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The Colorado Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Council Low-Risk High-Needs Committee

Evaluation of Truancy Prevention and Early Intervention

Prepared by Spark Policy Institute in collaboration with the Low-Risk High-Needs Committee of the Colorado Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Council

Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention
Colorado JJDP Council

CDPS CO
COLORADO
Division of Criminal Justice
Department of Public Safety

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INTRODUCTION

OVERVIEW OF THE EVALUATION DESIGN

Spark Policy Institute, in collaboration with committee members of the Colorado Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (JJDP) Council's Low-Risk High-Needs (LRHN) Committee, conducted this evaluation to inform the Council, Committee, and other relevant audiences about strategies to prevent truancy and improve school attendance.

In 2017 Spark members conducted a qualitative assessment, gathering perspectives from 1) the field of stakeholders in Colorado implementing or supporting truancy-reduction focused work; and 2) the four pilot programs funded by the LRHN Committee from 2014-17: Truancy Problem-Solving Courts (TPSC) in the 1st, 16th, and 18th Judicial Districts and La Plata Youth Services Prevention Program.

The evaluation sought to understand both the pilot programs' and the broader fields' level and nature of collaboration and identify catalysts and challenges to fostering new and productive partnerships. The evaluation focused on identifying emerging lessons and promising practices for reducing truancy and key elements of the system that support or act as barriers to truancy prevention or intervention implementation.

Four primary evaluation questions guided the evaluation design. These questions were developed in collaboration with the LRHN committee members through a series of discussions in fall 2016.

Q1: Across the three years of funding, what have been the most important accomplishments of the truancy pilot programs?

- In terms of processes, infrastructure, use of resources, and/or cost savings?
- In terms of culture and value perspectives?
- In terms of positive outcomes for children and families?

Q2: How have the judicial system, the education system, and other key entities supported or hindered the pilot programs over the course of three years?

Q3: How have judicial, educational, and community entities developed partnerships that facilitate implementation of truancy-reduction strategies, both within the pilots and the field more broadly?

- What aspects of the partnerships have been most critical for supporting the pilot- and the field-level goals?
- What have been barriers to creating and/or taking full advantage of the partnerships?

Q4: What are the most essential elements for sustaining or expanding truancy reduction efforts in Colorado?

Methods

The evaluation data collection activities, conducted February through June 2017, included phone and in-person interviews with: 1) the field of stakeholders supporting truancy-reduction work, including; and 2) pilot program directors and key staff, including school personnel, agency partners, and community organizations including mental health providers. In total, 29 individuals participated in an interview. Table 1 reflects the systems-level perspectives represented. The interview protocols are provided in the appendices of this report.

Table 1. Interviewees' System Perspectives

Site	Education	Judicial	Human Services/ Child Welfare	Community
Field-Level Stakeholders	X	X	X	
1st Judicial District - TPSC[1]		X	X	X
16th Judicial District - TPSC	X	X	X	X
18th Judicial District - TPSC	X	X	X	X
La Plat County – Prevention Pilot	X	X	X	X

After all interviews were complete, Spark facilitated a dialogue with all pilot program directors on June 21, 2017 to review initial findings and pilot summaries. Feedback and learnings from this meeting were integrated into the report. In addition to conducting interviews, the Spark evaluation team reviewed quarterly and annual pilot site reports, pilot data sets, and other materials from the pilot programs for examples of impact and key learnings. Spark used these documents to develop the program-level data tables included in the pilot-specific summaries.

Data Limitations

As with any evaluation, this assessment has a number of limitations. First, the evaluation occurred at the end of the three-year funding cycle of the pilots and therefore provides a retrospective snapshot of program implementation and changes over time. The evaluation was not able to fully examine how systems evolved over the course of the three-year grant. Second, the pilot partners identified to participate in interviews represent a limited number of individuals from each of the pilot programs and the field overall; findings may not capture the full range of perspectives. Participants were narrowed down from a larger pool of pilot partners identified by pilot site leads. Third, it was not possible to conduct interviews with families or youth who participated in the pilot programs because of the necessary processes for ensuring confidentiality and human-subjects protection did not align with the project timeline. Therefore, the evaluation findings only reflect the experiences and insights of the pilots' program directors and staff members and institutional partners. Finally, Spark cannot verify the accuracy or completeness of the aggregate data provided by the pilot sites. Pilot site evaluation processes were developed based on site need; therefore, results cannot be compared across sites. The LRHN Committee members may choose to complete internal verification processes

[1] Spark reached out to but was unable to secure a representative from the education system to participate in an interview for the 1st JD, Jeffco Public Schools; due to data restrictions and the evaluation timeline.

with the project directors of the four pilot sites and their own grant monitoring records before disseminating the report (or any portion of it) to internal and external audiences.

ORGANIZATION OF THE REPORT

The evaluation report begins with an overview section – including a brief description of the truancy landscape in Colorado, the LRHN Committee, and the focus of the four pilot programs. Section 1 summarizes reflections based on cross-site learnings from data gathered through interviews and document review, and provides recommendations for the Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention (JJDP) Council to consider in identifying next steps to prevent truancy and improve school attendance. Section 2 provides detailed results from the field-level interviews, outlining Colorado truancy policies and practices, and critical components to effectively addressing truancy. Section 3 provides detailed results from the pilot-level interviews, highlighting each of the pilot program's accomplishments, barriers and catalysts, and lessons learned.

OVERVIEW

THE TRUANCY LANDSCAPE IN COLORADO

As depicted in Figure 1 on the next page, the schools are primarily responsible for implementing tiered responses to truancy based (in part) on the number of unexcused absences. In addition to the schools, parental involvement is encouraged throughout and parents[2] are notified of each unexcused absence. Court involvement is triggered once a student is habitually truant and fails to comply with their implementation plan, while other agencies may voluntarily insert themselves in the process at different stages. Figure 1 is based on the Colorado Compulsory Attendance laws (CRS 22-33-107), which outline in detail how a habitually truant student progresses through the systems, primarily placing the responsibility for addressing truancy on schools. The succeeding sections of this report illustrate how the systems that touch a truant youth interact and the challenges and opportunities cross-system collaboration brings about.

CRS § 22-33-107(3)(a)(I). Habitual Truancy:

"Child who is habitually truant" means a child who has attained the age of six years on or before August 1 of the year in question and is under the age of seventeen years and who has four unexcused absences from public school in any one month or ten unexcused absences from public school during any school year.

Compulsory attendance laws are crafted by each state to require school attendance for children of certain ages.

At-Risk Youth

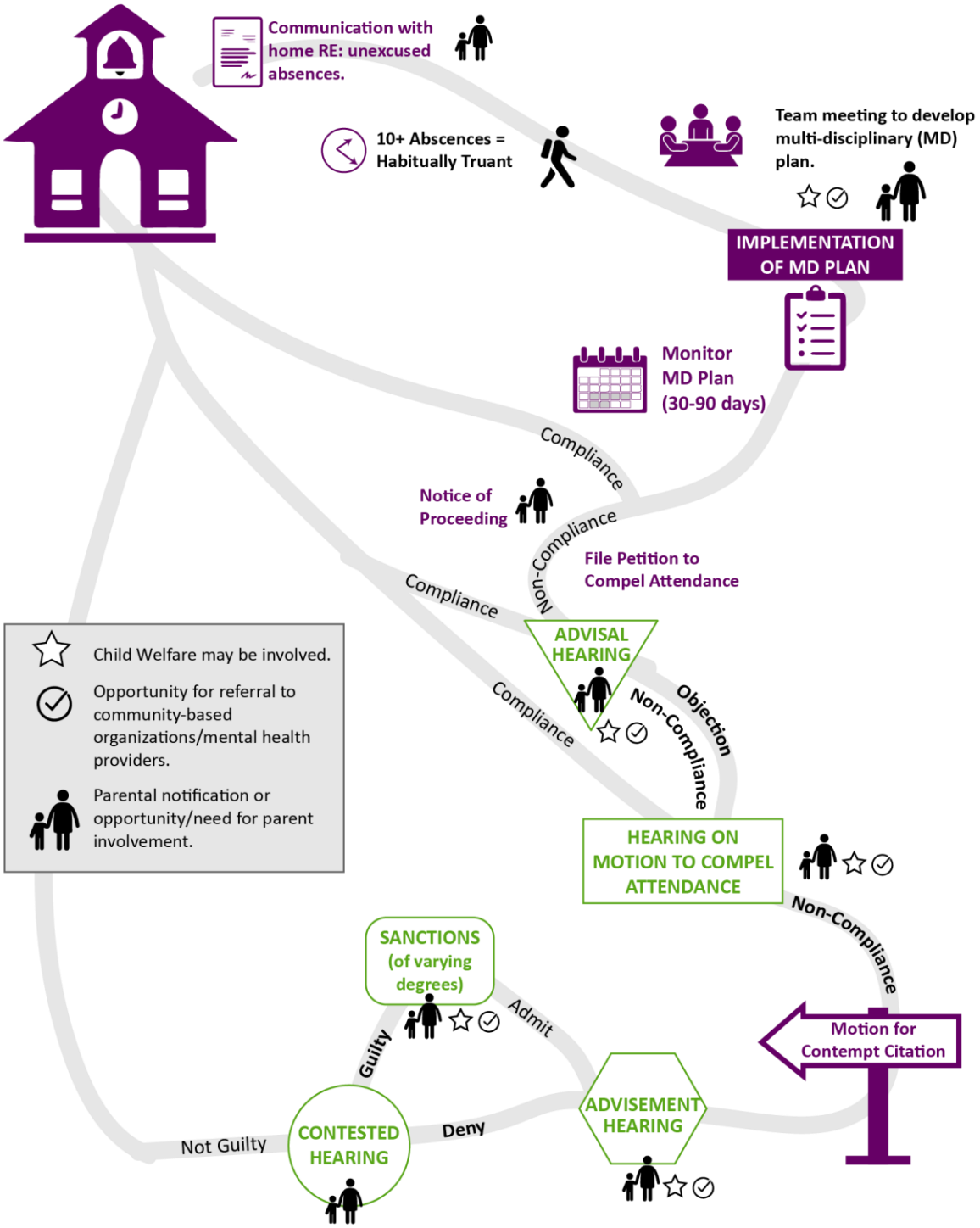
The term at-risk youth typically implies a future with less than optimal outcomes. Youth are considered at-risk for a number of reasons. Examples include youth who may be:

- Homeless or transient;
- Involved in drugs or alcohol;
- Abused sexually, physically or emotionally;
- Mentally ill;
- Neglected at home or live in stressful family environments;
- Lacking social or emotional supports; or
- Involved with delinquent peers.

Source: http://schoolengagement.org/school-engagement-services/at-risk-youth/

[2] Throughout the report the term parent and family are used, these terms are used to refer broadly to whoever a youth's legal guardian or caretaker are and/or their care system they have in place.

Figure 1. Colorado's Truancy Intervention Process



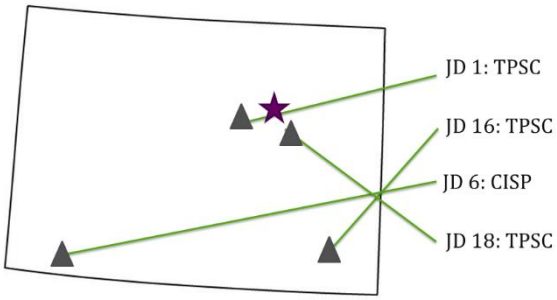
Sources: CRS 23-1-107; https://www.courts.state.co.us/userfiles/File/Administration/Executive/JP3/Truancy/Appendix_B.pdf; http://dps-counseling.wikispaces.dpsk12.org/file/view/Attendance+interventions+and+the+DPS+system.pdf

Contempt: Contempt is a legal phrase that means a person has acted in a way that is disobedient or disrespectful towards a court of law in a way that defies the authority, justice, and dignity of the court. (https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/contempt_of_court_indirect)

OVERVIEW OF THE LOW-RISK HIGH-NEEDS COMMITTEE

The JJDP Council's Low-Risk High-Needs (LRHN) Committee was established in 2013 to address the needs of juveniles who may not have criminogenic tendencies but whom do have undiagnosed, unmet, or underserved needs, which may contribute to these youth's eventual progression into and through the juvenile justice system.

In 2014 the LRHN Committee decided to focus on truancy due to recent legislative changes, namely House Bill 13-1021 (HB13-1021), the release of Safety, Opportunity & Success (SOS): Standards of Care for Non-Delinquent Youth by the Coalition for Juvenile Justice, Safety, and Opportunity & Success Project which advocates to end confinement for status offenders (such as truancy), based on data that illustrate the negative impact of detaining youth for such offenses.



The LRHN Committee supported JD 1, 16, 18, and La Plata County in their grant process for funds to implement or expand on existing programs aimed at truancy. The three judicial districts created truancy problem solving court (TPSC) models with Colorado Juvenile Accountability Block Grant (JABG) funds over the course of three years (May 2014 – May 2017). The prevention pilot in La Plata County created a Community-In-Schools Partnership Program (CISP) and received Title II, Formula Grant funds from January 2014 - January 2017.

Problem-solving courts (PSCs) follow a wrap-around model, providing resources within the courtroom and in the community to students and their parents. Although PSCs require significant upfront time and effort, they can be effective in reducing recidivism and decreasing the use of sanctions including detention. Common elements of PSCs include:

- **Focus on outcomes** – Aiming to achieve positive outcomes for youth, schools, and the community.
- **Systems change** – Promoting reform in how government systems respond to the problem.
- **Collaboration** – Working with partners, within and outside the court system, to achieve goals.
- **Non-traditional roles** – Allowing the court to take on roles or processes not common in traditional courts, such as facilitating outcomes rather than overseeing an adversarial process.
- **Screening and Assessment** – Incorporating screening and assessment tools to determine the appropriateness of treatment plans.[3]

[3] Rachel Porter, Michael Rempel, and Adam Mansky. (2010). What makes a court problem-solving? Center for Court Innovation.; Spark Policy Institute (2016). Truancy problem solving courts in Colorado: A case study. Retrieved from: https://cdpsdocs.state.co.us/oajja/Publications_Reports/LRHNJJDP_JudicialDistrict_Case_Study_Final.pdf.

Community-In-Schools Partnership Programs (CISP) formally blend school and community resources; they bring community resources inside public schools, where they are accessible, coordinated, and accountable, and surround students with a community of support and empower them to stay in school .[4],[5] These partnerships represent a promising strategy for addressing barriers to learning, enhance healthy development, and strengthen families and communities.[6] In essence, a CISP program creates the environment for healthy relationships to form between the students, community, and school, giving students a sense of belonging to a caring community.[7]

DESCRIPTIONS OF THE FOUR PILOT PROGRAMS

Specialized Truancy Engagement Program (STEP) Court (1st Judicial District)

Mission Statement – The 1st Judicial District STEP Court was a specialized, collaborative court that sought to improve attendance by identifying barriers to education and providing assistance to empower students and families to overcome those challenges.

Project Description – The STEP Court was a voluntary program that took 6-9 months to complete. The program was overseen by a multidisciplinary group called the STEP Team. At the beginning of each STEP, every student – in conjunction with school staff, the STEP Court Coordinator, parents, and other involved professionals - created a STEP'ing Up Plan. The STEP'ing Up Plan was an individualized plan that set forth the requirements that a student must satisfy in order to STEP Up to the next STEP. If needed, the STEP'ing Up Plan addressed mental health treatment, substance abuse treatment, sobriety monitoring, and attendance goals.

Motivation, Achievement, and Power (MAP) Program (16th Judicial District)

Mission Statement – The MAP Program is designed to MOTIVATE youth to ACHIEVE high attendance and academic performance in school and bring out the POWER to thrive not only in school but in everyday life.

Project Description – The MAP Program is a mandatory program designed to last between 6-12 months. The program is divided into four phases called the Four C's: Choice, Challenge, Change, and Courage. Emphasis is placed on school attendance, academic achievement according to ability, and appropriate conduct. Referrals are made to appropriate services based upon assessment results. Youth move through each phase via a point system, tracked through a point register. A points list explains to participants how they earn or lose points. Points are monitored on a weekly basis by the youth, the case manager, and parent/guardian. A specific number of points (tied to specified outcomes) must be accumulated prior to moving to the next phase.

[4] Center for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA. (2012). School-community partnerships: a guide, 2-4.

[5] Communities in Schools. (2016) Retrieved from http://www.communitiesinschools.org/about/.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Ibid.

Academic Centered Empowerment (ACE) Court Program (18th Judicial District)

Mission Statement – The 18th judicial district Truancy Problem Solving Court honors and empowers families to reconnect truant students with school or other educational alternatives. It employs a holistic, problem solving, culturally-sensitive approach in order to foster educational success and create self-sufficient families.

Project Description – The ACE Court Program has four phases, each of which has progressively more rigorous standards. ACE Court provides youth with the following tools to set them up for success:

- Incentives and sanctions;
- Accountability through court reviews and assignments;
- Substance use monitoring; and
- Meetings or check-ins with Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs), Guardians ad Litem (GALs) and Student Engagement Advocates.

Participation in the ACE Court Program is a voluntary commitment of approximately 8-12 months.

Community-in-Schools Partnership (La Plata Youth Services)

Program Mission – The Community-in-Schools Partnership (CISP) Program provides a community-based, collaborative early intervention/prevention response to students facing significant, adverse barriers to school attendance.

Project Description – The CISP program aims to prevent and respond to issues facing at-risk students. CISP has three overarching goals:

1) Working on improving and capitalizing on positive school climates. This is achieved through the implementation of Restorative Justice, and through trainings for teachers (trauma informed care etc.).
2) Providing services and support to students that present with externalizing behavior or are heavily involved with discipline in school. This is done primarily through in-school individual behavioral health (between 8 to 12 sessions) but also includes case consultation and advocacy.
3) Targeting at risk populations through specific groups including Youth of Color, Girls Circles and LGBTQ groups.

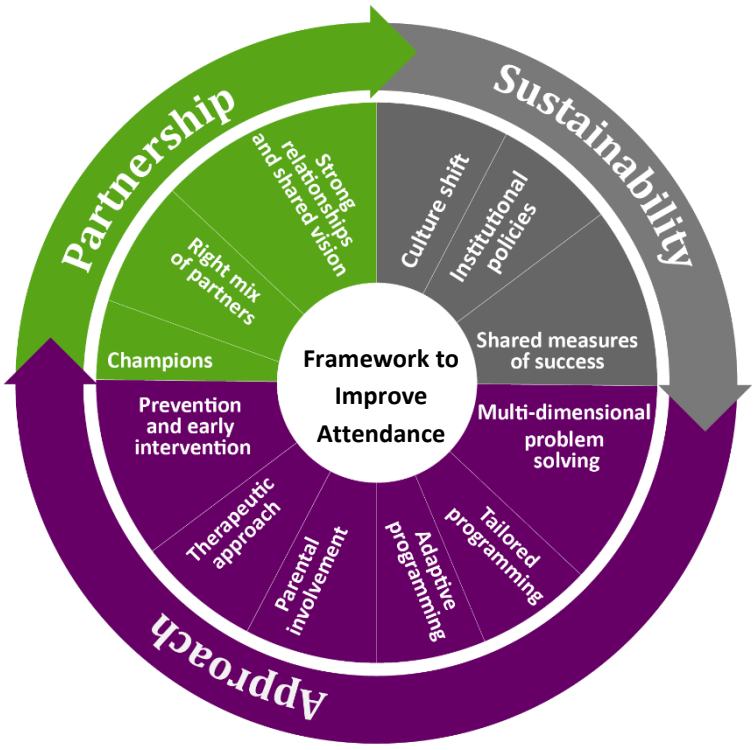
SECTION 1: REFLECTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Results from the evaluation can be used to inform and support future work around truancy prevention and early-intervention efforts. Based on the evaluative findings the evaluation team developed a collaborative framework to help align efforts to improve school attendance, and identified a set of recommendations for the JJDP Council's consideration.

A COLLABORATIVE FRAMEWORK TO IMPROVE SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

Pilot site evaluations and field-level interviews revealed the importance of three areas in building a collaborative framework to improve school attendance: 1) partnerships, 2) approach, and 3) sustainability. As illustrated in Figure 2, each area and its components builds on the other and are necessary to the success of the framework.

Figure 2. Collaborative Framework to Improve School Attendance



Partnership

The partnership area outlines the need to engage the right collection of partners and resources, establish strong relationships and a shared vision, and identify champions.

- **Right mix of partners:** Schools, the judicial system, child welfare, and community organizations and members all play an important role in truancy prevention and early intervention efforts. When the right partners are involved, they can pool and leverage their resources to respond in a coordinated way to youth and family needs.
- **Strong Relationships and Shared Vision:** Partners need to develop strong relationships and a shared vision, mission, and goals to guide their work. The vision can differ depending on the partners and settings, but it is important for all partners to be in alignment, be engaged and trust each other. Partners must also have mechanisms in place to facilitate open communication.
- **Champions.** Truancy prevention and early intervention efforts can benefit from identifying champions dedicated to advancing the work. Champions should be created at all levels – including judges, teachers, school administrators, and parents in order to disrupt the system's power structure and ensure inclusion of diverse perspectives.

Approach

The approach area discusses the core components needed when developing and implementing truancy prevention and early intervention programming, including the need for it to be adaptive and tailored, apply multi-dimensional problem solving, involve parents, and apply a therapeutic approach.

- **Prevention and early intervention:** Programs should focus both on 1) preventing truancy from occurring and 2) intervening once a student has been identified as truant. Ideally, intervention should occur early in a student's trajectory of school absenteeism.
- **Multi-dimensional problem solving:** Programs should create the space and structures (e.g., collaborative meetings) for diverse perspectives and disciplines to come together to develop an action plan that addresses the underlying factors that contribute to poor school attendance and meets the full range of youth and family needs (e.g., mental health, transportation, student engagement and achievement, family obligations, etc.).
- **Therapeutic approach[8]:** Programs should apply a youth-centered, problem-solving approach to promote positive behavior change through personal development. Therapeutic approaches can include restorative-focused practices, skill building, counseling, and multiple coordinated services.
- **Tailored programming:** Programs should provide an individualized, tailored approach for each student to achieve success. Program approaches should be tailored to improve student attendance by determining the barriers and motivations for each student.
- **Parental involvement:** Programs should meaningfully engage and include parents in the prevention and early-intervention processes, and provide the necessary resources to build their capacity to support their family.
- **Adaptive programming:** As programs are developed and implemented, partners' policies and practices should be altered, based on the population being served and the available community resources. As partners learn from each other and program participants, they should continue to adapt their program and accountability structures, processes, pool of resources, and ways of working together.

Sustainability

The sustainability area illustrates the components needed to formalize truancy prevention and early intervention efforts including establishing shared measures of success, supporting a culture shift, and encouraging the development of supportive institutional policies.

- **Shared measures of success:** Truancy prevention and early intervention programs, as well as the broader truancy field, need to define and establish measures of success. Partners must be mindful to build measurement systems that align with existing data systems and related state and national measures.
- **Culture shift:** Settings and partners need to shift the paradigm from a punitive nature to supporting positive behavioral outcomes. Training across systems at all levels is an important component of creating culture shifts.
- **Institutional policies:** Partners – including school districts, courts, and community organizations – should develop supportive organizational policies that remove barriers and enhance supports. Institutionalizing policies and practices can help facilitate program implementation and sustain work amidst staff turnover.

[8] Mark W. Lipsey et al. (2010). Improving the effectiveness of juvenile justice programs: A new perspective on evidence-based practice. Center for Juvenile Justice Reform.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Drawing on the pilot site and field-level perspectives, the Spark evaluation team identified the following set of recommendations for the JJDP Council to consider.

Truancy was routinely categorized as a low priority within the judicial system and in turn has been allocated minimal resources and structure. While there are varying opinions on the best structure to address truancy, currently, neither schools nor court systems are sufficiently structured or resourced to address this important issue. ***The Council has an opportunity to work with key stakeholders to identify what a well-resourced truancy structure looks like and how to engage and support necessary system players.***

Child Welfare involvement is lacking in current truancy prevention and intervention efforts; however, their involvement is critical to ensuring good outcomes for youth and families. Courts can trigger Child Welfare involvement, and timely court interventions can help prevent further penetration into the system. Moreover, Child Welfare involvement in the preventive stages would provide resources to youth to help them from entering court. ***The Council can provide support for creating a more formalized relationship between Child Welfare and truancy efforts.***

To effectively reduce truancy, there is a need to support prevention and early intervention-focused approaches. To advance these approaches, schools need better systems to track and identify students who are missing instructional time. ***The Council can help shift the paradigm of truancy prevention to one of missed instruction and, in turn, support strategies to: 1) adopt prevention-focused approaches, for example, strategies that help all youth remain engaged in school; 2) identify attendance problems early (e.g. elementary school); and 3) implement strategies to identify at-risk students and intervene before chronic absenteeism becomes an issue.***

Identifying habitually truant youth requires data. The data requirements placed on schools can have unintended consequences for truant youth. For example, to avoid having to report their data, schools may transfer habitually truant students to an alternative school or disenroll them. School policies can also lead to unintended consequences that exacerbate the number of unexcused absences. For instance, late assignment policies can lead to students skipping class because they feel as if they are too far behind to catch up. ***The Council could support an evaluation of school policies and practices to identify how policies directly or indirectly impact truancy and in turn identify potential changes.***

The Truancy System is used to refer to the network of systems (e.g. education, judicial, human services, community etc.) that are involved in meeting the needs of an at-risk student, habitually truant student, or a student at-risk of becoming habitually truant.

The need for more formalized collaboration among the schools, courts, Child Welfare and community organizations is not isolated to truancy. It is reflective of a larger challenge faced when addressing the needs of at-risk youth. Creating more formalized collaborative structures can promote systems-level change and institutionalize practices, making them sustainable. ***The Council can help the truancy system explore policy and practices shifts that promote sustainability, including creative strategies for funding.*** Truancy provides an opportunity to deploy small tests of change to see how collaboration can be formalized to improve system efficiency to meet youth and family needs.

SECTION 2: CONTEXT OF TRUANCY INTERVENTION & PREVENTION

Field-level interviews were conducted to better understand the context in which the truancy demonstration pilots are operating. The purpose of these interviews was to describe the evolution of truancy landscape and chronic absenteeism across the state. Seven individuals were interviewed, including perspectives from education, the court, human services, and school districts. The content of the interviews is reflected in this section, supplemented with written resources and organized by policies and practices, the role of the court, and opportunities and challenges in the current system.

COLORADO TRUANCY POLICIES AND PRACTICES

State-Level Policies

Colorado legislative changes between 2010 and 2013 created a policy framework that "moved the state away from strict, mandatory punishment to supportive discipline."[9] ***With regards to truancy, this shift in policy framework culminated with HB13-1021 which substantially amended the School Attendance Law originally passed in 1963.*** The bill placed more responsibility on schools to support habitually truant students and use court as a last resort. School districts are required to establish attendance procedures for identifying chronically absent students and to implement evidence-based practices to improve the student's attendance.[10] The legislative intent is to minimize a school district's use of court proceedings to compel a student or their parents to comply with attendance requirements and possibly use detention. ***When schools file in court on students, they are now required to illustrate, through written proof, the strategies and interventions they have employed to improve the student's attendance***.[11]

Most interviewees felt the policy progress in Colorado resulted in positive outcomes, however one interviewee noted:

> *While the state-level policy progress is a big win, it has not been marked by decreased absenteeism. Truancy filings have decreased, but this is not translating into better attendance in the school.*

What is clear is the ***legislative changes have placed truancy more in the control of schools and school districts.***

The State's Role

As the attendance landscape evolves, one interviewee suggested that the state sees its role as keeping the pressure on local school districts. ***Interviewees noted the state also needs to continue to provide information and coordination of efforts, so that by design and not chance, youth serving professionals are aware of best practices around truancy.*** One interviewee found that investment of additional resources alone is not sufficient. Rather, if the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) extends additional resources it must be mindful of attendance issues through the lenses of intervention, enrichment, and civic engagement, and create a formal structure aimed at curbing chronic absenteeism.

[9] The Office of Dropout Prevention and Student Re-engagement, Colorado Department of Education (CDE). (2017). 2015-16 State policy report: Dropout prevention and student engagement, p. 22. Retrieved from the CDE website https://www. cde.state.co.us/dropoutprevention/2015-16statepolicyondpse.
[10] Smith, Hillary. (2013). Memo: Overview of state law and recent legislation concerning truancy proceedings. Retrieved from the Colorado Legislative Council website https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/sites /default/files/13%20JuvDefOverviewofStateLawRecentLegislationConcerningTruancyCharges.pdf
[11] Ibid.

The National Dialogue: A number of national developments have influenced the dialogue on truancy in Colorado, including:

- *The ABCs of Dropout Prevention*, which established principles for dropout prevention and truancy reduction.
- Additional published research pointing to the negative impacts of using detention to address status offenses (including truancy) which has begun to create a shift in state's policies and practice.
- Development of early warning systems and student data trackers software, which increased schools' capability to understand students' attendance patterns and trajectories.

District-Level Policies and Practice

Interviewees found that when the state policy framework shifted the conversation from truancy to missed instruction, the burden of meeting student needs was placed on the school districts and schools. In Colorado, each school district is responsible for monitoring student attendance.[12] Under HB13-1021, if a student is habitually truant, the school district shall contact the local community service groups[13] to coordinate the creation of a multidisciplinary plan to improve student attendance.[14] ***A school cannot initiate court proceedings to compel attendance unless it has implemented the plan and the student continues to be habitually truant after plan implementation.***[15]

Compliance of District Level Policies and Practice

Colorado's compulsory attendance laws mandate certain school behavior as it relates to habitually truant students, however interviewees stressed that school districts are not penalized for non-compliance with attendance laws. Some interviewees noted that if school districts are not following the law, the state has no authority to enforce compliance. The responsibility to enforce falls on the locally elected school boards.

According to one interviewee, the Colorado Association of School Boards (CASB) is the most influential body in terms of developing and recommending policy at the local level. Part of their services includes providing sample policies (not best practice policies) to the schools to ensure they are in compliance with law. Districts often use schools' adoption of CASB policies as a reasonable standard to assess compliance with district policy. According to one interviewee, the district may not follow up to see if schools are correcting their attendance practices to meet compliance, rather the districts take adoption of polices as sufficient.

[12] CRS § 22-33-107(1).
[13] CRS § 22-33-107(3)(II).
[14] CRS § 22-33-107(3)(b).
[15] CRS § 22-33-108(5)(b).

ROLE OF THE COURT IN TRUANCY CASES

Currently, the role of truancy court is to force compliance, of both the student and parent if necessary. However, interviewees had divergent viewpoints on the intimidation factor of courts and the effectiveness of using court as a threat. In addition to using the intimidation power of courts interviewees noted that ***schools often utilize the power of the court to secure resources for a habitually truant student.*** According to one interviewee, using the court to engage Child Welfare can make the human services system feel misvalued. If involved earlier on in the process Child Welfare can provide resources to hopefully prevent a student from being filed on in court.

Beyond the intimidation factor and resources, one interviewee found the courts' value was in their ability to take the conflict between the school and student out of the school and look at the facts objectively.

While the court may have the ability to force compliance, secure resources, and look at the cases objectively, interviewees do not think it is structured to deal with truancy, which has a ripple effect across the truancy system.

Lack of Formalized Court Structure

Generally interviewees agreed it is crucial to prioritize and recognize truancy at the lowest level in court for the highest needs youth. A commitment to addressing truancy in the courts is largely dependent on the sitting judge or magistrate and their commitment to the issue and interest in securing necessary resources. Moreover, the lack of a formal structure leads to lengthy delays and minimal docket space. Several interviewees discussed how filing on a student is dictated by the availability of the court where docket space is allocated based on a weighted system.

More often than not there is a significant lag time between when the school district files on a student and when they appear in court, and this can range anywhere from four to six months depending on the judicial district. Further, one interviewee found that due to the general low priority of truancy, the magistrate or judge is often not prepped and in turn is unaware of past interventions and what is currently in place to support the youth, leading to duplicative and ineffective orders.

Some interviewees stressed that for schools who rely on the court as a lever in behavior change, the lag time and continuances lead to a sentiment among students that there is no real consequence for habitual truancy; instead they see it as an empty threat. Interviewees believe the limited docket space resulting from the lack of priority placed on truancy leads to an inability of schools to file on all the youth they need to and a perception that courts ultimately lack enforcement power. Additionally, one interviewee identified that limited docket space also results in a high-level of Child Welfare referrals from the court because schools are primarily filing on youth with the highest-needs.

Due to limited docket space, schools often only file cases with the highest needs, resulting in a negative feedback loop. These cases tend to require interventions beyond the school's capacity and as a result lead to Child Welfare involvement. According to one interviewee, this practice can give the impression that schools are filing in order to get Child Welfare resources. While interviewees noted

that schools file to compel Child Welfare involvement, it may be exacerbated by the fact that due to limited docket space the cases filed are those with the greatest needs.

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES IN THE CURRENT SYSTEM

According to interviewees, a critical component to meeting the needs of truant students is creating formalized structures for collaboration among truancy system partners. Interviewees also highlighted the importance of cultivating a shared vision and fostering information sharing across partners and disciplines.

Engagement of Key Partners in Addressing Truancy

Across interviewees there was a strong sentiment that the education system, the courts and the community (e.g. organizations, service providers, and members) all have a role to play in meeting the needs of truant youth. ***There is a noted desire for structure for collaboration among these partners, which stems from the current lack of a formalized structure.*** For example, one interviewee pointed out there is not a designated party to own a truancy case once it enters court. Some interviewees feel that because truancy has not been prioritized, the current infrastructure can only serve the function well when the right collection of leaders – individuals who can allocate resources and make binding decisions – are involved.

> *"In our isolated groups we talk about the root causes or context for behaviors but that does not always translate into juvenile justice (disproportionate contact for students of color or disability) but even more deeply there is a failure to recognize that juvenile court involvement is a manifestation of systemic failure."*
>
> – Education System Interviewee

Additionally, the truancy system is currently highly dependent on individuals' value systems and philosophies, which as one interviewee pointed out is another reason to have the individuals with resources involved in decision making. These stakeholders include the magistrate or judge, the primary school administrator, and agencies that provide services such as Child Welfare and Mental Health Centers.

Interviewees highlighted the informality of service provider involvement in truancy prevention. ***Often service providers' involvement is voluntary, which creates a high degree of variability around what organizations and agencies are engaged to meet a truant student's needs and the reliability of their commitment.***

For example, one interviewee noted schools have strong relationships with Child Welfare when it comes to dropout prevention but not around truancy. There are no mandates that Child Welfare be involved in decision-making when multidisciplinary plans are created for a habitually truant student.[16] Another interviewee stressed that the benefit of Child Welfare involvement runs along a continuum ranging from early-intervention to being brought into a case by court order. Their involvement early-on must be done through a concrete request because the Department of Human

[16] An example of where this shift in partnership between Child Welfare and education occurs is for foster youth, where there have been substantial efforts to work together primarily pushed by the need.

Services (DHS) does not have the capacity to place a representative at every implementation plan meeting. Moreover, the variability across schools and DHS personnel creates very tangible logistical challenges.

Other voices missing from critical conversations on truancy efforts include the classroom teacher and the community at large. Interviewees discussed the role of classroom teachers who often identify the issue, but do not always have a role in following up because such a task often falls on the counselor or attendance staffer. Diverting duties to the counselor or attendance staffer is primarily for practical reasons but then when there is a group conversation on what it will take to incentivize a youth's attendance the voice of the teacher is often missing.

Some interviewees find that another critical voice – community voice – is often missing due to lack of a formalized structures. Community includes both community-based organizations or service providers and members of the community. In school districts where prevention and intervention lead to positive results for students, there is a high degree of community involvement.

However, according to interviewees, truancy is thought of as a community issue until it comes to solving it. Community involvement looks different in each district. One interviewee noted that the right community partners can depend on factors behind non-attendance. For example, if students are skipping class and hanging out at bodegas, the bodega owners would be critical community members to involve. While there are mandates placed on school districts as it relates to truant students, there is a lack of a formalized collaborative structure around truancy in the community for school districts to rely on.

Many see the parent or guardian as the individual who should bear the bulk of the responsibility for truant youth. Interviewees noted that when a parent owns the process often the outcome for the student shifts for the better. That said, interviewees stressed that ***for parents to be a partner, school personnel must let go of biases and recognize that lack of parental engagement is typically due to either a cultural difference or lack of a necessary soft skill*** (e.g. homework support, discipline guidance). One interviewee noted that cultural differences may lead to differing viewpoints on the role of educators in meeting a student's needs. Another interviewee mentioned that while important, education may not be the first priority in a family, and if families lack the skills to engage their youth or ability to do so, educators must provide help. Overall, interviewees identified the parent as a critical partner, but families may need support to serve as a partner and the school, in turn, needs the necessary resources to provide such support to families.

Need for a Shared Vision to Address Truancy

Field-level interviews reveal a need for a shared vision to address truancy. Interviewees views of truancy solutions ranged from needing courts and the threat of punishment to change behavior, to the view that truancy does not have a place in court and instead is an education system issue. Educating individuals across the truancy system on realistic expectations is critical to fostering a more collaborative environment.

Additionally, one interviewee thought the first step to creating a shared vision would be to ensure there is a shared definition of truancy and an understanding of the mandates placed on the different

systems involved in addressing truancy. Interviewees also stressed that a tension emerges when the definition of success is not in line with what a school is held accountable, for example attendance.

Shared goals and a shared vision are integral to creating a collaborative truancy prevention structure and aid in effectively partnering across the numerous organizations and individuals that touch truant youth. One interviewee referenced *The Colorado Statewide Youth Development Plan*,[17] created by the Colorado Office of Children Youth and Families, Division of Child Welfare that is updated biennially. The *Plan* seeks to establish a shared vision across agencies and outlines how decisions should be made related to Colorado youth. Despite publication of the *Plan* and an iteration of policies to support it, one interviewee noted that implementing the practices outlined in the Plan to address youth-related barriers has been difficult. Interviewees found there is still a need to better define what implementation of prescribed practices at the community level looks like.

The Need for Information Sharing and Data

Overall, interviewees agreed that data tracking related to school attendance needs to be restructured in order to inform action. As one interviewee put it, ***"the attendance data collection practices that are in place currently tell the story of which schools have better truancy practices, not which schools have better attendance practices."*** Said another way, schools have data on truant youth and intervening strategies, but lack data on why a school has high-attendance. Collecting data on an at-risk student who is not truant may allow schools to better understand what prevents some at-risk students from becoming habitually truant.

At a more tactical level, ***two main issues related to data emerged: 1) the need to shift the paradigm to missed instruction in order to get an accurate picture of at-risk students; and 2) a lack of demographic data to inform potentially inequitable practices.***

First, preventing habitual truancy requires early intervention when youth are missing more than 10% of instruction in a school year. According to some interviewees, the problem with a targeted intervention approach is altering historical practices. ***Most schools do not track excused absences as truancy prediction points.*** More often than not the standard practice for absences at the elementary level is to call a student's parent, and if the parent provides an explanation the absence is considered excused. One interviewee highlighted their concern around tracking missed instruction by saying, "excused or not, the absence should be considered as missed instruction."

Second, interviewees identified a lack of demographic truancy data. ***Currently, there is no requirement to track truancy at a demographic level (e.g. race, free and reduced lunch, etc.).*** Tracking demographic data is important because it allows for identification of discrepancies in treatment or interventions and can inform subsequent adjustment of policies and practices. Some interviewees stressed that disaggregating data to tell a more holistic picture may lead to a more strategic allocation of resources by isolating where equitable intervention points are.

Not as frequently mentioned, but still touched on, was information sharing across state and county agencies. The information a school can receive from Child Welfare and vice versa, is limited and must

[17] Retrieved from Colorado Department of Human Services website: https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/cdhs/publications-reports

be formally requested. For example, for a school to acquire data on a youth from Child Welfare, the parent must sign a disclosure agreement.

According to interviewees, information sharing is critical because truant students are often involved in multiple systems and these systems must be in communication in order to effectively respond to the youth's needs. One interviewee noted that the lack of information sharing and data on truant youth is preventing the truancy system from fully understanding the population they are seeking to serve. Some interviewees found that in order to create a culture of information sharing, building the infrastructure to do so requires an intentional framework outlining the type of information wanted and how the information would be used.

Challenges and Catalysts to Creating Shared Vision and Sharing Data and Information

Table 2 below reflects additional factors that emerged across interviewees which are sometimes both challenges and catalysts.

Table 2. Challenges and catalysts to a shared vision, and information and data

Factor	Catalyst	Challenge
Resources/ Capacity	• Community resources in schools to meet student needs. • Access to onsite mental health providers and the increased relationship with mental health centers.	• Missing critical partners in the decision making process. • Competing priorities based on what schools are held accountable for and who schools are held accountable to.
Communication	• Players are working together to meet the needs of habitually truant students – not solely when a specific student presents a need – to collectively improve the truancy system.	• Schools can feel left out of the loop after a student enters the court system which prevents them from meeting the student's needs at school. • Divergent definitions of success for a student and a failure to level-set.
Educational Stability	• Districts and schools actively tracking missed instruction and intervening accordingly.	• Processes that add to students' educational instability by taking them out of the classroom.
Cultural Values	• Alternative programs including online classes that allow students to balance school and family commitments. • Training staff in cultural competency.	• A lack of listening across cultures to understand how divergent core values may lead to absences. • Different expectations of teachers and parents and a failure to articulate these expectations. • Biases can lead to blanket statements and assumptions about a student's absences.

SECTION 3: TRUANCY DEMONSTRATION PILOT PROGRAMS

The LRHN Committee supported the 1st, 16th, 18th, Judicial Districts, and La Plata County in their grant process for funds to implement or expand on existing programs aimed at truancy. The three judicial districts created Truancy Problem Solving Court (TPSC) models and received Colorado Juvenile Accountability Block Grant (JABG) funds over the course of three years running from May 2014 – May 2017. The prevention pilot in La Plata County created a Community-In-Schools Partnership Program (CISP) and received Title II, Formula Grant funds from January 2014 - January 2017.

Mission Statement – The 1st Judicial District STEP Court was a specialized, collaborative court that sought to improve attendance by identifying barriers to education and providing assistance to empower students and families to overcome those challenges.

Population Served – STEP served Jefferson County Public Schools (JeffCo) students ages 12 - 16, who were at high risk of not graduating high school, and had been adjudicated as habitually truant.

Pilot Site Description – JeffCo Public Schools is the largest public school district in Colorado with approximately 87,000 students.

Project Description – The STEP Court was a voluntary program that took, 6-9 months to complete. The program was overseen by a multidisciplinary group called the STEP Team. At the beginning of each STEP, every student in conjunction with school staff, the STEP Court Coordinator, parents, and other involved professionals met and created a STEP'ing Up Plan. The STEP'ing Up Plan was an individualized plan that sets forth the requirements that a student must satisfy in order to STEP Up to the next STEP. The STEP'ing Up Plan addresses mental health treatment, substance abuse treatment, sobriety monitoring, and attendance goals.

SPECIALIZED TRUANCY ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM COURT (1ST JUDICIAL DISTRICT)

Five partners associated with the Specialized Truancy Engagement Program (STEP) Court in the 1st Judicial District were interviewed between February and May 2017 to gain insights from their diverse perspectives on the design and implementation of the pilot program including overall achievements and lessons learned.

Key Partnerships and Stakeholders

A key accomplishment of the STEP Court pilot program was strengthening existing organizational relationships to increase collaboration across the agencies that interact with truant youth and their families. ***Throughout the 1st Judicial District, pilot project relationships were deepened*** between the 1st JD magistrate and staff, the District Attorney's Office lawyers and staff, Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) representatives, Jefferson Center for Mental Health staff, and Department of Human Services Division of Child Welfare staff. An additional partner was the Jefferson County Public Schools. The individuals from these agencies worked together to broaden how they work within the court system to address truancy and leveraged their collective expertise and resources to address issues affecting truant youth and their families. In working with the youth and their families to identify the issues that contributed to truancy, interview participants noted that examples of "incremental, positive progress" were experienced by both youth and families in the pilot program.

Each of the partners brought different experiences, resources, and organizational

Increased communication and collaboration with partners outside the justice system led to a more efficient use of appropriate resources.

roles to the pilot project. For example, CASAs focused on the best interest of the youth and how they can support that work. Child Welfare staff monitored cases for evidence of neglect or abuse, and supported strategies to ameliorate issues before they became causes for filing legal cases. This was an important role, as the team of partners was trying to tackle priority issues with the youth and their families to reduce the likelihood that neglect/abuse cases would arise in the long run. The partnership between Child Welfare and the STEP Court deepened and increased understanding of roles in truancy prevention. An outcome was a decrease in orders from the court for Child Welfare interventions.

Interview participants identified a positive outcome of organizations proactively leveraging their services before cases escalated, requiring additional legal intervention.

The Jefferson Center for Mental Health was also highlighted as an important partner by the interview participants. They provided case review, mental health assessments, and services to support students and their families. The organizational approach of "how do I say yes" to support the truancy court provided a positive and open tone to discussions of how partners might share resources and streamline procedures. The

The pilot program partners worked to foster a culture of support for students and families.

Center leveraged their internal resources to hire a case manager for the pilot program after they identified the need for additional professionals to support youth and their families by conducting assessments and linking them to services. Also, the partnership with the magistrate resulted in an increased use of the Center's *CrossRoads Program* to provide assessments and services. Overall, the truancy court has an increased awareness of available community resources and strengthened relationships with community partners.

Jefferson Center for Mental Health *CrossRoads* Program

CrossRoads provides mental health and substance abuse programming to underserved at-risk youth ages 10-18 who live in Jefferson, Gilpin or Clear Creek County. It is designed for youth with mental health needs, who may also have an accompanying substance abuse issue. It provides youth and their families with professional support and structure in a safe and welcoming setting with easy access to services.

Source: http://theroad4youth.org/services/crossroads/

Loss of a Key Partner

While deepened and collaborative relationships are an accomplishment, they can also be framed as a challenge or barrier of the pilot program. Interviewees noted that creating and maintaining relationships across the various agencies was very time intensive and relied upon having consistent staff members and representatives participating in the court to create historical knowledge and shared beliefs. However, it is not uncommon for staff members and representatives to change over time due to reassignment and general turnover. Interviewees stressed the

difficulty of keeping all parties involved in the case management of truant youth and their families, and identified the need to create a shared vision and goals that are then integrated into the organizations rather than resting with one individual staff member. In addition, there was a concern that not all non-traditional partners felt comfortable and open to speak up or pushback against instances that arose within the court setting.

Interviewees noted that the most difficult aspect of the pilot program's implementation and subsequent closure was the loss of representatives from the Jefferson County Public School district. Without a committed school partner, the STEP Court pilot program could not proceed as designed. The original school representative was "in the trenches" of the truancy work at Jefferson County Public Schools. With their involvement in the pilot, their perspective changed from focusing on punitive approaches to approaching the truancy cases with a supportive, research-informed approach. However, this valuable perspective was lost when district leadership reassigned the representative.

A lack of clear communication and a shared vision created disconnect among the partners ultimately resulting in the pilot program's early end.

The collaboration with Jefferson County Public Schools ended in the second year of the pilot program. The other collaborating partners continued to provide support and services for those students and families that were already in the court program for the remainder of the pilot.

Creating a Shared Vision and Goals

Within the STEP Court pilot program, most of the partners shared the belief that truancy is a symptom of more chronic root causes of instability and needs of youth and families. Therefore, the partners focused their work to support healthy families and positive outcomes through coordination of their services.

"It is small thinking when you think your only stick is jail. The truancy case managers are frustrated but thinking that threats and punishment leads to modified behavior leads to change is simply false. There is a carrot and a stick but the stick does not need to be jail."

This shared focus on supporting positive outcomes, rather than punishment, is a cultural shift in how truancy is conceptualized and influenced how partners reviewed and discussed each truancy case. Truancy court processes traditionally make prescriptive, punishment-oriented requirements of the youth and their families. The partners in the pilot considered this approach ineffective and were interested in exploring alternative processes for supporting truancy. Partners reshaped how they thought about each truancy case and tailored the use of incentives, sanctions, and services to the individual student and their family. One interviewee highlighted that truancy court cases are civil, not criminal cases. Therefore, the approach should be about ameliorating the conditions that cause truancy and not about consequences as if the behaviors were criminal or delinquent.

The partners saw the need for a shared vision with accountability for students and their families that progressed towards positive action, rather than using punishment and detention as tools for compliance. However, the approach to do this was not clear and consistent across the partners. The pilot sites were provided with some training from subject matter experts, but interviewees indicated this did not provide clarity.

Interviewees also suggested the need for a values champion to lead the work and hold everyone accountable. In addition, there was a staff change within partners in the second year of the pilot, and there was no discussion of values when onboarding new partners – possibly causing a disconnect in priorities.

Program Development

Interviewees noted the STEP program was developed around the courts and not the schools, which arguably contributed to its closure. The grant was technically offered to the judicial district and not the schools.

The program includes a scoring system for students to qualify for STEP court and this was often not followed. Students who qualified would not enter the program and students who did not qualify would be pulled in, often at the discretion of the courts. Some felt this discretion produced an inconsistent measure for program entrance and outcomes. This concern was present from the start of the program when STEP court developed policies and procedures that set forth the eligibility criteria for participation in the program – students could participate in the program through a judicial override. After adoption of the policies and procedures some stakeholders objected to the judicial override process and asserted the magistrate was violating the Court's policies and procedures.

There was a sentiment from some interviewees that the pilot program was created around the court not the school, potentially causing tension in program execution.

In addition to discrepancies in program entrance, once a student was engaged in the program, there were unclear steps and guidance on how to progress in the program. This was also designed within the court and did not include school representation, suggesting a misalignment in the attainability of program progression and completion.

Where the STEP court saw success was in uncovering and addressing the root causes of truancy. For example, ***the Court "went to very great lengths to understand a family, which is not typically done in a court setting."*** Court hearings often incorporated consultations from mental health providers and examined things such as mental health in the parents, home drug use, and other circumstances such as food and clothing access. This approach highlighted the systematic layers that contributed to truancy and in turn allowed for services to be provided to families with higher needs in a fast manner, such as individual and family therapy, medication, and case management in a holistic approach.

Defining Successful Outcomes

With the limited implementation of this pilot due to the loss of the Jefferson County Public School partnership, it was difficult to identify shared outcomes, especially at the system-level. Importantly, the lack of outcome tracking contributed to the closure of the

program because it was not clear if truancy was being positively addressed.

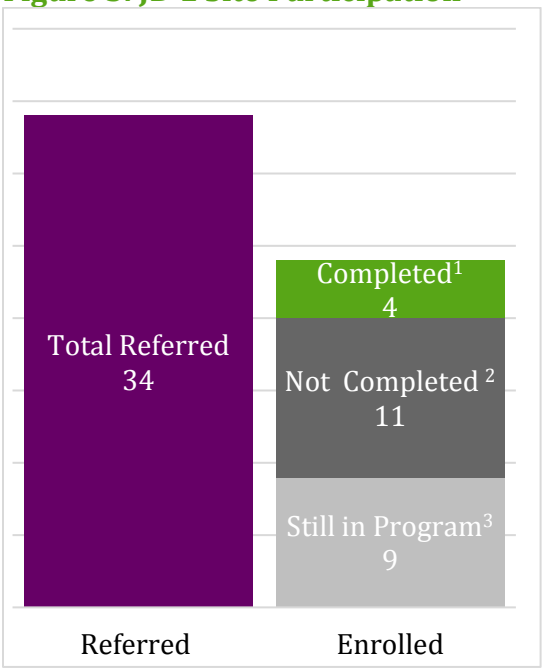
Divergent definitions of success made it difficult to agree upon and track shared outcomes.

Some of the interview participants felt success was about "doing things differently in how they supported youth and their families" in addition to the individual students and families meeting program participation and attendance benchmarks. But it was difficult to agree upon specific metrics to track across different agencies, as each agency monitored their own metrics that they are held accountable for by state and federal funders.

Appendix B outlines what data was collected by JD 1. Interviewees noted it is important to share with the field how the four pilots reflected best practices and identified positive outcomes for youth and families.

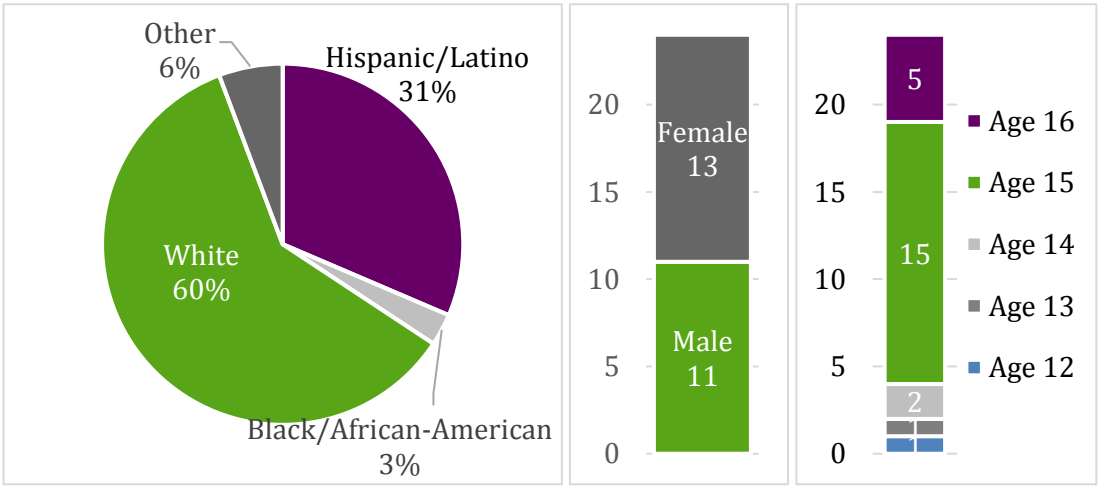
The following figures and table illustrate data collected with the STEP court, with a reporting period of October 2014 to May 2016. Figure 3 shows participation numbers, including referrals and program completion. Figure 4 outlines the site demographics, including race/ethnicity, gender, and age. Table 3 includes data on school attendance and cases filed.

Figure 3. JD 1 Site Participation



[1] Successfully completed all STEPs and graduated from program or satisfied all requirements and were discharged.
[2] This number reflects students that the Court terminated involuntarily and students who chose to voluntarily terminate.
[3] Number of students who were in STEP Court when it dissolved.

Figure 4. JD 1 Participant Demographics*



*Two students declined to answer.

Table 3. JD 1 Participant Outcomes

Outcomes	Number (Percent)
Improved school attendance*	4 (16.7%)
Charges or cases filed	
A new truancy filing	4 (16.7%)

*Number is reflective of those who completed or graduated from the program.

Challenges

The 1st Judicial District's challenges ultimately led to the erosion of the pilot program. Arguably, the greatest source of challenges was associated with partnerships, including turnover of key partners and a lack of clear and consistent program policies. The integration of multiple system viewpoints created difficulties when identifying shared outcomes and defining success. Further, placing the program in the court may have led to caution by non-traditional partners for fear of speaking out and in turn a misalignment between partners may have been exacerbated.

Lessons Learned

A key lessons identified by interviewees was that building trusting and supportive relationships across agencies and organizations takes time and must be continuously supported. Lines of communication must be established and frequently used to communicate not only about individual cases but the program overall and its vision.

Additionally, agency directors and key staff need to act as catalysts, proactively aligning their organizations' staff expertise and resources with the goals of the pilot program.

Interviewees emphasized that each agency's director decides which staff members are assigned to truancy court. How those decisions were made played a key role in the pilot program's success and failure.

Interviewees noted the need to involve more than a few individuals from each agency to create institutional support and memory for the work. Additionally, "vetting" who is involved is important to determine if they are truly committed to the goals of the truancy approach versus it being a work assignment.

As noted earlier, relationships with professionals across the entire truancy justice system must be nurtured because those same individuals frequently intersect on cases throughout the justice and child welfare systems. ***Interviewees emphasized that the more partner staff members aligned how they approach working with youth and families in their organizations, the more coordinated and collaborative the work can be.*** Alignment also serves as a catalyst to efficient use of shared resources across the entire system.

Despite the failure of this pilot to sustain positive relationships across all key partners, interviewees noted they would continue to support the collaborative work and continue to foster newly formed relationships.

Mission Statement – The MAP Program is designed to MOTIVATE youth to ACHIEVE high attendance and academic performance in school and bring out the POWER to thrive not only in school but in everyday life.

Population Served – MAP served elementary to high school students in Bent, Crowley, and Otero Counties for whom an Order to Compel Attendance has been entered.

Pilot Site Description – The 16th judicial district comprises three rural southeast Colorado counties. There are nine school districts and 20 schools.

Project Description – The MAP Program is a mandatory program designed to last 6-12 months for program participants. The program is divided into four phases called the Four C's: Choice, Challenge, Change, and Courage. Emphasis is placed on school attendance, academic achievement according to ability, and appropriate conduct. Referrals are made to services based on assessment results. Youth move through each phase via a point system, tracked through a point register. A points list explains how participants earn or lose points. Points are monitored on a weekly basis by the youth, the case manager, and parent/guardian. A specific number of points (tied to specified outcomes) must be accumulated prior to moving to the next phase and ultimately graduation.

MOTIVATION, ACHIEVEMENT, AND POWER PROGRAM (16TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT)

Seven partners associated with the Motivation, Achievement, and Power (MAP) Program in the 16th Judicial District were interviewed between February and May 2017, to gain insights from their diverse perspectives on the design and implementation of the pilot program, including overall achievements and lessons learned.

Key Partnerships and Stakeholders

As a result of the pilot program, interviewees highlighted the increased involvement of different officers of the court systems and other agency partners. Partners at the table include the South East Health Group, primary care providers, peer support groups, Colorado Youth Connect, school staff, Child Welfare, the judge, probation officers, SB 94 staff, MAP staff, Interagency Oversight Group (IOG), Otero County Human Services, caseworkers, and the Guardian ad Litem (GAL).

Highlighted by interviewees many times as ***one of the contributing factors of success in the program was the pooling of resources in a rural area through both formal and informal partnerships.*** Students were shared among surrounding districts, which equated to larger partnerships and more sharing of ideas. This brought an increased amount of perspectives and resources to the table and collaborative learning; essentially all of the resources available in the Valley were represented at the table.

In addition, interviewees indicated they are a successful partnership because of their strengths-based attitude. They consistently help the families in the program identify positive aspects in the student's life to focus on

and build upon versus only focusing on negative behaviors.

The rural context encouraged partnerships aimed at sharing and maximizing resources, and partners deployed a strengths-based attitude.

From the beginning of the pilot to today, the cooperation and communication among partners has increased tremendously. ***Communicating effectively was critical to the pilot's success***. This allowed a trust to grow between agencies, which in turn built program support. There is a great deal of respect for one another, open communication, and a culture of stepping up to help out.

Another key piece to the successful relationship is how well everyone knows each other in the program. Because it is a small community, many of the staff have known each other for decades. Moreover, the staff may also know the families in the program. This, however, could also be a potential detriment. As a few interviewees noted, outsiders to both the program staff and those being served by the program may face a lack of trust or a culture that prohibits all voices from being readily heard.

Interviewees discussed the impact of some of the partnerships. For example, before the implementation of the MAP program, there was little involvement from Child Welfare in truancy cases. The MAP program was designed to include their involvement which allowed them to be proactive in preventing cases from being referred to them later.

Child Welfare has limited capacity to address changing the environment for students, such as having not enough foster parents, no group home available, and general financial restrictions. A suggested improvement from an interview is to have Child Welfare follow up with the MAP committee once a student gets referred out to them.

Similar to the importance of Child Welfare was the importance of case managers. Interviewees noted that because of them, there is increased rapport with the judge, relationships with students, and more contact with families. Despite the high-degree of case manager turnover interviewees highlighted the need for a consistent presence in this role.

Creating a Shared Vision and Goals

Interview participants noted that a shared vision was established early on and was critical to engaging stakeholders and ensuring everyone was on board. It was based on the truancy court vision, *"Empowering Students to Thrive"* already established nine years prior that was not fully successful but helped lay the foundation to build the pilot project on. For example, some schools were already involved in this process, but there was no money or time designated to invest in developing a process.

A shared vision and goals are integral to successful collaboration and seeing positive results helps generate continued buy-in.

At the beginning of the pilot program, there was a stakeholder meeting with executive leadership called a Steering Committee where plans for the program were discussed and further developed. Stakeholder input was gathered and the plans subsequently revised. There was a lengthy vision statement that was tweaked as the work progressed. Now a smaller program review committee meets at the end of every school year to evaluate the

program, which includes the judge, case manager, supervisor, chief probation officer, GAL, SB 94 coordinator, and a school representative. The overall goals of the program have remained relatively the same. Seeing positive results from partners and the program helped unify the shared vision.

Program Components

The successful system surrounding the pilot program includes how MAP speaks with schools about how to do truancy prevention and then how to refer a student to court, without the use of an attorney.

Once a student was in the program, the process is very clear for how to move through the four different phases to graduate, which is based on a point system. ***The process to create this system was very iterative and constantly refined as the MAP committee learned along the way***. For example, the program was started without clear sanctions in place. Along the way, clearer sanctions were developed and refined and given to students when they started the program, so they knew what results their behavior would yield. They also originally started the program without a point system in place. This was added at about one year into the program as a way for students and parents to know how to progress through the program.

The MAP Committee's adaptability has allowed to program to shift to meet the needs of students and their families.

Another important component of the MAP program is the MAP Team Staffings. ***The Team Staffings meetings occur before court and are considered by some interviewees as essential to the program's success.*** Typically the Team Staffings are one hour and focus on discussing the progression and plans of, on average, 10 students. The Team Staffings is comprised of the partners discussed above and continues to grow as services are needed.

Interview participants highlighted the positive reinforcement developed in the program. For example, students get to spin a wheel for a chance to win behavior reinforcement items (e.g. prizes) if they met their goals. If they have not been absent or tardy or if their grades go up, they have an opportunity to win gift cards, to take a photo at the judge's post, or win smaller prizes. If they graduate the program, they receive a tablet.

The MAP program has led to an increase in positive outcomes for students and their families.

Interviewees also discussed that the pilot program gives "teeth" to what they needed and was able to "makes consequences real." For example, in extreme cases parents have been placed in contempt and sent to jail. This approach helps enforce that the consequences are real. There have not been any unsuccessful students in the program. Students have aged out or moved out of the jurisdiction prior to program completion.

Interviewees also highlighted the importance of employing motivational interviewing in the program to allow them to get to know the students and to encourage the students to change within themselves.

But one of the biggest problems with motivational interviewing is a lack of sincere parental engagement. Interviewees indicated they perceive the parents to feel it is the MAP program's responsibility to fix their youth's behavior and the parents do not have the tools/motivation needed to intervene. When there are extreme cases of parental

disengagement, the Court has cited parents for contempt, and sent four parents to jail. Short of trying to use reinforcements for the desired behavior, there are not a lot of things that can be done to force parents' participation.

Positive Programming

In addition to the positive reinforcement aspect of the program, interview participants discussed the positivity generated by the pilot program, specifically the positive feelings produced by students and parents involved in the program. There was a drastic change in the view of truancy court. ***Before the pilot program, truancy court was viewed by some as negative and punitive, now it is seen as a positive by the schools and community***. For example, the program praises the good behavior of students compared to only discussing the negative.

Data indicates there are few repeats in the program, and detention rates have dropped since introducing the new format. Interview participants provided many case study examples of students who have been truant for years, and once they entered the MAP program they turned their lives around entirely, including getting As and Bs in school and graduating from high school.

Moreover, there have been increased relationships between students and their families with the program staff and teachers, resulting in a feeling of "there are no strangers in the courtroom." Teachers and principals even attend the students' graduation in court.

Systems at Play

The justice, education, and community systems all contribute to both supports and barriers of truancy prevention and more specifically the impact of the MAP program.

Justice System

The Judge overseeing the truancy docket is very involved in the work and is considered a facilitator of the program. ***The justice system itself is seen as a support for the pilot program because those working in it care about the youth.*** In addition, the rest of the partners are seen as a catalyst for the work. The use of motivational interviewing, the ability to administer drug tests, and the student assessment process were also discussed as tremendous strengths in the justice system.

Some interviewees highlighted that the MAP program can be the only option to deter negative behaviors. "I hate to say this too loud, but Pueblo Youth Corrections/Detention has a place." Students know it is out there and that helps alter their behavior and attendance. However, once detention is used, the students sometimes realize it is not that bad, and the power of it is completely gone. Utilizing the court can also create a bottleneck effect in the court. Filing a student in contempt can delay everything for three to four weeks, and schools can only bring a habitually truant student to court every three weeks due to limited docket space.

The complexity of the systems involved and multitude of actors across systems contribute to both positive and negative truancy prevention outcomes.

Education System

The education administration and teachers involved in this work tend to be very involved and passionate. Teachers engage with the students and report to the MAP program on their behalf (such as reporting grades, absences, and tardies). It is often viewed as an "all hands on deck" project.

However, the way the system is currently structured, attending truancy court requires pulling teachers and students out of the classroom, and it adds more workload to already stretched teachers.

Filing on a student is also a financial- and time-intensive process. Interviewees discussed how schools can become burned out with the process and tend to give up with older students and focus their efforts on younger ones. Some school districts also outright refuse to pilot the work because of either long distances between the courts and the school, a perceived non-existent truancy problem, or lack of buy-in by staff.

In addition, the school system itself is often slow to change and making the culture change needed to accept truancy prevention programs has been difficult.

More broadly speaking, there is lack of available mental health care for social and emotional issues in the schools.

Community System

Many community based organizations and agencies are peripherally involved in and support the MAP program through engaging with students in some manner. Many businesses partake in Useful Public Services, which allows the students to fulfill a community engagement requirement. This includes helping out at the animal shelter, cleaning the courthouse, or working at the library.

Additional funding to increase staff capacity is critical to program sustainability and expansion.

A positive unintended outcome of the MAP program includes the recreation department engaging students through sports. Interviewees indicated that the more involved a student is in activities and structure, the more likely the student will be successful in the program.

Community members also donate items for the program. However, there are gaps in the community such as no mentoring programs, walk-in counseling services, and alternative school options like job core or a military recruiter. They are a small community and are often maxed out on capacity in programming.

Some interviewees discussed the difficulty they encountered when trying to change the community's value of education. They indicated there are different types of culture involved not based on race or creed. For example, there is a drug culture in the community and generational poverty. School is not seen as a priority in some families, and this has been discussed as almost impossible to change. The students that are very successful in the program are the ones who changed their values.

Sustainability and Expansion

Interviewees discussed what would be needed to sustain and grow the program. ***The most discussed need was programmatic funding to pay for staff and personnel and incentives and rewards for the students and their families.***

All of the other partners involved are doing this work on top of their regular job responsibilities; additional staff might be needed to ensure the work moves forward, particularly for program expansion. It was noted that Senate Bill 1451 and 94 have been great streams of money.

Another method to ensure sustainability is marketing and outreach. The judge

recommended this program to other judges and has written the processes of the pilot up, sharing it regularly with those interested. Original outreach of the program involved the judge traveling and talking to different school districts to get their buy-in. A similar process could be employed in expansion efforts. In general, interviewees indicated they need to do a better job publicizing the program and its successes to get more buy-in and financial support.

Defining Successful Outcomes

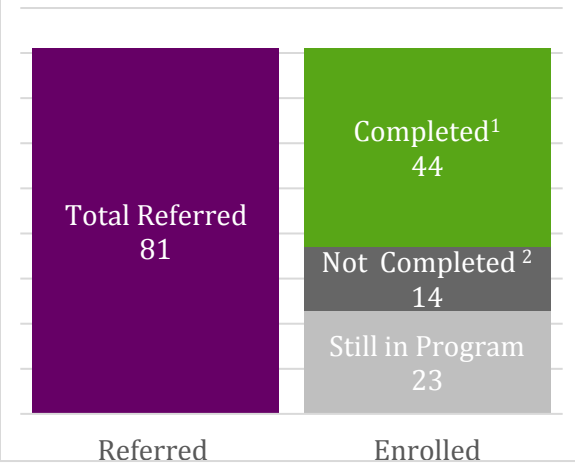
Interviewees noted a need and desire to define and measure program outcomes of students before and after enrollment in the program to demonstrate program success. Data that would be highly beneficial includes: 1) Attendance; 2) Attitudes; 3) Graduation rates; 4) Grades; 5) Time in program; 6) Number of students needing to access the program (and if this number goes down); 7) Reason for absence; 8) Student follow-up post program; and 9) Barriers to program completion.

As of right now, the MAP program is tracking and seeing positive results of students' attendance, grades, and behavioral issues. Detention rates have also dropped since the implementation of the program.

One thing MAP is retroactively calculating in the MAP's data system is the age of youth in the program.It was done based on an observation that a third of their youth are ten years old and younger. Appendix B highlights the data currently being collected by JD 16.

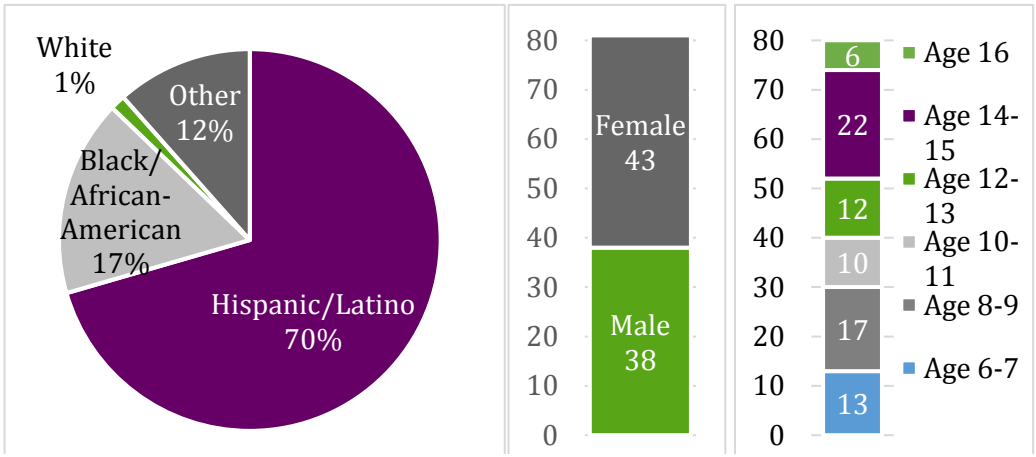
The following figures and table illustrate some of the data collected with the MAP court with a reporting period of August 18, 2014 – June 15, 2017. This includes those participating solely in the MAP program as well as those who began in the traditional truancy court format and finished through the MAP program. Figure 5 illustrates referrals and program completion. Figure 6 outlines participant demographics, including race/ethnicity, gender, and age. Table 4 includes data on school attendance and other outcomes.

Figure 5. JD 16 Site Participation



[1] Program completion is any student who successfully completed all MAP program requirements and did not age out or move prior to program completion.
[2] Those individuals who aged out prior to program completion or who moved from the area prior to program completion.

Figure 6. JD 16 Participant Demographics*



* Ethnicity data were available for 78 participants. Gender data were available for 81 participants. Age data were available for 80 participants.

Table 4. JD 16 Participant Outcomes

Participant Outcomes	Number (Percent)
Improved school attendance [1]	52/53 (98.1%)
Charges or cases filed [2]	
Truancy (within 120 days of completion)	1/37 (2.7%)
Delinquency or Criminal (within one year)	1/31 (3.2%)
Attendance rate first full 90 school days after completion [2]	
90% or greater	24/30 (80%)
80% or greater	4/30 (13.3%)
Use of Detention (FY13 baseline of 15%) [4]	
MAP Participants only (over three years)	2/63 (3.2%)
Students carried over from previous format (over three years)	3/18 (16.7%)
Overall use of detention (over three years)	5/81 (6.2%)
GPA at time of program completion [2]	
3.5 and above	4/38 (10.5%)
3.0 to 3.49	5/38 (13.2%)
2.5 to 2.99	12/38 (31.6%)
2.0 to 2.49	4/38 (10.5%)
1.99 or below	1/38 (2.6%)
Online or primary passing/satisfactory	12/38 (31.6%)
GPA at first full grading period after program completion [3]	
3.5 and above	5/33 (13.1%)
3.0 to 3.49	4/33 (10.5%)
2.5 to 2.99	5/33 (13.1%)
2.0 to 2.49	3/33 (7.9%)
1.99 or below	4/33 (10.5%)
Online or primary passing/satisfactory	12/33 (31.6%)

NOTE: Data does not include information on those who moved or aged out prior to program completion. There were 18 students who were carried over from the previous program format (6 of whom moved or aged out).
[1] Improved attendance defined as students who met any of the following criteria after 90 full days of program participation: received at least 10% or greater attendance increase over their baseline at program entry; online students who met the requirements set forth by the online school regarding the amount of work completed to successfully complete the program; or students having an initial baseline attendance of less than 90% but reached a 90% or higher attendance level while in the program. The student who did not reach the 90% goal received an attendance rate of 88%.
[2] Outcome data do not include those 1) who remain active and/or still have yet to reach the measurement point for this outcome; or 2) whose institutions do not calculate/report the metric.
[3] Reported for all 81 program participants.

Challenges

Outside of the anticipated challenges that arise from limited funding and resources in a rural district, the 16th Judicial District challenges primarily emerged from the existing infrastructure they are operating within. Interviewees outlined challenges in the justice system that ranged from very tactical – limited docket space, to strategic – hesitation by nontraditional partners to speak frankly with officers of the court. Interviewees indicated that education system challenges primarily centered on available staff capacity and the limited ability to engage in a student's reform. Interviewees identified a potentially more difficult challenge to overcome that is a perceived sense by some educators and schools that there is not a truancy problem.

Lessons Learned and Best Practices

Interview participants highlighted critical learnings to share with those interested in implementing a similar program. The following list highlights snapshots of lessons learned during the MAP program implementation.

- Celebrate the little victories along the way;
- Develop a strong relationship with the judge;
- Ensure the schools are on board;
- Develop local connections and relationships;
- Rewards are more successful than sanctions;
- Empower and support champions of the work;
- Review, reflect, and revise the program as it goes;
- Tailor the program to fit each student's unique needs; and
- Try, try again – if at first you do not succeed.

Mission Statement – The 18th judicial district Truancy Problem Solving Court honors and empowers families to reconnect truant students with school or other educational alternatives. It employs a holistic, problem solving, culturally-sensitive approach to foster educational success and create self-sufficient families.

Population Served – Academic Centered Empowerment (ACE) Court serves Aurora Public Schools (APS), which has the highest level of need in Arapahoe County. It is open to youth that qualify in the 3rd –10th grades.

Pilot Site Description – APS currently serves nearly 40,000 students with 61 total schools in the district.

Project Description – The Program has four phases, each with progressively more rigorous standards. It provides youth with the following tools:

- Incentives and sanctions;
- Accountability through court reviews and assignments;
- Substance use monitoring; and
- Meetings or check-ins with Court Appointed Special Advocates, Guardians ad Litem and Student Engagement Advocates.

Participation in the ACE Court Program is a voluntary commitment of approximately 8-12 months.

ACADEMIC CENTERED EMPOWERMENT COURT PROGRAM (18TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT)

Five partners associated with the Academic Centered Empowerment (ACE) Court Program in the 18th Judicial District were interviewed between February and May 2017 to gain insights from their diverse perspectives on the design and implementation of the pilot program, including overall achievements and lessons learned.

Key Partnerships and Stakeholders

Interview participants noted that each of the partners involved in the 18th Judicial District pilot program were committed, active participants. Building on prior personal and professional relationships, an open and trusted tone was created in the pilot program.

Partners in the ACE program included magistrates, Aurora Mental Health, Mile High Behavioral Health, the Juvenile Assessment Center (JAC), court appointed special advocates (CASAs), the guardian ad litem (GAL), Arapahoe Works, Aurora Police Department, school districts, and Child Welfare. Table 5 outlines the partner's roles and responsibilities within the pilot program.

An important aspect of the pilot was nearly constant communication between Aurora Public Schools (APS) and the 18th Judicial Court staff members. Interview participants noted that over the course of the three years of the pilot program, it was critical to identify not only the school principals as points-of-contact in APS, but to also include district administrators and school counselors in all

communication efforts. Interview participants noted this created a culture of "we are all in this together" by ensuring that many individuals at each school and across the school district were focusing on and supporting the goals of the pilot.

The staff members of the 18th Judicial Court developed the overall pilot program design with input from APS and other partners, including CASA representatives and Child Welfare staff. However, there was concern that non-traditional partners (including APS) may not always feel like they can pushback or speak up in the judicial setting, particularly in front of the judge.

Another integral piece of the pilot program was when the partners would convene prior to court. The partners would discuss each student together and come up with a care plan. The process was informal but very frank—an important piece as this does not occur in regular truancy court.

Increased communication and collaboration with partners outside the justice system led to a more efficient use of appropriate resources.

APS' approach to truancy evolved in the past three to five years, with leadership ready to "give up the reins of control" to test out supportive and positively-focused approaches. This cultural shift in how they approach delinquency focused on filing fewer cases of truancy by providing supports to ensure long-term progress. The attitude of APS leadership was "how can the truancy courts help us to achieve that?"

The cultural shift among partners and leveraging of resources across systems has allowed for more efficient service provision.

An aspect of the 18th District Court system that posed some difficulty for continuity of the pilot program was the turnover of staff involved in ACE court. There were three magistrates involved in the truancy court pilot program.

A lesson identified by interviewees was the need to be proactive in how best to balance the approach of the pilot partners with the comfort level and commitment of the magistrates.

Additionally, there was some turnover in the school staff and staff from the partner agencies across the three years. The program director worked to be adaptive in the pilot to integrate the perspectives of the magistrates and the incoming staff members.

In retrospect, the program needs to revisit having an Aurora police officer on the team. Their support was valuable, but intimidating. When the youth would come forward to court, it would make them nervous to talk openly. Police presence caused the youth to question why they were there and ask if they or their parents were going to get arrested (some of the parents had outstanding warrants). It is great, however, to have their input on the Committee for insights.

Table 5: JD 18 Partner Roles and Responsibilities

Partner	Role & Responsibilities
Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs)	Interviewees highlighted and stressed the importance of CASAs. CASAs spend a tremendous amount of time diligently engaging with students and families in the program and thereby develop personal relationships with students. For example, CASAs conduct home visits, visits at the school, and take the students on outings. Compared to the program set up prior to ACE court, and even compared with those in the program who do not get assigned a CASA due to lack of capacity, there is a noticeable difference in impact and outcome of the students. JD 18 is working to secure more CASAs, particularly male, to ensure everyone has access to this important piece of the program.
Case Managers	The 18th Judicial District pilot program has partnered with the University of Denver to provide internship opportunities for students to serve as case managers in ACE court. Interviewees indicated case managers are critical to maintaining communication with the agency staff members and school personnel to keep abreast of the youth and families, and to document the resources and services they are receiving. The case managers also work with community-based organizations to support the youth and their families through recreation and sports, academic tutoring, leadership and volunteer opportunities which serve as incentives, or as needed, sanctions.
Judges	Throughout the course of the ACE court pilot program, there were three different judges. Interview participants highlighted that while each of the three judges had different approaches to how they managed the truancy court cases, all three believed the role of the courts was to "do the best for the youth and their families." The magistrates ranged from conservative to moderate to liberal in their approaches to truancy. This past experience of the magistrates in concert with the pilot partners' value for truancy interventions allowed for minimal "onboarding" of the magistrates.
Child Welfare	The ACE court struggled to fully engage Child Welfare in the program, most likely due to their limited capacity. For example, once a case was assigned to Child Welfare, at times it took up to four months before services were rendered.

Creating a Shared Vision and Goals

Using shared experiences of some of the agencies and the 18th Judicial Court's staff members with adult problem-solving courts, the partners built off of the old truancy model to shape the vision and purpose for the pilot program. Specifically they took from the problem-solving court model the vision of bringing justice, education, and social services systems together to support positive behaviors, rather than using purely punitive approaches to truancy.

As a result, a primary goal of the ACE Court was to enable the students to get back on track in the education system through social and life skills support, in addition to academic resources, so they never saw a truancy court in the future. The partners did this through agreeing to work together and setting up norms for the group that included agreeing that everyone has a voice, taking turns on speaking, and believing there is no such thing as dumb ideas.

The shared vision was built upon the existing mantra of bringing justice, education, and social service systems together to support positive student behaviors.

Program Implementation and Participation

Interview participants emphasized the importance of conducting assessments on youth and families early in the truancy process as a key factor in streamlining services. The JAC provides important assessments of the student at the beginning of each case, and the community health partner Mile High Behavioral Health routinely conducts an assessment to identify mental health and trauma needs. The program at first was cumbersome because they did not do the student assessment until the student was in the ACE court. Now they do a pre-assessment to see if a student has a low, moderate, or high need. From that, as a team, they discuss how to move forward. At this screening point, they determine why the student is missing school and then what services are needed and who needs to be involved.

Adapting the program to meet the needs of the students contributed to the pilot program's success.

Interviewees noted the pilot program tried a variety of incentives and sanctions during the three years of the pilot, with varying success. Deciding how to track the quality and impact of these approaches was difficult, but all partners agreed to move away from detention as a sanction. ***The partners focused on new conceptualizations of sanctions and incentives that could be immediately applied to each situation that arose with an individual student and parent.*** For example, gift cards and access to recreational programs were incentives; and sanctions required volunteering within the school district or local community-based organizations. The students pulled from an incentive basket to get a round of applause, gift cards, or small toys like Slinkys, coloring books, or drawing journals. In addition, the way the court talked to students was more positive and encouraging. As a result of the practice changes, students would come into the court proud and happy.

Originally the pilot program used a handbook created by the program director that outlined four phases through which the program participants would transition. The intent of the handbook was not meant to be "one size

fits all" and was organized to identify services that would be most robust based on the grade-level or age of the students (middle school versus high school).

Interview participants noted adjusting the program's goals to reflect not just program compliance, attendance, and academic outcomes, but also to include social and life skills outcomes as critical. The "black and white approach" of compliance was not appropriate; rather the partners discussed needing to acknowledge the "gray areas" of truancy prevention. Not unlike approaches to mental health, interview participants emphasized taking an approach to working with the students and families that focused on current needs and leveraged services to support the whole family to make progress overtime.

Motivational Interviewing

Interview participants noted that use of motivational interview techniques was a particularly useful tool in the design of the ACE Court Program. Motivational interviewing promotes the identification of underlying issues that contribute to truancy, while recognizing incremental, positive behavioral actions. ***Shifting the focus and tone of the conversations between the youth, their families, and the representatives from the court and partner agencies was critical.*** The goal of the partners in the pilot was "getting to the heart of the matter" so that court sessions elicited the barriers leading to truancy and created trusting relationships between the youth, their families, and the agencies involved.

During the pilot program, the 18th District Court trained probation offices on motivational interviewing; the partners hope to expand the training to other members of the truancy court system through professional development activities with the GAL, CASA, and APS staff members. The goal is to create shared approaches that develop interpersonal interactions with youth and families across the system of agencies.

Parental Involvement

Interviewees discussed the important roles parents had within this process and the challenges associated with it. APS provided money for a counselor to talk to parents about child raising techniques. They hosted a six-week session, first in groups then individually. As a result, parents that became stronger advocates for the ACE court, and had a higher rate of success regarding their children graduating the program.

In addition, ACE court changed the program method by developing parent support advocates, which helped parents make meetings with schools after being referred to court and got them signed up and using resources.

The Systems at Play

The justice, education, and community systems all contribute to both supports and barriers of truancy prevention, and more specifically the impact of the ACE court. Interviewees discussed the positives and negatives of each of these systems.

Justice System

Interviewees emphasized the importance of recognizing that the truancy court system is just one piece of a larger system that can be leveraged to support youth and their families to be successful. The truancy court magistrates and staff members also recognized they have relatively limited resources and capacity to their current infrastructure. Truancy courts are not viewed as "dealing with serious issues" and thus do

not have personnel and resources that other parts of the court system have in place to focus on criminal cases. Typically, truancy justices are part-time with limited hours per week for the truancy docket.

An interviewee noted it is not unusual for youth to be in the truancy court system for one to three months before an assessment is ordered. This delays access to mental health, drug treatment, and trauma support services for youth and their families. In the future, the pilot partners would like to provide treatments for mental health and social service programs as early as possible in the truancy court process, thereby increasing the likelihood of supporting students to get back on a positive academic track.

The interviewees noted most legislators and policy makers are not going to focus on truancy when thinking about where to focus justice system monies. This makes educating them about the school-to-prison pipeline and best practices in juvenile justice difficult.

Truancy is a key element of subsequent criminogenic behavior. In a recent review of more than sixty drug recovery court cases in the 18th District, 100% of participants had truancy problems.

Truancy cases often have overlap with criminal cases and dependency and neglect cases. This serves as a barrier to securing resources through the truancy court because those cases take precedence over truancy. It would be better if all parties collaborated.

Lastly, interviewees discussed how the students in the program were, for the most part, disengaged, and missed a lot of school. By the time these students get to truancy court it is difficult to get them to trust the supports being offered. Coupled with this, the youth lacked the type of family support that one would hope for.

This was discussed in the context that at times, it felt like all they had was carrots and no sticks in the system. In drug court, if a student fails they go back to the original system. Here, sticks could be Arapahoe Works, or volunteering but that is not much "teeth," especially for the very difficult cases.

Education System

Sometimes the school system itself has red tape, regulations, and policies that prevent the work of the ACE court. For example, it is an ordeal to get CASAs volunteer badges and access to student data. As one interviewee noted, "how do you expect to come together if you keep information apart?" Filing on a student is also slow, burdensome, and costly to an already strapped school administration

As a result of the pilot, schools have become more likely to implement supports for factors contributing to truancy, rather than filing on students. However, school districts, especially smaller ones with less capacity, often do not have the time or trust to focus on interventions.

Capacity and resource limitations exist in each system for truancy prevention.

Many schools have internal processes for dealing with truancy, but for smaller districts the service referral criteria is not always met, most likely due to capacity issues. For example, truancy may be labeled as cultural differences or family struggles, and the underlying drivers are not fully unpacked. This results in referrals to ACE court without any interventions at the school level.

In addition, school districts often lose patience in general and feel interventions do not work, resulting in them referring students immediately to ACE court. This is not to say there have not been any changes in schools as it relates to filings. ***Interviewees discussed how they have seen less filing on contempts, and the schools are implementing more supports first because they are identifying the issues contributing to student's truancy.*** This is in part due to school attorneys becoming involved in the process and word of mouth among students about the program.

There is a huge opportunity to ensure teachers build relationships with students and are more integrated into truancy prevention processes. Students will come to school if there is a teacher there they trust. Teachers may not know where students come from, how they live, or the trauma they have experienced. Yet they have good insights on students and a critical connection that can be leveraged to build stronger relationships.

Teachers can reach out and take an interest in the student – ask why they were not at school and have the student start to share their life with the teacher. The teacher could then be part of the committee after the student becomes involved in ACE court.

Community System

Interviewees cite having great community partnerships with programs like Arapahoe Works, Aurora Mental Health, CASA community volunteers, and other community-based youth programs.

However, there is still a need for more support for CASAs and community involvement in services that address underlying issues contributing to truancy. Eighty-five percent of students in ACE court are youth of color and APS has a large immigration population from countries such as Burma, Vietnam, and India. There is a need for more translators and more representatives from the refugee community to provide supports. In addition, the schools could use support from more counselors to help with family issues and donations like clothing.

Defining Successful Outcomes

As noted earlier, ***the director of the ACE Court in the 18th Judicial District and the partners in the pilot project adjusted their expectations of successful participation and outcomes for youth and families.*** Original goals, such as 100% attendance in school, were not realistic and not representative of the underlying issues affecting the families. The partners modified their goals to align with a case planning approach with individualized services and short-term goals.

For example, for each youth in the pilot, the program director and case workers documented progress week-by-week, noting if any new social or health issues arose or instances of truancy occurred. Documenting incremental progress on goals set for students and families was a joint effort across the partners.

One interviewee noted that they "traded [their] original narrative of success for one that was more realistic and grounded in the work." It was no longer about the percent of school attendance and compliance with sanctions. Success was redefined as trying to stop youth and families from re-entering the truancy court and not escalating to delinquency or other criminal courts.

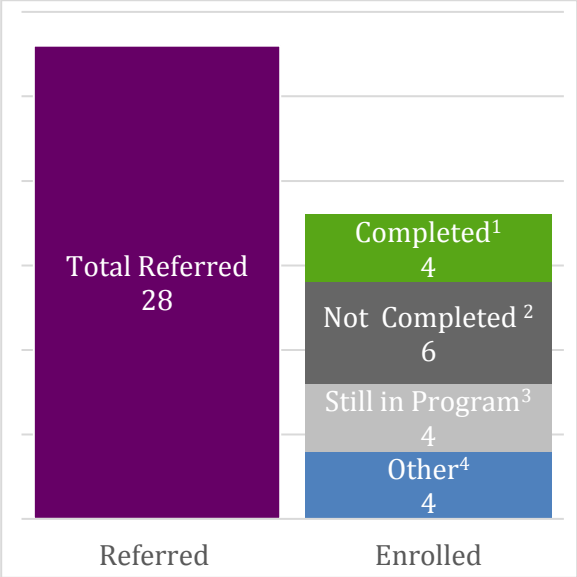
The partners discussed "what it means to not have failure, but not yet robust success" to identify indicators of progress and track data sets across the collective of agencies. During the pilot they documented which

services youth and families were participating in, evidence of participation and progress within those services, and lack of escalation of services and court filings (i.e., no criminal charges, social services filings). Moving forward, interviewees note that all of the interventions done on the district end should also be included in the data.

In the future, the pilot program would like to put in place measures that go beyond the typical metric of 90-days of school attendance after exiting the program. The partners noted the importance of identifying participants who are most likely to benefit from the program and get them intensive resources as early as possible so they have less involvement in the system overtime and do not become repeat "offenders" in any parts of the civil and/or criminal courts.

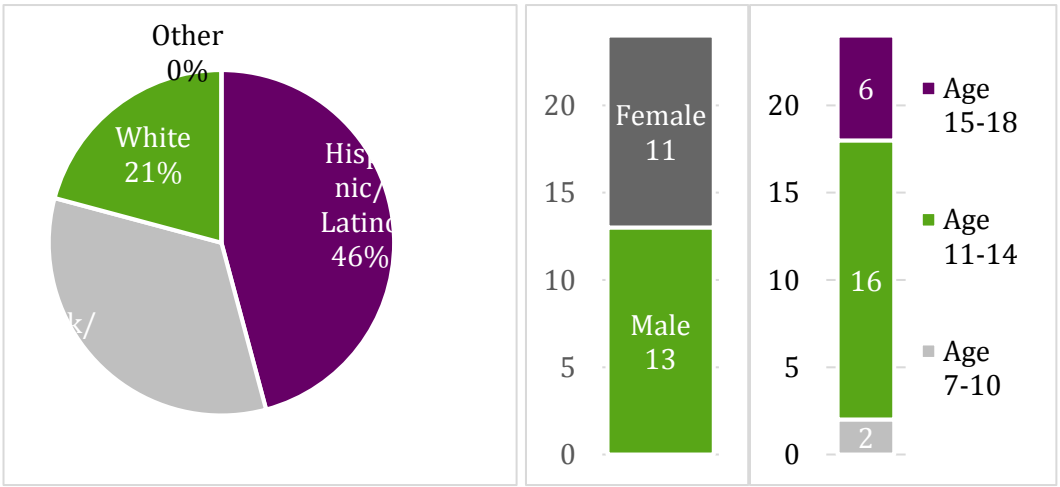
Following are figures and a table that illustrate some of the data collected with the ACE court, with a reporting period of December 1, 2014 to April 1, 2017. Figure 7 illustrates participation, including referrals and program completion. Figure 8 outlines the participant demographics, including race/ethnicity, gender, and age. Table 6 includes data on school attendance and cases filed.

Figure 7. JD 18 Site Participation



[1] Participants who either 1) graduated from the program (completed all four phases of the program and at the time of graduation was passing all classes, attending 80% of all classes four weeks prior to graduation, and saw no "significant" behavioral issues four weeks prior to graduation) (n=4); or 2) saw improvements in attendance and behavior, but had their cases transferred to the Dependency and Neglect docket (n=6).
[2] Participants who were unsuccessfully terminated due to not seeing continued improvements in attendance, behavior and/or academics. Termination was used after all other options were exhausted.
[3] Five will be eligible to graduate the program in October 2017, pending attendance/academic numbers continue to rise at the Spring 2017 rate.
[4] Participants who left the school district.

Figure 8. JD 18 Participant Demographics*



* Of those who started/entered the program.

Table 6. JD 18 Participant Outcomes

Outcomes	Number (Percent)
Improved school attendance [1]	6 (21.4%)
Charges or cases filed [2]	
A new truancy filing	0 (0%)
Juvenile delinquency filing	1 (3%)
Dependency and Neglect Filings	6 (21.4%)

[1] While other participants saw increases in attendance, behavioral matters and academics, it cannot be said with absolute certainty that these trends continued after supervision was transferred to the delinquency and neglect court or after students moved out of the state/district.
[2] Among those who started/entered the program. Includes charges in district or county court anywhere in the state of Colorado; does not include municipal court cases.

Challenges

The turnover of truancy prevention staff in the 18th Judicial District led to a myriad of unanticipated challenges, which revealed the importance of a magistrate with juvenile experience, and the need to formalize truancy prevention processes.

In addition to turnover and resource and funding limitations, the court experienced setbacks in its attempts to prioritize truancy despite limited docket space and magistrate time.

At a tactical level, delays in assessments led to a delay in service provision for youth (e.g. mental health and drug treatment). According to interviewees, a challenge in working with the court was a feeling by nontraditional partners that they may be punished in other settings for speaking candidly with judicial officers. This feeling has led to frustration by some court staff who were seeking honest feedback in order to improve processes.

Similar to the court system, challenges experienced in the education system were largely due to limited capacity, funding, and the system's infrastructure. Currently in the 18th Judicial District, school districts are undergoing budget cuts and filing on a student in truancy court is financial and time intensive. A failure to properly file and follow prescribed best practices can lead to frustration on the part of other stakeholders.

The 18th Judicial District has experienced difficulty in securing case managers, and community partners like CASAs can fill this role and are integral in helping students navigate family issues. In addition to needing more counseling support, the ACE Court needs donations from the community and translators to help with the growing refugee community. In sum, as the 18th Judicial District continues to grow, evolve, and become more diverse, it needs systems to strategically collaborate and the community to engage more fully.

Best Practices and Lesson Learned

Interviewees shared some valuable lessons learned and best practices from their involvement with the ACE court. The list below provides a snapshot of those lessons.

- Get to youth early so a pattern of non-attendance has not taken hold. Filing on elementary students is very low hanging fruit and super effective.
- Have patience. It took an entire year for this program to take hold.
- With limited resources, as hard as it is say, sometimes you will not reach them all and you might have to cut your losses.
- Set realistic expectations.
- Phase students up quickly. Get youth in and out quicker.
- Make it family friendly, and do not overwhelm parents.

- Make it one stop shopping. Figure out where it is best to have services done, at court or school. Once you know what they need, get the services all in one place.
- Take time to advertise to get the word out about the program, particularly to educators and school administrators to secure their buy-in.

LA PLATA YOUTH SERVICES AND LA PLATA SMART COLLABORATIVE

Mission Statement – The Community-in-Schools Partnership (CISP) Program provides a community-based, collaborative early intervention/prevention response to students facing significant, adverse barriers to school attendance.

Population Served – CISP serves elementary and middle school students and their families in La Plata County, CO.

Pilot Site Description – La Plata County is a tri-ethnic, rural community. It has a concentration of people living in mid-to-high socio-economic households. The community faces many challenges common to rural communities, with a limited scope of social services resources, a wide range of socio-economic households, and noteworthy gaps in service, especially for youth. Both progressive and traditional rural values are prevalent in La Plata, with organizations often acting in silos, reflecting a value of "rugged individualism." Latino and Native American families tend to be marginalized, with people of color typically working in lower income jobs, and students of color disproportionately representing youth considered at risk of not finishing school.

Project Description – The CISP program aims to prevent and respond to issues facing at-risk students. CISP has three overarching goals:

1) Working on improving and capitalizing on positive school climates. This is achieved through the implementation of restorative justice, and through trainings for teachers (trauma informed care etc.).
2) Providing services and support to students that present with externalizing behavior or are heavily involved with discipline in school. This is done primarily through in-school individual behavioral health (between 8-12 sessions) but also includes case consultation and advocacy.
3) Targeting at-risk populations through specific groups including Youth of Color, Girls Circles and LGBTQ groups.

COMMUNITY-IN-SCHOOLS PARTNERSHIP (CISP) (LA PLATA YOUTH SERVICES AND LA PLATA SMART COLLABORATIVE)

Five partners associated with the Community-in-Schools Partnership (CISP) through the La Plata Youth Services (LPYS) and La Plata SMART (Student Multidisciplinary Assessment Review Team) Collaborative were interviewed between February and May 2017 to gain insights from their diverse perspectives on the design and implementation of the pilot program, including overall achievements and lessons learned.

Key Partnerships and Stakeholders

Interview participants considered the partnerships they developed through the CISP a significant accomplishment. The schools and

LPYS meet monthly to focus on forward thinking actions and processes. One example of this was providing professional development to staff and interventions to students that focused on changing the culture and climate in school. Another example is when they brought in licensed therapists to work with the students both one-on-one and in a group. The schools also partnered with LPYS and received a grant to implement restorative justice practices in school.

Originally the CISP was developed to meet the truancy need through a grassroots approach. One of the responses to address the need was to ***develop a problem solving, case management collaborative for truant students***, i.e. the SMART Collaborative. The Collaborative had leadership from the school district, judicial, and community sectors. During the first years they met, they staffed truancy cases that would get referred to LPYS and taken back to the Collaborative when more support was needed. This created a continuum of services for truancy in the community that consisted of several different initiatives. Now the SMART Collaborative includes the magistrates, school districts, local law enforcement, human services, victim advocacy organizations, Boards of Cooperative Education Services, San Juan Basin Public Health, and Axis Health.

Interviewees discussed how services were limited in the community and therefore it seemed as if everyone who worked with youth was involved in this work. It took a long time to get certain agencies involved as they first had to prove the program was working.

Even so, interviewees see an opportunity to build stronger relationships with some partners. For example, law enforcement serves a critical role in removing students from the streets, but dropped in their engagement, most likely due to personnel issues.

In addition, the pilot would like a robust relationship with Child Welfare. ***There has also been a paradigm shift across the partners to embrace the idea of being able to work collaboratively across agencies to support young people.*** Further, the support is directed at underlying factors instead of trying to squash bad behavior.

The strong partnership led by LPYS helped the pilot stay the course. Interview participants noted LPYS is very flexible in their thinking and attuned to the needs of the school district. LPYS understands each school had a unique personality and unique needs. As a result, they have developed and sustained personalized programs at each school site.

Also, interviewees discussed the importance of having a partnership with San Juan Public Health and Axis Health as they run the two school-based health services. These programs support behavioral health needs within the school setting. Axis Health provides a behavioral health specialist, and San Juan Basin Public Health has recently joined as a very strong partner in looking at at-risk behavior with school-aged children as a result of their suicide work.

Lastly, ***interviewees emphasized it is essential to have a community agency with collaborative experience that is outside the schools, and is community based, nongovernmental, or nonprofit working within the youth and family sector to be the convener and coordinator of a program like this.***

Creating a Shared Vision and Goals

All of the partners involved came in with creative energy and really believed in the

work. Some interviewees felt the lack of a model was an advantage to be able to start from scratch.

Given CISP operates in a smaller community, there were many pre-existing relationships with the partners and stakeholders when the pilot began. Even though pre-existing relationships existed, level setting was completed across partners on the front end. Once they came together, they discussed root values, a shared vision, and strategically shared goals – this process lasted about six months.

Starting with a blank slate, pre-existing relationships, and creative passionate energy contributed to creating a successful shared vision and goals

First, they started with a small core group that included school administration, counselors, and LPYS staff that did a lot of planning work behind the scenes. Then they conducted a needs assessment, pinpointed a few key areas they wanted to focus on, and slowly introduced the partnership to school staff. They ran focus groups with students, education partners, and parents where they discussed barriers to truancy.

The data collected suggested they should focus on early intervention and emphasize mentorship and consistent interaction with adults who care. They very strategically brought people in on the frontend and made the program visible.

While teachers were retiscent in during the early stages of the program they ***eventually teachers found value in the people and the process and this worked to build their trust in the program.*** The teachers' buy-in helped to solidify the vision for the CISP at their schools.

Program Implementation and Participation

The process for preventing and addressing truancy became more streamlined during the pilot phase. This included ***building infrastructure that allowed for the school to see what can and should be done within the school before reaching out to the community for assistance***.

Prior to this being established, schools were inconsistent and often absent in their role to prevent truancy. One interviewee commented on how the CISP model should produce cost savings as schools are not going through the court process as much because needs are being met up front.

Some interviewees felt the most essential aspect of the pilot was the ***coordinated delivery of community services in a school setting***. The coordination filled a personnel need, namely, someone to draw linkages between students and services and work with schools and community partners, and to maintain relationships and identify new ones as they evolved.

Because the buy-in from the school and community was so great, they have sustained a full-time position for this coordination from the support of a local foundation and school district. The financial support is illustrative of the value of the partnerships and the services it brought to the school.

As the program progressed, it evolved from transportation and tutoring support to more focus on behavioral health support. Schools were really looking to community partners who have expertise in the behavioral health area to provide mental health support in the

schools, as they saw an increase in trauma, anxiety, and depression in their students.

Preliminary Research

The pilot was given a six-month planning component before they started as part of the grant. They used this time to do qualitative research, collecting data and stories locally from people aged 10-40 years old, about truancy prevention.

A consistent factor identified by participants was their struggle with school engagement. They highlighted underlying factors, opportunities, and windows of resilience.

At the same time, a national research project released corroborating results. The research provided the language and examples the community needed to say "here is what we need to do." It took a lot of time to educate people around the issue, but they kept the conversation going with people who understood the need. They continued to slowly expand their influence to include new audiences.

Mental Health Services for Youth

As a result of mental health service gaps in the community, the pilot created their own private mental health budget, though it does not reach the need. They also struggled with retaining contracts with good private therapists. School-based mental health professionals had high turnover, largely because the pilot could not pay them at the level needed. They plan to implement new models to overcome this barrier.

At the time of the interview, the mental health aspect of the program had reached 92 youth. Interviewees indicated the high number of youth served is because of their efforts to reduce red tape. For example, they went to where the youth were and used contracted individual therapists which reduced administration barriers. Had they seen youth at a clinic, they would have needed an intake appointment, and that is not offered in the town. Other types of mental health services they offer include group therapy for females, domestic violence victims, and youth of color, and they also have individual behavioral health counseling.

Changed Culture in Staff and Agencies

Interviewees discussed how staff are now more aware of the struggles students and their families face and how this contributes to truancy. The schools support a increased understanding by applying trauma-informed practices and offering targeted and tailored training at the schools.

> *Apply trauma informed practices and training to encourage staff and teachers to understand contributors of truancy.*

As a result, instead of telling a student they are late, staff ask them what is happening that is preventing them from getting to school on time. One respondent described this as, "putting more value into the reality that there are so many variables that go into truancy."

CPYS also focuses on implementing restorative practices in the schools by training faculty. Changes in the partner agencies began to occur once enough agencies and partners got involved in the program and received training. As one respondent indicated, the change just started to "snowball."

Still, some agencies and schools have not experienced a culture shift and openness to approaching truancy differently. Interviewees noted that some of the schools that need services the most are the last ones on board.

Power of Court Mandates

Some interviewees thought it was key that ***the judge signed a proclamation stating they would not send a youth into detention for truancy because of the collaborative effort they had in plac*e.** In the past two years, no child has been sent to detention. As a result of this and the pilot project focusing on resource and therapeutic interventions, fewer students are going to court.

Interviewees indicated youth and their families are having their needs met more, including through therapeutic counseling services and social and emotional support. However, some interviewees discussed the power and value of court mandates and specifically when schools should be leveraging the court in truancy prevention.

Systems at Play

The justice, education, and community systems all contribute to both supports and barriers of truancy prevention and more specifically the impact of the CISP program. Interview participants discussed the positives and negatives of each of these systems.

Justice System

The mere existence and implied threat of court involvement is important to this work. CISP partners with probation, juvenile judges, the District Attorney's office, public defenders, pretrial services, and SB 94. Further, ***the JJDP Council and its leadership on the Low Risk, High Needs Committee all hold a progressive vision,*** which is a huge support to go to this kind of program.

However, interviewees identified many barriers in the justice system. Often, program staff want to provide supports and services (particularly related to mental health) to youth when they are needed, but those require some justice system involvement to trigger access treatment.

Other opportunities for improving justice system support include:

- Providing more education to families about the truancy process and system as a whole.
- Working together with the school in a restorative manner to support keeping youth in school.

In addition, there is some discomfort for partners and those involved in the program to being open and candid with the judge. Heavy guidelines about hearing specific cases with a public defender or district attorney in the room also caused cautious communication.

Education System

Teachers, counselors, and school administrators are critical in reaching out to parents and students and building relationships to motivate them to participate. It is important to have a principal who understands the paradigm of needs, both behavioral health and trauma needs, and gets the whole picture. It is also important that schools allow agencies to come into their school to help.

In addition, interviewees discussed changes they noticed within education policies over the past few years. For example, one interviewee sat on a committee of stakeholders to rewrite the student code last year, looking at the activities in the athletics code. They changed the language and responses to interventions to be more restorative and inclusive and had it approved by the school board.

However, there are still some signs that improvement is needed to carry this evidence of progress forward.

All of this work is an addition to the teacher's workload and at times interferes with the student's school schedule. Periods are short, it is hard to pull a student out of class for therapy, and teachers feel pressure to keep students in class to meet teaching standards.

Also, the new culture of caring does not exist in all of the LPYS schools. Some still have the mindset that when a student makes a mistake, they need to be punished for it. When LPYS asked students what would make them stay in school, the response overwhelmingly was feeling like someone cared. Students felt that no one sought them out when they did not show up.

LYPS is in the midst of shifting the culture and will be establishing policies to support it. "Really it's about developing systems that have students learning at the center of it."

Community System

"We do what we can to really work with what we have," one interviewee said as they described the community system in place. Specifically, the community provides mentoring programs, mental health services, school transition programs from those entering high school from middle school, and self-image improvement programs.

Usually, when agencies see a need, they are willing to help. A lot of the students are a part of many systems. ***CISP creates a space for all of the different agencies to come together and provide wrap-around services for the student and prevents families from jumping around in the various systems.*** As a result, the partnership allows their resources and money to go farther.

But, because it is a small community with over 450 nonprofits, at times the community work becomes siloed, and organizations enter the battle of scarcity. There is also a need to expand mental health services for youth especially given residential treatment does not exist in the community.

Sustainability

For this work to be sustainable, the program must be institutionalized. "The historical knowledge and legacy that is often carried by people need to be carried on by systems."

The work of the pilot also needs to be embedded via culture change. "Funding will come and go, but if you have a culture embedded in the school, the value of creating relationships will still be there and happening."

Lastly, funding would secure the roles of those leading and coordinating the work. Interviewees argued that if the cultural change occurs, then a funding stream for the work would exist.

At the time of the interviews, the program was active in four schools. The program received a significant amount of funding and some interviewees felt they were sustainable at the moment.

Next year CISP will be expanding into a new school district and adding two schools into the program. They are also planning to add a restorative justice component. In collaboration with two school districts, they received $500,000 in funding for the programs' implementation.

In addition, the SMART team was modeled after the Senate Bill 1451 collaborative management program (CMP); it originally only addressed truancy but it expanded to include other risk factors. Modeling SMART after a CMP created a funding stream from Department of Human Services (DHS).

Challenges

CISP relies heavily on partners, and in the planning and early implementation stages of the program, it was incredibly challenging to get certain agencies involved. According to interviewees, CISP staffers still experience difficulty in keeping some agencies involved at an impactful level.

In addition, CISP has found it challenging to retain quality private therapists for students, and there is very high turnover with school-based mental health professionals. The lack of therapists is illustrative of a larger challenge in La Plata. It is a community with limited resources and a large number of nonprofits, which results in siloed work for fear of scarcity of resources.

Interviewees reflected that the resource challenges in La Plata make it all the more important for the judicial and education systems to be an effective partner.

CISP still struggles with some schools who have not engaged with truancy prevention. A reason for this may be that truancy prevention is an addition to teachers' workloads and can interfere with a school schedule. In appealing to schools and educators, CISP interviewees noted it would be helpful if there was a consistent way to define truancy and what success looks like.

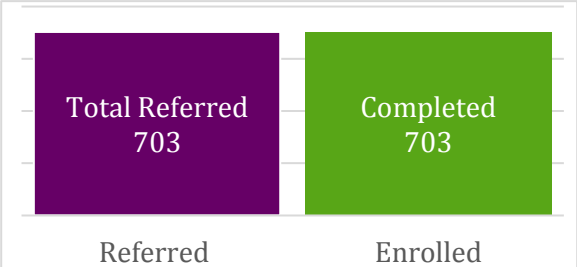
Defining Successful Outcomes

Interview participants discussed the need to focus on and document the root causes behind truancy, which could be housing, family issues, mental health, and/or substance abuse. One interviewee cautioned about looking for one specific model or program that is readily replicable as they are not sure one exact model exists because of each community's unique culture. However developing evidence-based practices would still be useful to know and try out as ***nationally, there is no consistent way to define truancy or improvement***. There is a need to create consistent measures.

Some interviewees felt that truancy should be an outcome measure, but success should be measure by looking at underlying factors like stabilized housing, behavioral health interventions, etc. It is worth noting that despit this perspective on underlying factors, partners often only look at data from a short period, but underlying factors take a long time to stabilize. Some interviewees also discussed that most truant students were at the middle and high school level, but when they looked at the attendance of elementary students, they could see patterns and the need to intervene early with the students and family who would likely be habitual offenders down the road.

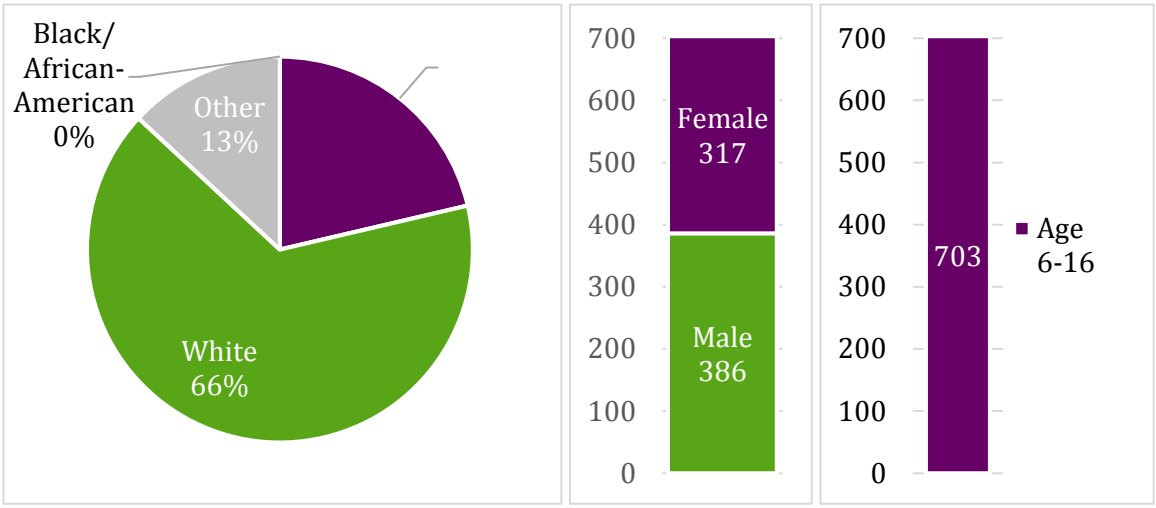
Following are figures and a table that illustrate some of the data collected with the CISP program and CISP Mental Health Program, with a reporting period of October 1, 2014 to January 31, 2017. Figure 9 illustrates participation, including referrals and program completion. Figure 10 outlines the pilot site participant demographics, including race/ethnicity, gender, and age. Table 7 includes data on school attendance and services used.

Figure 9. Participation CISP & CISP Mental Health



[1] CISP defines successful program completion as engaging in services. For mental health, this means participating in 8 to 12 sessions with a therapist in school. For substance abuse workshops, this means actively participating all activities etc.

Figure 10. Participant Demographics CISP & CISP Mental Health *



*Of those who started/entered the program

Table 7. Participant Outcomes CISP & CISP Mental Health

Participant Outcomes [1]	Number (Percent)
Improved School Attendance[2]	57%
Engaged in Services[3] Mental Health Other Community Services	92 (13.1%) 611 (86.9%)

[1] Of those who engaged in programming. If a student did not want to engage in programming, they were not counted as engaged or starting the program.
[2] 2015-16 attendance data was captured by participating schools and measured before engagement with program and then after. This data is not currently available for all years of programming.
[3] CISP defines successful program completion as engaging in services. For mental health, this means participating in 8 to 12 sessions with a therapist in school. For substance abuse workshops and pro social activities, this means actively participating in all activities etc.

Best Practices and Lessons Learned

Interviewees shared valuable lessons learned and best practices of their involvement with the CISP program and SMART Collaborative. The list below provides a snapshot of those lessons.

- Develop tight partnerships and trust in relationships.
- Be open to outside agencies coming to do this work.
- Start very intentionally with a small core group of partners.
- For the youth, it's all about having a positive relationship with an adult.
- Develop skills in community-based work and organizing.
- Flexibility is the most essential in program design. It's important to go into schools with a loose framework and design what needs to work for each school climate and culture.
- There are no quick fixes. Just keep at it and stay the course.

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS

JJDP-LHRN KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW PROTOCOL – FIELD/POLICY-LEVEL STAKEHOLDERS

Introduction

In partnership with the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Council's (JJDP) Low-Risk High-Needs Committee (LHRN), Spark Policy Institute is conducting a series of evaluation activities to gather information about truancy prevention, problem solving courts, and the overall juvenile justice system.

The primary purposes of the JJDP evaluation are to document the nature and impact of the four pilot programs funded by the LHRN committee in the 1st, 16th, and 18th Judicial Districts and La Plata Youth Services Prevention Program; and to understand the larger context of truancy within the juvenile justice system.

We hope to document the variety of approaches to truancy across the four pilots and inform the refinement and expansion of truancy programs and policy change strategies.

You have been invited to participate in this study, because your depth of knowledge and experience with juvenile justice issues and policy. Your perspective will allow us to understand not only the specific aspects of juvenile justice policies and processes related to truancy, but will also provide a deeper understanding of barriers and catalysts to engagement of diverse constituencies in these efforts.

Policy Priorities

Q: From your professional role/experience, what are crucial policy or programming priorities related to truancy prevention and juvenile court systems?

Q: What is most essential for progress to be made on decreasing the prevalence of truancy cases in the court system? To ameliorating absenteeism before it becomes truancy? To leveraging resources across sectors (e.g., courts, criminal justice, education, social services, community organizations, business, etc.)?

Q: In the past few years, has there been any progress (statewide and/or local wins) related to truancy prevention and juvenile court systems? If so, what?

Q: How might that progress be sustained and/or expanded?

Role and Influence of Stakeholders

Q: Which stakeholders are most essential involve in discussions to frame policies? To create and implement programs? To address inequities? To monitor progress?

(e.g., school/district administrators, teachers, counselors; juvenile court system: magistrates, attorneys, caseworkers; social services; community-based organizations; families/students, etc.)

Q: How might a common vision/shared goals/values be created across key stakeholder groups?

Sectors/Systems Elements

Q: What parts of the juvenile justice system acts as catalysts/supports? What acts as barriers?

Q: What parts of the education system acts as catalysts/supports? What acts as barriers?

Q: What parts of the community act as catalysts/support? What acts as barriers? (e.g., community-based organizations, social services, mental health services, businesses, mentors, etc.)

Q: What is missing from the juvenile justice system and education system that is needed to maximize the accomplishments of Problem-Solving Courts and truancy prevention programs?

Use of Information/Data Systems

Q: What types of information should be used to make decisions about statewide and local strategies related to truancy prevention and juvenile court systems?

a. What data would be most essential to influence policy-level decision makers?

b. Do you know of any data or evidence about inequities being used to influence decisions about truancy prevention and court systems? If so, what?

General Feedback

Q: What else would you like to share about your perspectives/experiences about truancy prevention and juvenile court systems?

JJPD-LHRN KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW PROTOCOL – PILOT SITES STAKEHOLDERS

Introduction

In partnership with the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Council's (JJPD) Low-Risk High-Needs Committee (LHRN), Spark Policy Institute is conducting a series of evaluation activities to gather information about truancy prevention, problem solving courts, and the overall juvenile justice system.

The primary purposes of the JJPD evaluation are to document the nature and impact of the four pilot programs funded by the LHRN committee in the 1st, 16th, and 18th Judicial Districts and La Plata Youth Services Prevention Program; and to understand the larger context of truancy within the juvenile justice system.

We hope to document the variety of approaches to truancy across the four pilots and inform the refinement and expansion of truancy programs and policy change strategies.

You have been invited to participate in this study, because your role in your pilot site and your depth of knowledge and experience with juvenile justice issues and policy. Your perspective will allow us to understand not only the specific aspects of your pilot site program, but will also provide a deeper understanding of barriers and catalysts to engagement of diverse constituencies in truancy prevention and juvenile justice efforts.

Overall Achievements

Q: What have been the most significant accomplishments of your JJPD LHRN pilot program?

a. In terms of processes, infrastructure, use of resources, and/or cost savings? (e.g., staffing, funding, expertise, laws and guidelines, etc.)

b. In terms of culture and value perspectives? (e.g., perspectives on absenteeism and truancy, school climate, cross-sector partnerships, non-traditional roles)

c. In terms of positive outcomes for children and families? (e.g., reduced detention/expulsion, improved academic outcomes, early intervention; wrap around services to support families, resiliency)

Q: Have you had any unexpected successes? If so, what and why do you think they happened?

Key Partnerships and Stakeholders

Q: With whom have your partnered to advance your goals? (e.g., school/district administrators, teachers, and counselors; juvenile court system: magistrates, attorneys, caseworkers; social services; community-based organizations; families/students, etc.)

Q: How has your partnership leveraged your shared resources/staff/infrastructure to decrease the prevalence of truancy cases in the court system?

a. To support youth/families in the court system to successfully exit?

b. To ameliorate absenteeism before it becomes truancy?

Q: Were any of these partners new to engaging in truancy prevention or problem-solving courts? If so, how were you able to demonstrate the value of being involved in your pilot to those partners?

Q: What relationships/partnerships were previously established that "jump started" your pilot program?

Q: Which stakeholders were most essential involve in discussions of how to frame your pilot program? To create and implement the programs/activities? To address inequities? To monitor progress?

Shared Visions/Goals

Q: Were you able to create a common vision/shared goals/values across your stakeholder groups? If so how? If not, what were the primary barriers to doing so?

Q: Overtime, what changes have you seen in partners'/stakeholders' attitudes about engaging in your pilot program? What do you think contributed to these changes?

Program Implementation and Participation

Q: What has been the balance voluntary participation versus mandatory/court ordered participation in your pilot program? (Problem-Solving Courts in 1st, 16th, and 18th districts; La Plata prevention school-based program)

Q: What aspects of your program design/activities were most essential?

a. Seem most promising in contributing to positive outcomes?

b. Make the best use of current resources and expertise?

c. Get the most "bang for the buck"?

Q: What aspects of your work were most difficult to move forward?

Q: What was a failure? Why? (e.g., implementation design, aim of the strategy, partners involved, readiness of partners, lack of complementary policies/processes, inadequate time and staffing capacity, etc.)

Sectors/Systems Elements

Q: What parts of the juvenile justice system acts as catalysts/supports? What acts as barriers?

Q: What parts of the education system acts as catalysts/supports? What acts as barriers?

Q: What parts of the community act as catalysts/support? What acts as barriers? (e.g., community-based organizations, social services, mental health services, businesses, mentors, etc.)

Q: What is missing from the juvenile justice system and education system that is needed to maximize the accomplishments of the pilots?

Q: What is most essential for sustainability and/or expansion of the work of your pilot program?

Use of Information/Data Systems

Q: What types of information should be used to make decisions about statewide and local strategies related to truancy prevention and juvenile court systems?

Q: How might the findings from the four pilots be used to motivate others to become involved in the work? To see the value of the work? (e.g., other district courts, criminal justice, government, community members, philanthropy/funders, policy makers, etc.)

Q: What, if any, best practices or lessons learned have emerged across the three years of your pilot program? In other words, what is most important to share about your experiences with others?

APPENDIX B: TRUANCY PROBLEM SOLVING COURT PILOT SITE DATA POINTS

Table B-1: Data Points Collected on Truancy Problem Solving Court Program Participants

1st Judicial District	16th Judicial District	18th Judicial District
Case #	Gender	Phase
Admission Date	Court Location	Case #
DOB	Case #	Admission Date
Ethnicity	Start Date	DOB
Gender	School	Ethnicity
School	Starting GPA	Gender
Grade	DOB	School
Total Periods Missed	Race/Ethnicity	Grade
Sanctions	Status at intake	Total Periods Missed
Incentives	Child Welfare Involvement current	Sanctions
Tutor/Pro-social	Attendance Mandatory	Incentives
Prior Suspensions/Expulsions	Referral Source	Tutor/Pro-social
Suspensions/Expulsions during TPSC	Current JJ Inv.	Prior Suspensions/Expulsions
GPA before TPSC	Held back grade level	Suspensions/Expulsions during TPSC
GPA at Discharge	Passing grades	GPA before TPSC
MH Rx	Youth has an IEP	GPA at Discharge
MH Diagnonis	Mother level of education	MH Rx
Prescribed Medication	Father level of education	MH Diagnonis
Substance	Baseline Attend Rate %	Prescribed Medication
Substance Tx/group	1st 90 Day Attend %	Substance
Significant Life Situtations	2nd 90 Day Attend %	Substance Tx/group
DHS Involvement	Free or Reduced Lunches	Significant Life Situtations
# co-occurring	Truancy Asmt. Score	DHS Involvement
In-patient	CRAFFT	# co-occurring
Funding	SRA	In-patient

1st Judicial District	16th Judicial District	18th Judicial District
Comments	MAYSI	Funding
Discharge Date	Trauma Indicated	Comments
Total Days in TPSC	Phase at 180 days (full 6 mo)	Discharge Date
Discharge Reason	Complete in one year (calendar)	Total Days in TPSC
# Graduate from TPSC	Post-screen #36	Discharge Reason
Final Outcome	Post-screen #37	# Graduate from TPSC
Phase at Discharge	Pre-Screen #24	Final Outcome
Employment Status	Pre-Screen #28	Phase at Discharge
Charges prior to TPSC	Detention reason and los	Employment Status
Victims/Dates	Contempt (Y or N)	Charges prior to TPSC
During TPSC	Total Final Court Attend %	Victims/Dates
1 Year Post TPSC	GPA at Grad.	During TPSC
2-3 yrs post-TPSC	Services Referrals	1 Year Post TPSC
Days in JDC during TPSC	Final Outcome & Date	2-3 yrs post-TPSC
Days incarcerated 1 Year post TPSC		Days in JDC during TPSC
Days incarcerated 1-3 years post TPSC		Days incarcerated 1 Year post TPSC
		Days incarcerated 1-3 years post TPSC