



Addressing Truancy in Fairfax County

PRESENTATION TO: SUCCESSFUL CHILDREN AND YOUTH POLICY TEAM

MARY ANN PANARELLI, FAIRFAX COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
ROBERT BERMINGHAM, JDRDC COURT SERVICES UNIT
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Goals of the Presentation



- Overview of current situation
- Review outcomes resulting from truancy
- Discuss current efforts to address truancy – what's working and what isn't working
- Gain support and sponsorship of SCYPT to hold a community dialogue about ways to address truancy

Average Daily Attendance



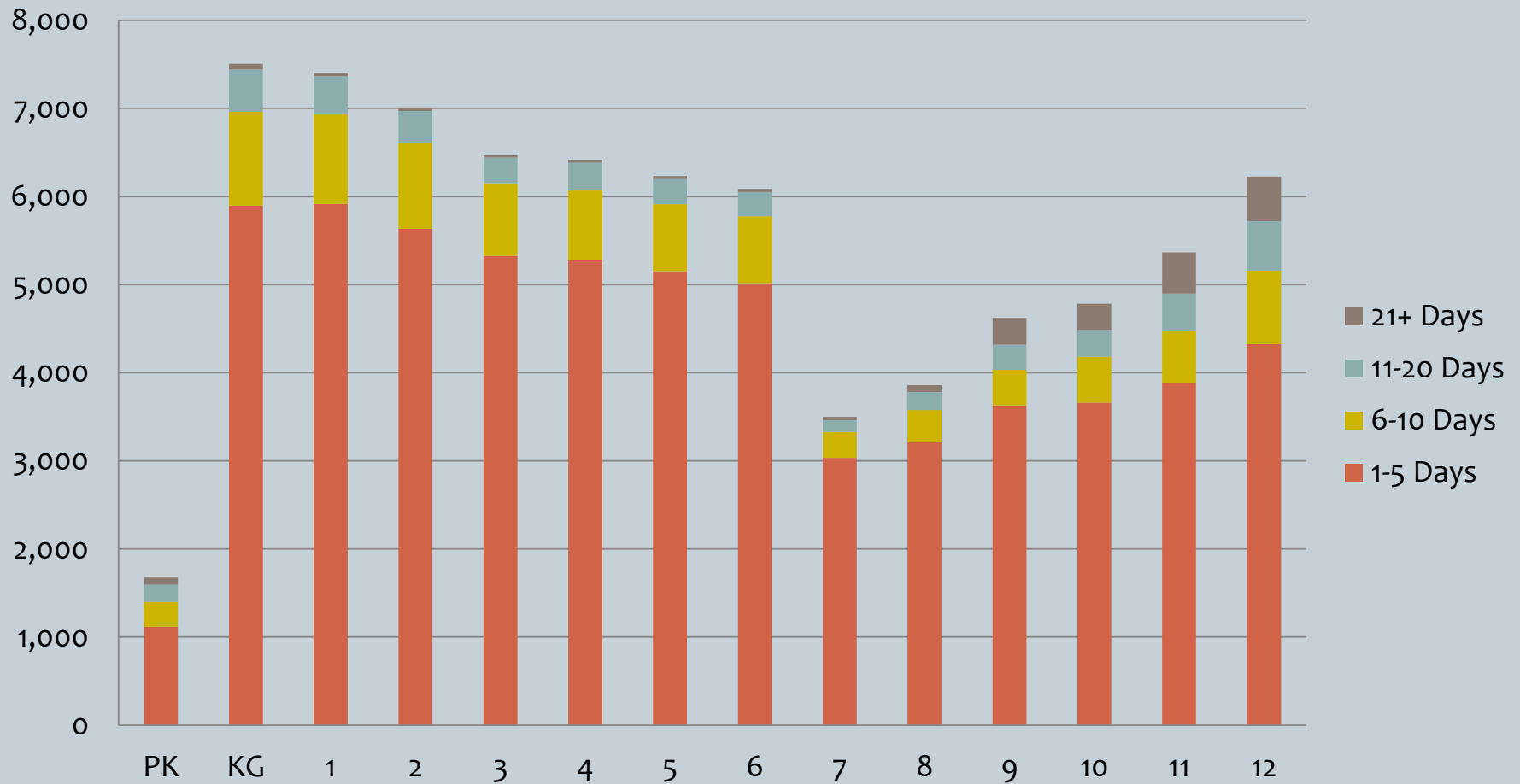
- Average daily attendance is very high
- Elementary-all subgroups 96% or better
- Percent of secondary students in attendance each day varies slightly by subgroup

	Asian	Black	White	Hispanic	Free & Reduced Meals	Limited English Proficiency
Grade 8	97.4	96.5	95.7	95.3	95.5	95.4
Grade 12	93.3	93.2	92.5	91.8	91.9	90.7

Source: Fairfax County Public Schools

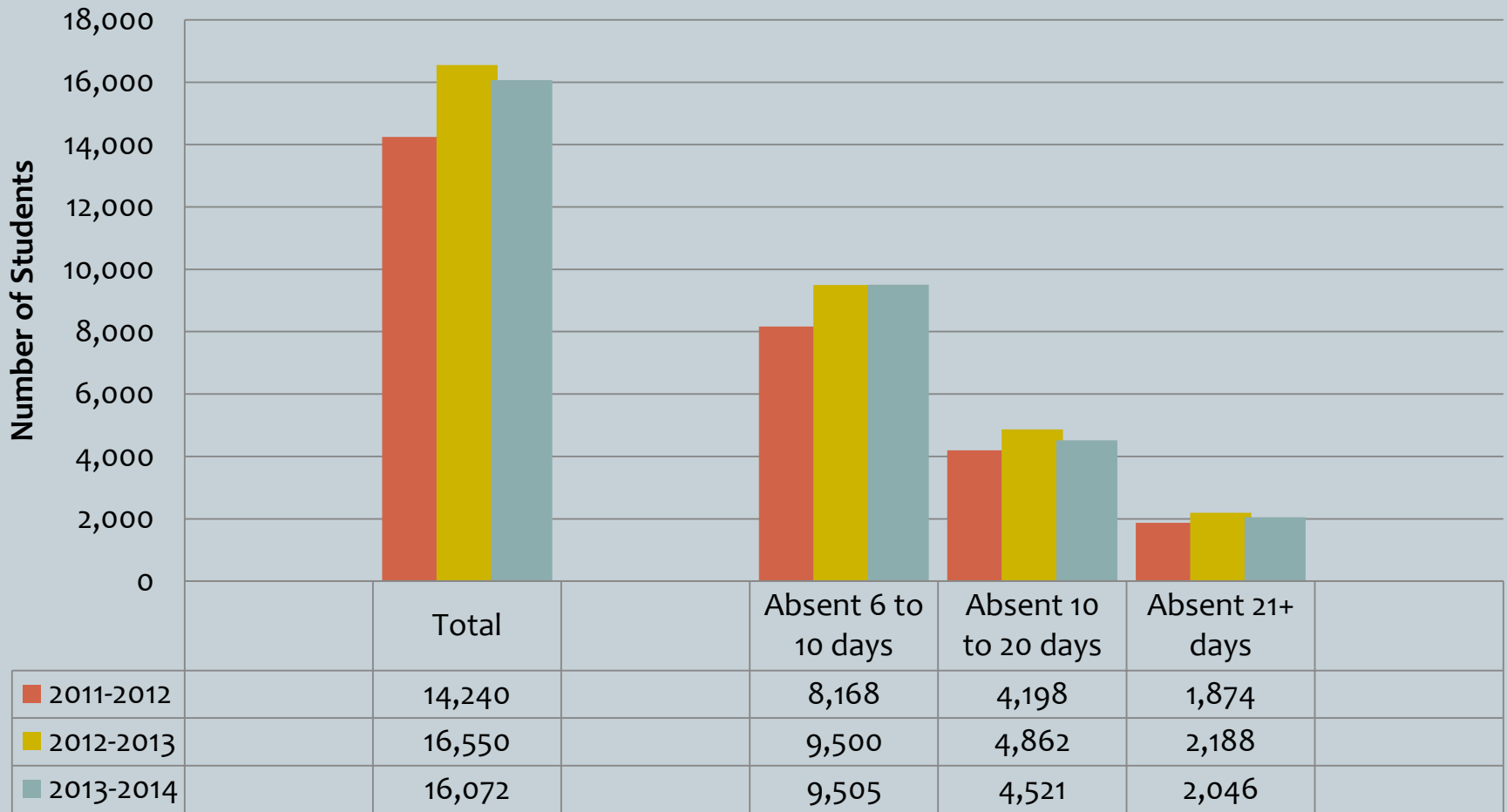
Number of Students with Unexcused Absences by Grade

2013-2014



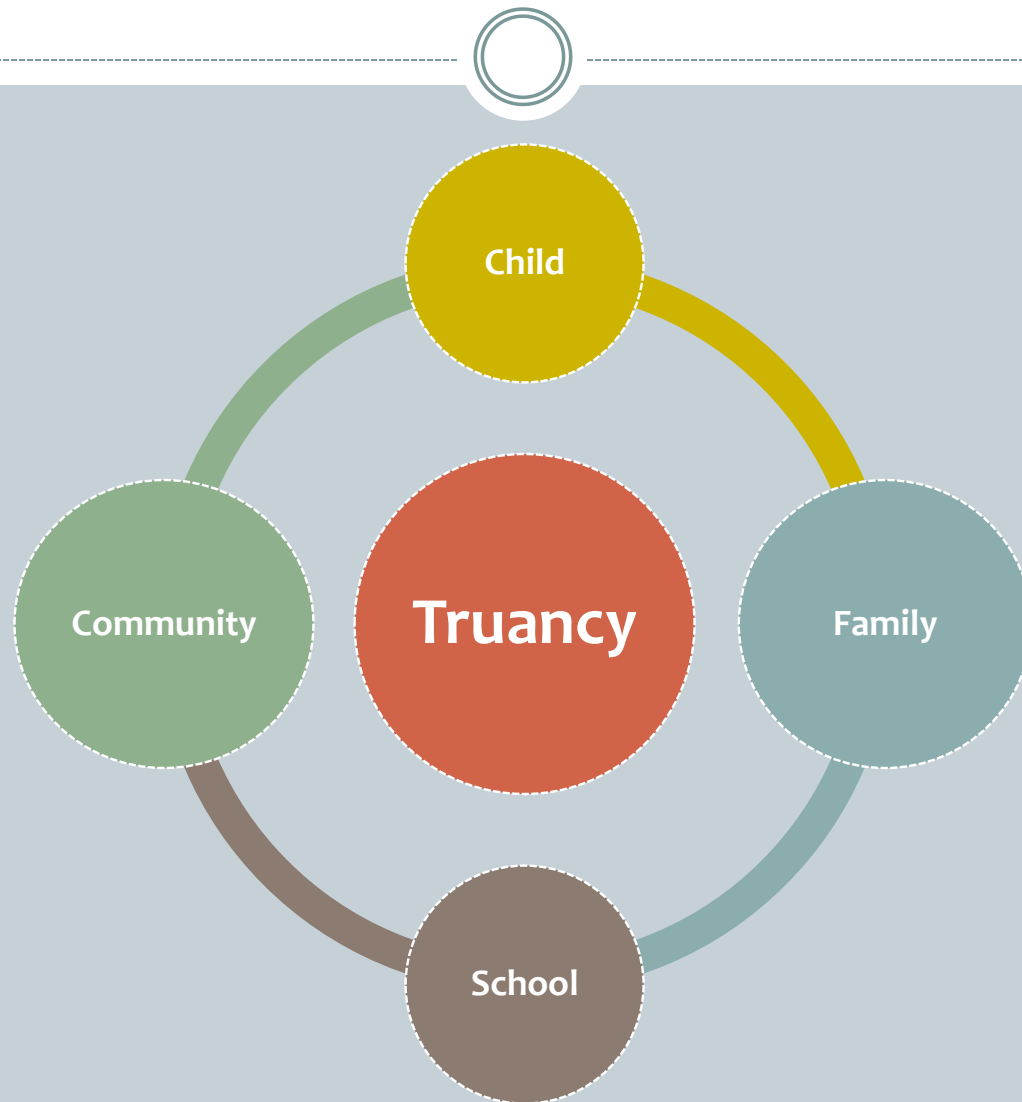
Source: Fairfax County Public Schools

“Legal” Truancy: Absent more than 5 days



Source: Fairfax County Public Schools

Truancy exists in the context of interaction among 4 domains. All domains need to be involved in addressing the issue.



Outcomes of Truancy for the Child



- Higher rates of drop out
- Lower financial security
- Future relational difficulties
 - Early marriage
 - More likely to have more children
 - Higher levels of divorce
- Poor health outcomes
 - Increased risk of mental health problems
 - Increased risk of alcohol and drug abuse
 - Higher levels of personal injury
- Delinquency that **may** lead to adult criminal behaviors

Outcomes of Truancy for the Family



- Increased levels of family stress
- Family conflict with educational and social service providers
- Potential involvement with juvenile justice authorities

Truancy Outcomes for the School



- Disrupts ability of teacher to build momentum in instruction for class, especially in group activities
- Frustrates teachers who are trying to build relationships and motivation
- Adds cost of providing remedial and repeat courses
- Threatens school accreditation
 - Due to lower rate of on-time graduation

Truancy Outcomes for the Community



- **Economic:**
 - Lost income and tax revenue
 - Increased demand on local social services
- **Political:**
 - Reduced levels of political participation
- **Social:**
 - Increased crime rates
 - Reduced intergenerational mobility
 - Poor levels of health
 - Widens the social gap for some subgroups

Common Reasons for Missing School



- **Child focused**
 - Don't see school as relevant to their life
 - Don't function well in standard school settings
 - Mental health problems and/or learning disabilities
 - Feel that they don't "fit in" with other students
 - Don't feel safe – feel threatened
 - Lack academic competence

Common Reasons for Missing School



- **Family focused**
 - Family needs older children to work or provide child care because of economic conditions
 - Some families in “survival” mode
 - Parents may not understand impact of absences on learning
 - Parents may not know how to navigate the system to advocate for their children, e.g. may not know that they need to call in absences
 - Parents don’t have time to attend parent/teacher conferences
 - Language barriers
 - Immigrant parents require more support to understand how the system works here and the importance of education and school attendance

Overview of Truancy Intervention Research



- Although national research shows multi-dimensional causes and issues associated with truancy, interventions still tend to focus on individual child
 - Social welfare/therapeutic lens: emphasizes psychological problems and the learning disabilities that result from them
 - ✦ Interventions focus on remedial education and individual counseling
 - Crime control lens: views truancy as a part of the pattern of juvenile crime and is viewed as a public safety issue
 - ✦ Interventions focus on enhanced enforcement and punishment

Research Shows that Truancy Interventions



- Should be “multi-modal” and use proven strategies
 - Collaboration between schools, family, and community institutions
 - Student and family engagement
 - Comprehensive approach to problem-solving
 - Use of incentives and sanctions
 - Operating in a supportive context of active encouragement
 - Rigorous and continuous evaluation and assessment of intervention

Current Fairfax Responses to Truancy: Schools



- Limited Number of School Attendance Officers
15 officers to cover 196 schools and centers and 187,000 Students
 - Tasked with residency checks as well as attendance
 - Number hasn't changed for over a decade
 - Role has shifted from documentation for court to connecting with services
 - Highest priority given to high schools
- Inconsistent response to absences across schools
- Difficulty with successfully reintegrating youth back into academic work once they return to school

Current Fairfax Responses to Truancy: Schools



- Promising Practices

- Same day parent notification of absences-at 10am and 6pm
- System of Support Advisors at High School
- 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
- Monthly multiagency team meetings – discuss specific cases where truancy is a risk factor. Forum for identifying shared cases.

Current Fairfax Responses to Truancy: Juvenile Court

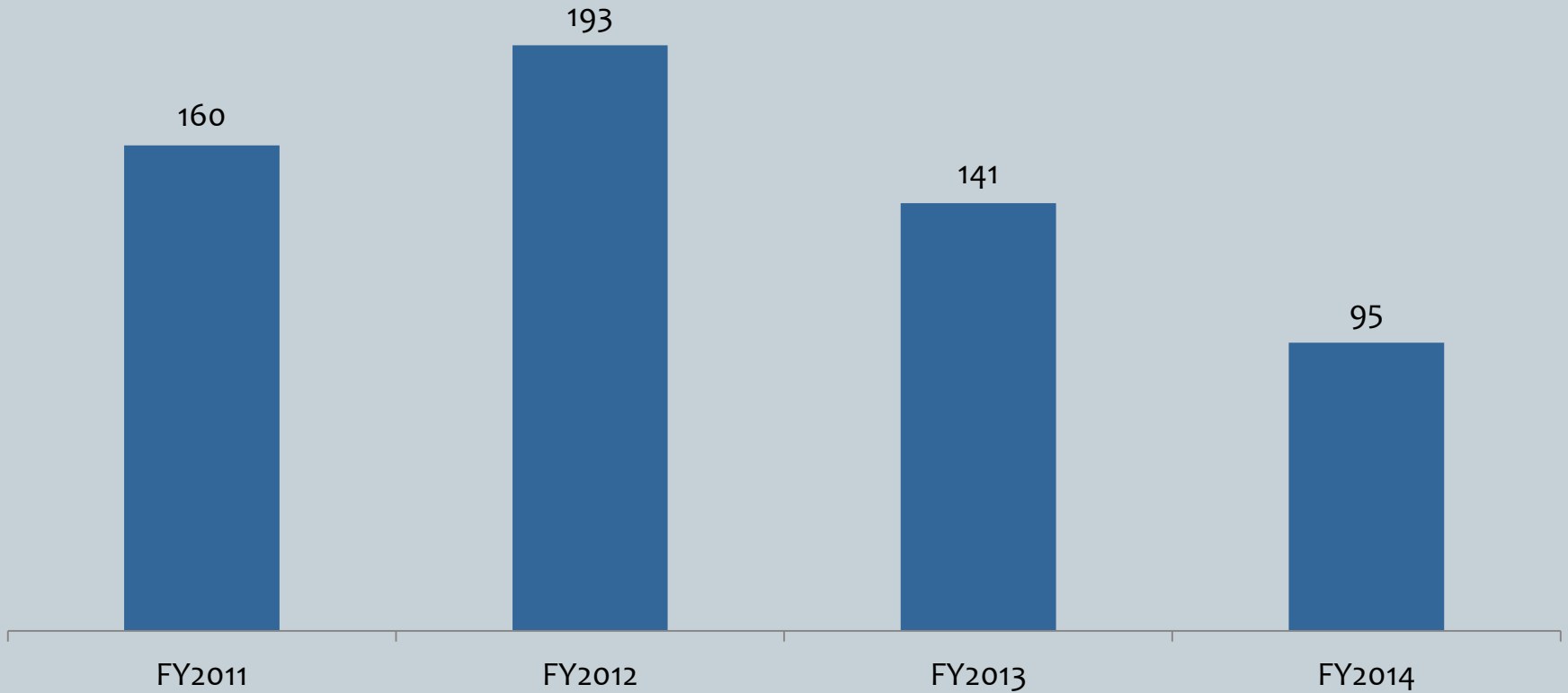


- Juvenile Justice responses limited by the Code of Virginia
 - Intake worker must decide if School Attendance Officer has exhausted all community resources
 - Intake *may* divert on first offense
 - ✦ Monitored Diversion Program
 - ✦ Diverted cases must be completed within 120 days
 - Intake *may* take unsuccessful diversion cases to court – limiting reinforcing school-to-prison pipeline

Current Fairfax Responses to Truancy: Juvenile Court Truancy Complaints Brought to JDRDC Intake

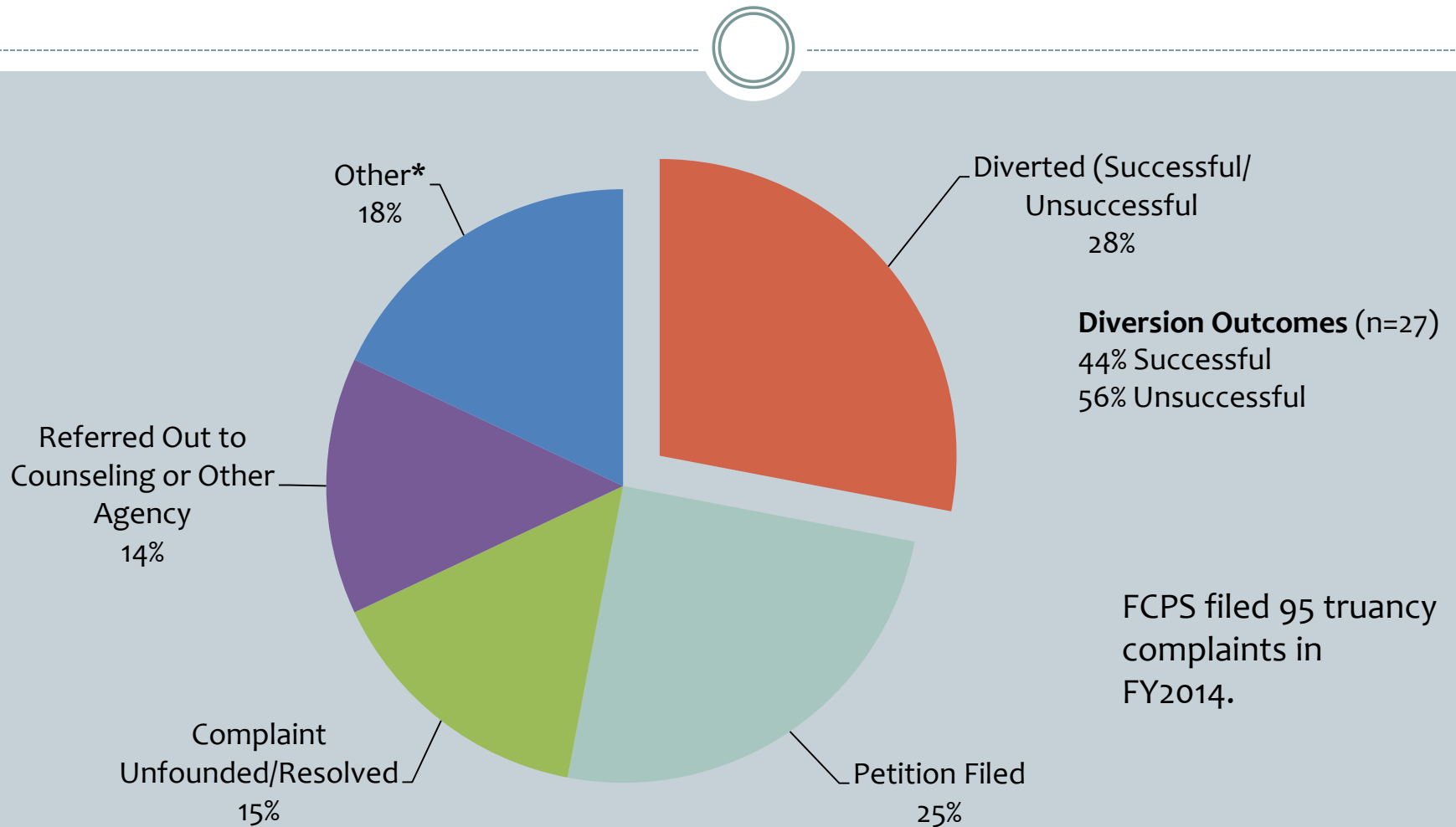


Truancy Complaints by Fiscal Year



Source: DJJ BADGE Management Information System

Current Fairfax Responses to Truancy: Juvenile Court Intake Dispositions for Truancy Complaints FY2014



Source: DJJ BADGE Management Information System, *Other includes cases still pending.

Where do we go from here?



- **Next Steps:**
 - SCYPT support for a multi-stakeholder truancy summit
 - SCYPT support for truancy task force