create affordable and engaging after-school programs for students of all ages (including high school) and informing schools of options for students.
- Supporting school-based mentoring and creating opportunities for community members (and employees) to volunteer for mentorship programs. Getting unions involved in apprenticeship programs.
- Child Protective Services (CPS) must help schools determine earlier stages when truancy becomes child neglect.
- Sports organizations (and Park Authority) can provide opportunities to increase youth participation in sports (especially truant youth who might not qualify for school-based sports).
- Create opportunities for motivational speakers to inspire students.
- Expand hours of mentoring programs beyond school hours. This increases both youth and parent's participation.
- More support for school counselors, especially in high school.
- Facilitate transportation for students who miss the school bus. Use a "Sweeper Bus" to pick up students who missed the bus and cannot get to school otherwise. Provide transportation for Kindergarten students within a one-mile radius.
- Students need to be engaged in something that seems valuable to them
- New engagement strategies need to be explored for students and parents. Find new ways for folks to feel connected to the school environment if what is currently offered is not working for everyone. Cultural issues around the value of education need to be considered
- Transportation is often a barrier to attendance when students miss the bus. This is one need that might be able to be met by community partners

- Many current responses bring attention to students who may, for a variety of reasons (to include mental health issues like anxiety) be less likely to want to return to school if they will be subjected to interventions or strategies that make them stand out from their peers (having an attendance sheet signed each period, having to stay after school ,etc.)
- Current responses are all school based. Problems may be stemming from the home. Home visiting should be part of the response
- Resource fairs at Annandale HS and Lee HS, have proven to be successful in getting families out to receive information
- Making sure that all kids have aces (Kids at Hope) and positive adult role models.
- Have people in place to meet with kids (Mentors, teachers, coaches, etc...)
- Need a reason to go to school. Show them a future plan/pathway, talk about careers earlier.
- Schools should meet with each student (individually) to find out why they are missing school. Parents attending a meeting may lead to a student being less honest as to why they do not attend school.
- Transportation - alternative ways to get kids to school if they miss the bus.
 - A late bus for morning pick-ups
 - Parent phone tree for late drop-offs
 - Fairfax Connector (moving towards free FCPS student riders)
- Address the issues of immigrants
 - Explain laws and expectations to both the student and parent
 - Should expectations be the same for a recent immigrant?
 - Multi layered problem.
- Collaboration with the community and other youth service providers.
 - Very little response from the schools when the community is reaching out to them.
- After hours programs in the neighborhoods
 - Teachers and tutors in the community centers - take it to the neighborhood
 - Strike teams to bring parent information, student services, and family resources to neighborhood programs (Teen Centers, community centers, FBOs, CBOs)
 - Create employment/internship opportunities between business and schools.
 - Using the academies, NCRA and Nontraditional Schools and matching them with businesses
- What plans are in place once a student transitions back to a regular school cycle?
- Student/peer “buddy system”
- Multi-agency meeting before court involvement – tiered interventions
- Tiers of intervention
- Early intervention – Don’t include Court – aim to keep kids out of Court involvement
- Identify which students go to tiered interventions
- Community Schools
- School-based mental health clinics – can be administered by third parties
- Look at pilots in schools
- Reintegrate students to be successful in schools

Professional Practices

- Monthly multiagency team meetings – discuss specific cases where truancy is a risk factor. Forum for identifying shared cases

- Increase communication with out of school providers about students' attendance. Community organizations can help provide context of what is happening in families for a more holistic intervention.
- Use multi-disciplinary teams at schools to address student issues. Currently, these are used for critical cases only. Using this approach can help create positive impact on more families.
- Use a strengths-based approach when reaching parents to discuss attendance issues. Don't limit messaging to only negative reporting, but also reward or praise parents when their children improve attendance. Establish an awards programs or incentives to make parents improve school attendance.
- Parents need to be involved in the discussion to help identify barriers and solutions
- phone calls and home visits – some demographics prefer a personal touch
- Nontraditional hours - evening and weekend
 - Utilize parent liaisons and make contact with non-English speakers.
 - Prefer text to robo calls. Real time v. answering machine.
 - DC - hired non profits to do work in the school - someone who can reach out.
 - Case workers who are 2 per school. Do the work for the school to collaborate.
- Work within a pyramid on truancy issues, approach needs to be tiered. Go from the Elementary school perspective, and build from there :
- Track students through each level of the pyramid.
- Have schools meet with their local business owners and explain to them why students should be redirected back to school (refused business) during school hours.
- Have those guidelines posted in the stores as well as posters on the importance of school attendance.
- Show businesses that they will actually gain in the long run if they turn away a truant student.
- Is there a benefit to being in a group of students that are struggling in the same way?
- It may prove difficult to have groups of students with various personal issues in one group.
- How do we stop the practice of nurses writing absentee notes and having doctors sign them when they haven't read them? How do we educating the Physicians?
- For mental health related issues, how do we inform parents of their best options?
- Work with students from year to year (with truancy officers)
- Include Court in early interventions
- Consistency in attendance practices in schools, e.g., when calls are made
- Work with students and families earlier and from year-to-year
- Excused absences for health: multi-team practice with public health nurses
- Involve social workers earlier in intervention
- Involve school probation officer earlier in intervention
- Conduct a physical health assessment with truants
- Look at streamlining attendance calls in schools
- Look at streamlining roles
- Early assessment of student
- GAINS assessment – consistent assessments for early intervention
- Partnerships between private practitioners and schools
- Early intervention lists – target students at risk
- Use group interventions earlier

Social Messaging

- Mobilize children and youth to work on addressing school attendance issues themselves. Incentivize positive peer pressure, the use of social media and other technology resources to educate peers.
- Public Awareness campaign about the important of school attendance
- PR needs to start early (pre-school level)
- Everyone in the community needs education about mental health and needs information geared towards removing stigma
- Social media is not used for attendance issues/truancy prevention. This should be a focus
- Promote what other businesses are doing to help
 - Ex: Fairfax County Connector provides free bus transportation to students with valid student ID.
- Focus on neighborhoods – parent engagement about attendance
- PSA on dangers of missing school
- Educate community on CHINS, truancy, accurate information
- Health information can change if student’s medical status changes – parents need to update information
- Parents often ask how many absences a student can have before it impacts grades/retention

Policy and Priorities

- Shifting focus from high school to elementary school truancy can help prevent truancy in later years.
 - Earlier identification of issues
 - Reasons for absence at that level may be very different from what we see from HS students. There may be opportunities to resolve underlying issues before HS
 - Student and family engagement needs to be achieved at this level. By the time students reach MS/HS, it might be too late
 - Fines or other penalties should be in place for parents who fail to send their child to school
- The traditional educational delivery model does not fit all students. There is too much focus on only academic performance (SOLs, test scores). And in some cases, a student may miss many days of school and still pass a class. Attendance needs to be reflected in grades obtained.
- FCPS needs a consistent policy/procedure around attendance protocols
 - Individual schools have too much discretion. Consistent policies need to be in place so that individual schools are not tasked with developing their own guidelines and enforcement strategies
 - Current policies do not capture tardiness, or address it effectively. Students learn how to work the system and are missing lots of school that is not captured by truancy data
- Some families have privacy concerns and do not want any information shared with organizations outside of the school
- Stop punishing students for truancy/escalating punishment
- Head Start – 5 straight absences (excused or not) leads to a vacancy
- Change from 5 to 10 the number of absences requiring a referral – let school intervene first
- Later bell schedule change is good
- Clearly define roles of school professionals, and redefine if necessary
- Universal definition of unexcused absence
- Multi-agency meeting before court involvement
- Funding set aside for attendance issues

- Look at state regulations that may need to be changed
- Look at attendance practices before escalating punishment and taking away activities
- Disproportionate consequences due to some parents knowing how to “game” the system
- Ways to hold parents accountable
- Identify incentives for parents for attendance

Mental Health Stigma

- Parents often do not want to share information related to mental health concerns with the school, and may be resistant to using services or supports due to the fear of labels and community perception
- Students may be hesitant to share this information, or to approach their guidance counselors to talk, because they want their counselor to have a certain impression of them (particularly around college recommendations and such). Students need professionals to talk to in the school setting who are bound by confidentiality and are not responsible for issuing grades or writing recommendations

Physical Health

- Keep students home during illness/outbreaks
- Maintain good air quality in schools

Evaluation

- Define which interventions are working and which aren't
- Look at outcome data and follow through with interventions
- Review attendance data

Youth Feedback

- School is confusing, why should i go to school? (from a student's perspective)
- Overwhelming; what is in place to make students not feel overwhelmed? (from a student's perspective)

Appendix B: Community Dialogue Participant Survey Results

Community Dialogue attendees were contacted the following week to participate in a survey on their experience. Nineteen attendees completed the survey. The findings are presented below:

1. How relevant to the work you do was the overall message from the morning's presentation?

Response	# of Responses	Percentage
1 = Not relevant at all	1	5.3%
2	0	0.0%
3	4	21.1%
4	8	42.1%
5 = Very relevant	6	31.6%
	Weighted average	3.95

2. Please evaluate your satisfaction level with the morning presentations in the following categories :

Potential application in my workplace

Response	# of Responses	Percentage
1 = Very low	1	5.3%
2	0	0.0%
3	7	36.8%
4	7	36.8%
5 = Very high	4	21.1%
	Weighted average	3.68

Potential positive impact on students

Response	# of Responses	Percentage
1 = Very low	1	5.3%
2	1	5.3%
3	6	31.6%
4	8	42.1%
5 = Very high	3	15.8%
	Weighted average	3.58

Potential positive impact on community

Response	# of Responses	Percentage
1 = Very low	1	5.3%
2	2	10.5%
3	5	26.3%
4	7	36.8%
5 = Very high	4	21.1%
	Weighted average	3.58

3. What breakout session did you attend?

Response	# of Responses	Percentage
Ensuring compliance	7	36.8%
Fostering organizational change and development	3	15.8%
Mobilizing the community	4	21.1%
Providing opportunities	1	5.3%
Reaching out/social intervention	4	21.1%

4. How would you rate the potential application of the ideas proposed during your breakout session?

Response	# of Responses	Percentage
1 = Not very likely and difficult to implement	1	5.3%
2	1	5.3%
3	10	52.6%
4	6	31.6%
5 = Very likely and easy to implement	4	5.3%
	Weighted average	3.26

5. How would you rate the potential positive impact that your proposed ideas would have on local youth?

Response	# of Responses	Percentage
1 = Not very effective	1	5.3%
2	2	10.5%
3	4	21.1%
4	6	31.6%
5 = Very effective	6	31.6%
	Weighted average	3.74

6. How would you rate the need for implementing the ideas proposed during your breakout session?

Response	# of Responses	Percentage
1 = Less important and can wait until later phases	0	0.0%

2	0	0.0%
3	6	31.6%
4	6	31.6%
5 = Very important and should be a priority	7	36.8%
	Weighted average	4.05

7. How do you feel the discussion impacted your view of the school attendance issue?

Response	# of Responses	Percentage
1 = Consistent with what I already knew	5	26.3%
2	2	10.5%
3	4	21.1%
4	3	15.8%
5 = Increased awareness	5	26.3%
	Weighted average	3.05

8. Which best describes your role?

Response	# of Responses	Percentage
Civic group	0	0.0%
Community advocate	1	5.9%
Educator	7	41.2%
Elected official	0	0.0%
Faith-based	0	0.0%
Human services agency	3	17.7%
Judiciary	0	0.0%
Law enforcement	2	11.8%
Nonprofit	1	5.9%
Parent	1	5.9%
Student/youth	0	0.0%
Other	2	11.8%

9. What was the top takeaway you gathered from this community dialogue?

Response
Nothing
Important to engage family and community in this process
There are multiple reasons that students do not come to school, from physical ailments, to economic conflicts, to emotional issues to logistical problems.
overly optimistic that our truants and parents will take advantage of anything provided to help them improve their life & education.
Importance of diverting truants from court and preventing problems by emphasizing to parents importance of attendance
Each school operates independently of each other and programs for at risk youth vary from school to school. To make it worse- schools/community/law enforcement are not aware of what each school offers-- even the schools are not aware of what the others are doing.
I am concerned that the great ideas developed will not have the resources (people and money) to implement the changes. I would like to see where this dialog goes...as in if it continues or if it was just a check in the box.
Our collaborative efforts are key in making a positive impact in the lives of our children and their families. It certainly does "take the village" in order for our communities to be successful. I found this to be the common message throughout the day and equally important to this, I believe we recognized that the collective impact model, which is expressed in this very statement, seemed to resonate with the group. It is going to take working together, with a common belief system, in order to bring us together and maximize our impact.
That people were ready to listen to new ideas.
How to address attendance issues from a systems level.
That this is a community issue, not just a school issue.
Good Turnout - Lots of different agencies represented.

10. Do you have any other comments or suggestions?

Response
Next time present more than one plan or program. There should have been alternatives presented.
Everything seemed to be covered during these sessions.
I am dismayed that my name and other advocates names were excluded from the attendee list. This is detrimental to encouraging dialog.
Dr. Garza's absence was felt by all- gave MANY attendees the sense that she does not feel that Truancy is an issue that should be dealt with
The event was extremely organized and I loved the representation from all stakeholders on this important issue. The break out session was extremely collaborative and the facilitators were knowledgeable and courteous. So I have to be honest...the general information presentation was long and there was not much new information. The intro with each dignitary from each agency was long and seemed more political than informative. I understand that is the polite thing to do, but I like jumping in and getting to work on the issue at hand. Furthermore...Did it cost money to have the two guest speakers from NY and WA? Not sure if that was money well spent. FC has the right people with great ideas that have already been implementing many of the same practices. I always like to look from within first before paying for outside speakers. So ultimately, the most revolutionary idea would be to have "wrap around" services within school communities. That would alleviate so many agencies supporting kids in a disconnected way. How powerful would it be to be more interconnected? I would be more than happy to share my office with a mental health professional, the School Attendance Officer, someone from juvenile domestic relations, probation officer, etc. And we already have many of the other people within the school (Public Health Nurse, Counselor, Social Worker, Psychologist). Any chance that future meetings could be tied into breakfast or lunch? Feeding people or giving them the opportunity to discuss issues over lunch is always a great way to network and build connections. It's all about the interconnections :)
This seemed more beneficial for community members.
To try and include more students and parents in the conversation.
School Personnel should have taken more of an active role in the morning session. CSU staff shouldn't have moderated.

Prevention Unit staff researched national evidence-based and promising practices in promoting school attendance and preventing truancy and dropout. Presented here are basic descriptions of various resources, presented in no particular order.

Promising Approaches to Truancy ([Vera Institute presentation](#))

1. Providing Individualized Attention in Schools
2. Developing Robust Processes to Ensure that Problems are Handled in Schools
3. Pooling Stakeholder Resources and Expertise
4. Graduated Responses to Keep Youth in the Community for as Long as Possible

Every Student, Every Day: A Community Toolkit to Address and Eliminate Chronic Absenteeism
<http://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/chronicabsenteeism/toolkit.pdf>

Action Step 1: Generate and act on absenteeism data. Prioritize the development of early warning prevention and intervention systems that identify students who are, or are at risk of becoming, chronically absent before they miss enough school that it is nearly impossible for them to catch up. Data from such systems should be shared—in a manner consistent with applicable State law and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)—between school districts and other key public and private organizations to ensure coordinated systems of support for students who are chronically absent.

Action Step 2: Create and deploy positive messages and measures. Focus on developing positive messages for youth and families as well as implementing supportive engagement strategies. For instance, these strategies may include mentoring, counseling, and creating safe and supportive school climates through approaches such as Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports to improve students' attendance at, connection to, and success in school. Punitive messages and measures are often ineffective and can lead to disproportionate suspensions and expulsions from school and inappropriate referrals of students and families to law enforcement.

Action Step 3: Focus communities on addressing chronic absenteeism. Launch local initiatives to raise public awareness about the causes and effects of chronic absenteeism, including awareness among families and youth. Prioritize training within communities and across sectors to conduct root-cause analyses of local absenteeism trends. Implement research and evidence-based strategies and programs—such as Check & Connect—that effectively engage and support students who are, or are at risk of becoming, chronically absent.

Action Step 4: Ensure responsibility across sectors. Regularly communicate that chronic absenteeism is a problem that affects the whole community, not just those students who are chronically absent and their families. Drive and evaluate cross-sector performance, at least in part, based on that principle. Education, health, housing, and justice system leaders should work together to ensure shared accountability within and across sectors to successfully address the local, underlying causes of chronic absenteeism.

Don't Quit on Me: What Young People Who Left School Say About the Power of Relationships

<http://gradnation.org/report/dont-quit-me>

- Individuals can:
 - Listen
 - Connect
 - Start a conversation
 - Be a mentor, tutor or coach

- Schools can:
 - Make it harder to leave and easier to return (create more on-ramps than off-ramps)
 - Bring the Web of Support in
 - Invest in building relationships and leveraging students' strengths
 - End zero-tolerance disciplinary policies
 - Engage young people as peer supporters

- Communities can:
 - Assess risk and resources of young people in your community
 - Improve the odds that all young people have access to an Anchor
 - Engage health care professionals
 - Include social support systems
 - See education and youth services as an economic development investment

Fifteen Effective Strategies for Improving Student Attendance and Truancy Prevention

<http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED485683.pdf>

School and Community Perspective—Students are part of a school community, but they are also part of the community outside the school grounds. Schools do not exist in isolation. Effective schools are integral parts of their communities and, as a result, have strong business and community support. Attendance and truancy issues, both predictors of dropping out of school, are community problems, not just school problems. Therefore, to set the stage for a comprehensive dropout prevention initiative, and concurrently improve student attendance and reduce truancy, there are three critical strategies that serve as a baseline for the other strategies.

1. Systemic Renewal
2. School-Community Collaboration
3. Safe Learning Environments

Early Interventions—Research has shown that early identification of poor attendance patterns of children and the ensuing truancy issue are vital to ensuring a successful school experience. Attendance problems and truancy usually begin in the elementary grades. When identified early, attitudes and behaviors can often be changed before they are deeply entrenched. These strategies are most effective when implemented at birth, but continue throughout a child's school years.

1. Family Engagement
2. Early Childhood Education
3. Early Literacy Development

Basic Core Strategies—Many school districts and communities are seeking effective interventions that target middle and high school students in at-risk situations. The following four interventions have had an impact at all school levels, but seem to be more easily managed in middle and high school. These student-centered strategies provide dynamic and meaningful learning opportunities in alternative, traditional, and community settings, all designed to keep students in school and on a path toward graduation.

1. Mentoring/Tutoring
2. Service-Learning
3. Alternative Schooling
4. After-School Opportunities

Making the Most of Instruction—What happens in the classroom is at the heart of keeping students in school. Strategies that address the different learning styles of students, increase the knowledge and skills of teachers, and harness the power of technology can increase learning and attendance. These school-based interventions are particularly effective with students in at-risk situations.

1. Professional Development
2. Active Learning
3. Educational Technology
4. Individualized Instruction
5. Career and Technical Education (CTE)

What Works Clearinghouse: Dropout Prevention

<http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/PracticeGuide.aspx?sid=9>

Diagnostic Recommendations

1. Utilize data systems that support a realistic diagnosis of the number of students who drop out and that help identify individual students at high risk of dropping out. States, districts and schools should develop comprehensive, longitudinal, student level databases with unique IDs that, at a minimum, include data on student absences, grade retention, and low academic achievement. Data should be reviewed regularly, with a particular emphasis before the transitions to middle school and high school. Minimal Evidence

Targeted interventions Recommendations

2. Assign adult advocates to students at risk of dropping out. Adult advocates should have an appropriate background and low caseloads, and be purposefully matched with students. Adequate training and support should be provided for advocates. Moderate Evidence
3. Provide academic support and enrichment to improve academic performance. Help students to improve academic performance and reengage in school. This should be implemented in conjunction with other recommendations. Moderate Evidence
4. Implement programs to improve students' classroom behavior and social skills. Students should establish attainable academic and behavioral goals and be recognized when they accomplish them. Schools can teach strategies. Minimal Evidence

Schoolwide interventions Recommendations

5. Personalize the learning environment and instructional process. A personalized learning environment creates a sense of belonging and fosters a school climate where students and teachers get to know one another and can provide academic, social, and behavioral encouragement. Moderate Evidence
6. Provide rigorous and relevant instruction to better engage students in learning and provide the skills needed to graduate and to serve them after they leave school. Engagement can be increased by providing students with the necessary skills to complete high school and by introducing students to postsecondary options. Moderate Evidence

Present, Engaged, and Accounted For: The Critical Importance of Addressing Chronic Absence in the Early Grades

http://www.nccp.org/publications/pdf/text_837.pdf

1. Prepare children for entry into school through high quality early care and education experience.
2. Ensure access to preventive health care, especially as children enter school.
3. Offer a high quality education that responds to diverse learning styles and needs of students.
4. Engage families of all backgrounds in their children's education.
5. Educate parents about the importance of attendance.
6. Encourage families to help each other attend school.
7. Offer incentives for attendance to all children.
8. Conduct early outreach to families with poor attendance, and as appropriate, case management to address social, medical, economic and academic needs.
9. Coordinate public agency and, if needed, legal response for families in crisis.

The Guide to Community Preventive Services: Promoting Health Equity Through Education Programs and Policies: High School Completion Programs

<http://www.thecommunityguide.org/healthequity/education/highschoolcompletion.html>

Eleven different types of high school completion programs were included in this review. They are listed below in approximate order of effectiveness.

1. Vocational Training
2. Alternative Schooling
3. Social-Emotional Skills Training
4. College-Oriented Programming
5. Mentoring and Counseling
6. Supplemental Academic Services
7. School and Class Restructuring
8. Multiservice Packages
9. Attendance Monitoring and Contingencies
10. Community Service
11. Case Management

What Works: Attendance Works

<http://www.attendanceworks.org/what-works/>

Strategies for School Sites

- A. Recognize Good and Improved Attendance
- B. Engage Students and Parents
- C. Monitor Attendance Data and Practice
- D. Provide Personalized Early Outreach
- E. Develop Programmatic Response to Barriers

Key Ingredients for Systemic Change

- A. Positive Messaging
- B. Actionable Data
- C. Capacity Building
- D. Shared Accountability

National Standards for the Care of Youth Charged with Status Offenses

<http://juvjustice.org/our-work/safety-opportunity-and-success-project/national-standards-care-youth-charged-status>

Section 1. Principles for Responding to Status Offenses

Judicial, legal, law enforcement, justice, social service, and school professionals working with youth alleged to have committed status offenses and their families should:

1. Apply a child and family-centric approach to status offense cases by prioritizing child and family safety, well-being, and permanency for the child.
2. Understand and apply current and emerging scientific knowledge about adolescent development, particularly as it relates to court-involved youth.
3. Understand positive youth development principles and how they can be used to achieve better outcomes for court-involved youth.
4. Ensure that past trauma and other experiences, which may underlie or lead to status-offending behaviors, are identified and responded to with appropriate screening, assessment, treatment, services, and supports.
5. Implement a status offense system framework that promotes shared leadership and responsibility by encouraging youth engagement in court, agency, and other meetings affecting their case, safety, well-being, treatment services, and/or placement.
6. Utilize alternative dispute resolution strategies to resolve youth and family conflicts outside of the court system.
7. Employ family engagement strategies that identify and emphasize a family's strengths, and empower families to find and implement solutions outside of the court system.
8. Eliminate racial and ethnic disparities by being culturally aware and ensuring impartial and equal access to culturally-competent prevention and intervention services and treatment for youth charged with status offenses and their families.

9. Understand the developmental, behavioral, and social differences between boys and girls and how their service needs are accordingly different. Make gender-responsive choices regarding interventions, treatment, and services before, during, and following court involvement.
10. Ensure that lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning (LGBTQ) youth who are charged with status offenses receive fair treatment, equal access to services, and respect and sensitivity from all professionals and other youth in court, agency, service, school, and placement.
11. Ensure children do not enter the status offense system because of learning, mental health, sensory, speech/language, or co-occurring disabilities. Ensure that children with disabilities who do enter the status offense system are treated fairly and given access to needed evaluations, treatments, and services.
12. Coordinate with other relevant formal and informal systems of care to better serve children and families.

Section 2. Efforts to Avoid Court Involvement

Education, social service, community-based, child welfare, runaway and homeless youth, mental health, law enforcement, and juvenile justice systems should:

1. Aim to resolve all status offense matters through the provision of voluntary diversion services.
2. Determine the proper course of action by identifying the family circumstances, unmet needs, or other factors that led to contact with the status offense system.
3. Train professionals who first respond to alleged status offenses about family and community dynamics and other factors that can cause status behaviors, as well as the availability and role of screenings, assessments, and services.

Law enforcement systems should:

4. Focus on prevention and intervention by connecting children and families to needed services in lieu of charging or detaining children alleged to have committed status offenses.

Education systems should:

5. Implement responses to truancy that match the reasons youth are absent from school and that aim to avoid court involvement, school suspension, or expulsion.

Child welfare, juvenile justice, and runaway and homeless youth systems should:

6. Implement responses to alleged status behaviors that aim to avoid court involvement and are tailored to the reasons the youth and family have been referred to the child welfare, juvenile justice, or runaway and homeless youth system.

Court intake personnel should:

7. Not accept jurisdiction over any status offense case until it has been determined that the applicable statutory requirements were met and that the agency that first responded to the claim made reasonable efforts to avoid court involvement by exhausting all available culturally appropriate pre-court assessments, services, entitlements, and treatments.

Section 3. Efforts to Limit Court Involvement

Judicial officers should:

1. Dismiss or, alternatively, stay proceedings when community-based services or other formal or informal systems approaches would circumvent the need for continued court jurisdiction.
2. Assess early whether the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) applies.
3. Ensure youth charged with status offenses have independent, qualified, and effective representation throughout status offense proceedings.
4. Not allow children in status offense cases to waive counsel or, alternatively, only allow waiver if: (1) the waiver is on the record, (2) the court has fully inquired into the child's understanding and capacity, and (3) the waiver occurs in the presence of and in consultation with an attorney.
5. Exercise their statutory and inherent authorities to determine, prior to adjudication, whether youth and families received, in a timely manner, appropriate interventions that could have limited their court involvement.
6. Exercise their statutory and inherent authorities throughout the child and family's court involvement to ensure that service delivery systems are providing the appropriate assessments, treatments, and services to children and families in status offense cases.
7. Assess alternatives to out-of-home placement or secure confinement.
8. Not securely detain or confine youth at any point in the status offense process.

Lawyers for alleged and adjudicated status offenders should:

9. Advocate for voluntary and community-based assistance to limit and/or avoid continued court involvement and secure confinement.
10. Advocate for child clients to be treated fairly throughout the court process and for their due process rights to be protected.
11. Ensure that child clients' rights and entitlements under relevant federal and state laws are protected.

Judicial officers and entities providing case management services should:

12. Effectively manage and close court and agency cases in a timely manner.

Section 4. Recommendations for Policy and Legislative Implementation

State and local policymakers and advocates should:

1. Eliminate juvenile court penalties and sanctions for behaviors labeled status offenses and ensure that systems are accurately responding to behaviors as either episodes of normal adolescent behavior or critical unmet youth and family needs that are best resolved through non-judicial interventions and supports.
2. Support an infrastructure of community-based and child- and family-serving programs and systems to ensure direct youth and family access to a seamless, comprehensive and non-judicial continuum of care that is empowered and resourced to respond to behaviors that might otherwise be labeled as status offenses.
3. In those limited circumstances where court involvement is necessary, ensure court mechanisms are in place that allow the appropriate court division to effectively serve the needs of the youth and family without inappropriate use or risk of more punitive outcomes for the child and family.
4. Prohibit schools from referring youth who engage in status offense behaviors to court, unless and until the school has made all reasonable efforts to avoid court involvement.
5. Prohibit parents/caregivers from referring youth who engage in status offense behaviors to the juvenile court until the family has first sought and meaningfully engaged in non-judicial interventions.

6. Promote coordinated, blended, or braided public funding streams that create a seamless, comprehensive, community-based continuum of care for youth and families.
7. Enact laws that ensure the right to counsel for youth who come into contact with the juvenile court for a status offense by not allowing youth to waive their right to counsel or only allowing waiver if: (1) it is on the record, (2) the court has fully inquired into the child's understanding and capacity, and (3) the waiver occurs in the presence of and in consultation with an attorney.
8. Prohibit the use of locked confinement for youth petitioned to court for a status offense.
9. Mandate meaningful efforts to engage youth and families in all aspects of case planning, service delivery, court proceedings, and disposition strategies.

Federal policymakers and advocates should:

10. Amend the JJDPa to prohibit the use of the valid court order (VCO) exception to securely confine youth adjudicated for status offenses.
11. Strengthen relevant federal agencies to provide research, training, and technical assistance to state and local authorities to better assist state status offense system reform efforts.
12. Create coordinated approaches between federal government agencies and programs that serve youth and families that will help states coordinate, blend, or braid federal funding streams to create a seamless, comprehensive, and, to the greatest extent possible, non-judicial continuum of care for youth and families.

Acknowledgements and Contact Information

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