National Leadership Summit on School-Justice Partnerships
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A Law School's Truancy Court Program: Changing the Lives of Students Inside the Public School Classroom...and Inside the School of Law

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Mission of the Center for Families, Children and the Courts (CFCC)

- Family justice system reform
- Identifying structures and processes to improve families’ and children’s lives
- Creation of Unified Family Courts (UFC’s)
CFCC’s Interdisciplinary Framework

Therapeutic Jurisprudence from the Law

Ecology of Human Development from the Social Sciences

CFCC Student Fellows Program

- 2 semester law school course (5 or 6 credits total)
- Students learn the theory and then put it into practice
- Experiential course; real world application
What Is Truancy?

Under Maryland law, a student is considered an habitual truant if he or she is enrolled in a school for 91 or more days and unlawfully absent for twenty percent or more of the days enrolled (about 20-25 days/semester).

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Truancy in Context

• Maryland's 2011 high school graduation rate = 82%; Baltimore City's = 65%

• Maryland's 2011 dropout rate = 3.2%; Baltimore City's = 4.2%

• Baltimore City Public Schools' 2010-2011 enrollment = 83,800; habitually truant Baltimore City students=5,700
Truancy Rates in Maryland

- Elementary School: 6.5
- Middle School: 9.5
- High School: 18.2

State: 42.2
Baltimore City: 30.5

Maryland Education Law

- Parents/custodians are responsible to see that children ages 5 to 16 attend school. **Md. Code Ann. Education §7-301(c)(2006)**

- Failure to do so is a misdemeanor, punishable by fines of $50 to $100 per day of absence and/or imprisonment for 10 to 30 days. **Md. Code Ann. Education §7-103(e)(2)(i)(ii) (2006)**
Consequences of Truancy

Many students who are habitually truant end up dropping out of school, and the consequences of dropping out are well documented. For example, school dropouts:

- Are more likely to be involved in problem behaviors such as delinquency, substance abuse, and early childbearing
- Have significantly fewer job prospects
- Make lower salaries
- Are more often unemployed
- Are more likely to be welfare-dependent
- Are more likely to engage in criminal behavior


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Truancy Statistics

- 70 percent of suspended youth were chronically truant in the last six months before suspension.
- 80 percent of dropouts were chronically truant.
- Of the 85 juveniles convicted of murder in New York State between 1978 and 1986, 58 percent had a history of truancy.


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Truancy Court Program Methodology

- Non-Adversarial
- Holistic
- Therapeutic—A Problem-Solving Approach
- Early Intervention (Targets “Soft” Truants)

Truancy Court Program Goals

- Improve Attendance
- Increase Parent/Caregiver Involvement
- Empower Teachers and Administrators
- Expand Services for Students and Families
Truancy Court Program Characteristics

- One judge (no judicial authority)
- Weekly sessions (10 weeks each semester)
- 10-20 students per school each session
- One-on-one meetings
- School team: social worker, teacher, administrator
- Law school team: faculty supervisor or TCP Coordinator, TCP Mentor, and CFCC Student Fellow

Truancy Court Program Characteristics (Continued)

- Mandatory parent/caregiver involvement
- Mentoring/character-building classes
- Use of CFCC’s TCP Toolkit and Mentor Manual
- Incentives
- Voluntary (school, judge, student, parents)
- Graduation
- Monitoring
Additional TCP Activities

- Kids and Cameras Program
- Kids and Theater Program
- Volunteer Tutors and Mentors
- Mediation (UB Family Mediation Clinic)
- Family Fun Nights; Read-alongs
- Graduations/First Lady’s Reception
- Stakeholder Meetings
- Bench Meetings
- Field Trips to Courthouse
- Parent Workshops (CFCC Student Fellows)

TCP Partnerships

- Community Groups (University of Baltimore Community)
- Civic Groups
- Law Firms
- Foundations
- City/State Agencies/Departments (Department of Juvenile Services’ “Spotlight on Schools”)
Truancy Court Program Numbers

- TCP has served 804 students in 26 Baltimore City Public Schools.
- TCP has served 235 students in 3 of Maryland’s largest counties.
- 25 judges and masters have volunteered to serve as TCP judges for the TCP

TCP Graduation

- Benchmark is a 65% decrease in unexcused absences and/or tardies, along with improved grades and classroom behavior.
- 70% of the TCP students graduate.
Breakout Session 1.E. Truancy Through the Lens of School Engagement and Re-engagement
Professor Barbara A. Babb, Director, Center for Families, Children and the Courts University of Baltimore School of Law

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Fall 2010 Baltimore City TCP Participants' Total Attendance Data Before, During, and After the TCP

Truancy Court Program Fall 2011 Graduation Rates in Baltimore City Public Schools

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Absences Among Fall 2011 Violetville Elementary/Middle School TCP Participants Before and During the TCP

Absences During 10-week Period

TCP Participants

Absences Prior Marking Period
Absences During TCP

Tardies Among Fall 2011 Collington Square Elementary/Middle School TCP Participants Before and During TCP

Tardies During 10 Week Period

TCP Participants

Tardies Prior Marking Period
Tardies During TCP
Breakout Session 1.E. Truancy Through the Lens of School Engagement and Re-engagement

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Absences Among Fall 2011 Hampden Elementary/Middle School TCP Participants Before and During TCP

Did you look forward to the TCP Sessions?

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Did the TCP team care about you?
Did the TCP team listen to you?
Was the TCP judge interested in you?
Did you feel you had to listen to the judge?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0%</td>
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Did the TCP judge and team follow through on the things they promised?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>91%</td>
<td>9%</td>
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Did the TCP address the problems that kept you from coming to school every day, on time?

- YES: 27%
- NO: 73%

Did the TCP help you in any other way, besides truancy?

- YES: 9%
- NO: 9%
- No Response/Unsure: 82%
Did you see changes in communication, interest, or support from your parents or teachers after the TCP?

- Yes: 64%
- No: 27%
- No Response/Unsure: 9%

Did you learn something about yourself while in TCP?

- Yes: 55%
- No: 18%
- No Response/Unsure: 27%
Would you recommend the TCP to other students with attendance problems?

- **YES**: 54%
- **NO**: 18%
- **18%**: No Response/Unsure

User Surveys - Parents

- All believe that the TCP team cares for their child(ren), listens to and understands what parents have to say, and follows through on promises.
- Presence of a judge is important – s/he “makes the children take it seriously.”
- Majority of parents note behavioral changes in their child(ren): prepare clothes the night before school; get up earlier; are more responsible; are more excited about school; are more motivated.
Recommendations

• Introduce truancy intervention programs into law school clinics and experiential courses
• Incorporate the TCP model into a continuum of interventions needed to address truancy