

**Minutes from Truancy Subcommittee Meeting of  
Families with Service Needs (FWSN) Advisory Board  
January 22, 2007**

Present: Maria Allegro, Peter Arakas, Carl Babb, Emily Breon, Christina Carver, The Honorable Curtissa Cofield, Andrea Comer, Kim DeSimone, George Dowaliby, Hector Glynn, Surrey Hardcastle, Kimberly Joyner, Valerie LaMotte, Richard LeGrier, Julia O'Leary, Cynthia Rutledge, Reginald Slade, Martha Stone

Purpose and Update of Families with Service Needs (FWSN) Advisory Board

- Purpose: Created by the General Assembly last year and charged with monitoring the implementation of legislation, passed in 2005, which will no longer allow youth to be incarcerated for status offenses and violations of court orders relating to status offenses, beginning in October 2007. The Advisory Board is currently writing and endorsing legislation which will divert all status offenders from the court and handle these youth through alternative means and with alternative services.
- Proposals Under Consideration
  - Creation of four Family Support Centers (Bridgeport, Hartford, New Haven, and Waterbury) that will provide services such as crisis management, respite beds and mediation to 900 of the most at-risk FWSN-involved youth. If youth are noncompliant with Family Support Centers' recommendations, the Family Support Center can refer the youth to court which can make an order, excluding detention.
  - Budget Pieces
    - Pace Center for Girls
    - Two Budget Options under the State Department of Education – individuals schools will respond to RFP

Purpose of FWSN Truancy Subcommittee

- Develop truancy proposals
- Comment on current legislation regarding truancy
- Act as a forum for communication between various state truancy initiatives

Descriptions of Current Truancy Initiatives in Connecticut

- Court Models: Truancy Court Prevention Project (Emily Breon, Center for Children's Advocacy); Regional Children's Probate Courts (Kimberly Joyner, Office of the Probate Court Administrator)
- School-Based Models: New Haven Public Schools (Carl Babb); New London Public Schools (Christina Carver); CBA/CBF Truancy Intervention Project (Peter Arakas, LEGO Systems); Connecticut Consortium on School (Valerie LaMotte, Office of Policy & Management)
- Law Enforcement Model: Hartford Police Dept. Truancy Program (Richard LeGrier, III, City of Hartford Police Dept.)
- Mental Health Model: School Refusal Program (Surrey Hardcastle, Institute of Living)

Other Truancy Initiatives in CT

- STEP Program: educationally based, delinquency prevention program that serves youth on parole in Hartford and New Haven – STEP has recently expanded to serve FWSN youth (Cynthia Rutledge, Department of Children and Families' Juvenile Services)

### Pending Truancy Legislation

- Proposed H.B. No. 6149 REP. KIRKLEY-BEY, 5th DIST. 'AN ACT CONCERNING AN APPROPRIATION FOR YOUTH SERVICE BUREAUS', to reduce truancy and provide recreational opportunities to youth by increasing grants to local youth service bureaus
- Proposed S.B. No. 759 SEN. HANDLEY, 4th DIST. 'AN ACT CONCERNING TRUANCY AND FUNDING FOR YOUTH SERVICE BUREAUS', to reduce truancy by providing adequate funding for youth service bureaus, which provide much needed learning, growth and recreational opportunities for young people.
- Proposed H.B. No. 5109 REP. WITKOS, 17<sup>th</sup> DIST. 'AN ACT CONCERNING THE DETENTION OF TRUANTS', to repeal the provisions that authorize police to detain truants in protective custody.
- Discussion of Youth Service Bureaus
  - Well-connected to schools
  - Work better in smaller communities
  - Glastonbury has excellent model
  - Funding should be competitive and data-focused

### Next Step – Develop Recommendations

#### *Preliminary Recommendations*

1. Develop an early intervention model, looking at truancy at K-2.
2. Foster more parental involvement.
3. Confront barrier of how to deliver services to families without the involvement of DCF.
4. Find or coordinate comprehensive services for particular needs (e.g. lack of housing as barrier to school attendance).
4. Devote more resources to track attendance/truancy patterns more consistently.
5. Develop more community partnerships, especially for English language learner (ELL) populations.
6. Help reintegrate students back into schools after extended periods of truancy with explicit transition/adjustment period, possibly in smaller school setting or with additional services.
7. Provide more transportation for students who cannot easily walk to school.
8. Expand vocational, co-op and employment opportunities, especially for students who are not successful in academics. These programs are crucial to help students think about the future and develop personal goals.
9. Get more role models to support students, including mentoring programs.
10. Allow schools to be present during FWSN hearings since school is the petitioner and needs to explain what interventions have already been tried.
11. Investigate Rhode Island model where juvenile court is conducted in the school.

**Next Meeting:** Monday, February 26, 2007, 2:30 p.m., University of Connecticut School of Law, 65 Elizabeth Street, Knight Hall Room 215.