



National Leadership Summit on School-Justice Partnerships
March 12, 2012

**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

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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

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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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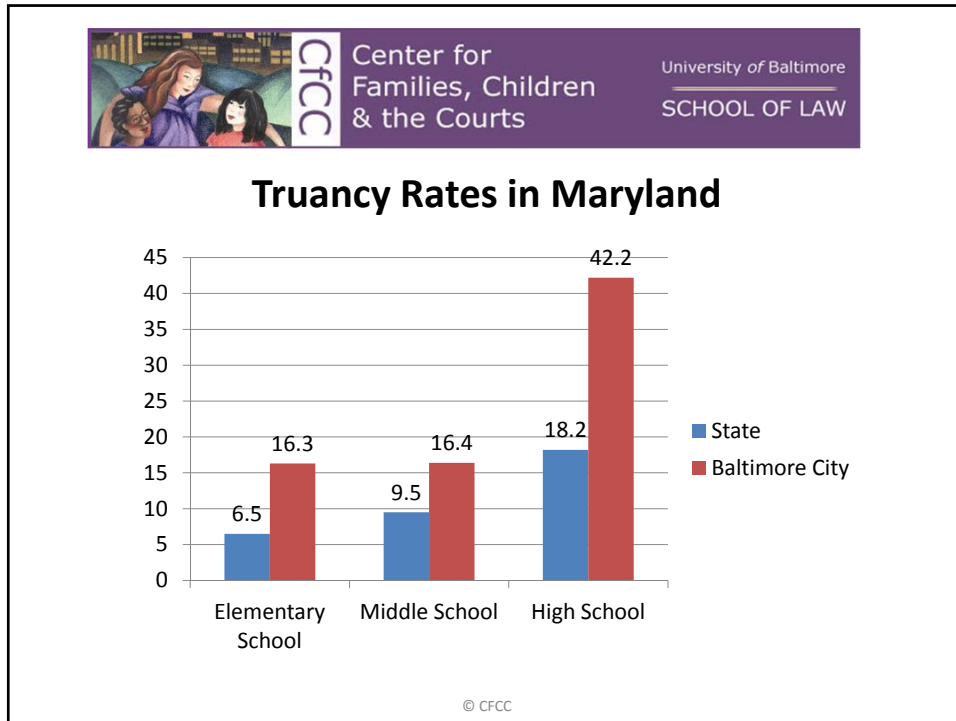
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Truancy in Context

- 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

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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)**

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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

Ref: *Factsheet, NAT'L CENTER FOR SCH. ENGAGEMENT*,
<http://www.schoolengagement.org/TruancyPreventionRegistry/Admin/Resources/Resources/TruancyFactSheet.pdf>
OJJDP Model Programs Guide, U.S. Dep't of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency
Prevention <http://www.ojjdp.gov/mpr/progTypesTruancy.aspx>

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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.

Ref: *Truancy, Dropouts and Delinquency: Solutions for Policies, Practices and Partnerships*, NAT'L CENTER FOR SCH. ENGAGEMENT (2006)
[HTTP://WWW.SCHOOLENGAGEMENT.ORG/TRUANCYPREVENTIONREGISTRY/ADMIN/RESOURCES/RESOURCES/TRUANCYDROPOUTSANDDELINQUENCYSOLUTIONSFORPOLICIESPRACTICESANDPARTNERSHIPS.PDF](http://www.schoolengagement.org/TruancyPreventionRegistry/Admin/Resources/Resources/TruancyDropoutsandDelinquencySolutionsforPoliciesPracticesandPartnerships.pdf)

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Truancy Court Program Methodology

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



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Truancy Court Program Goals



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

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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

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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

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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)



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TCP Partnerships

- Community Groups (University of Baltimore Community)
- Civic Groups
- Law Firms
- Foundations
- City/State Agencies/Departments (Department of Juvenile Services' "Spotlight on Schools")

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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

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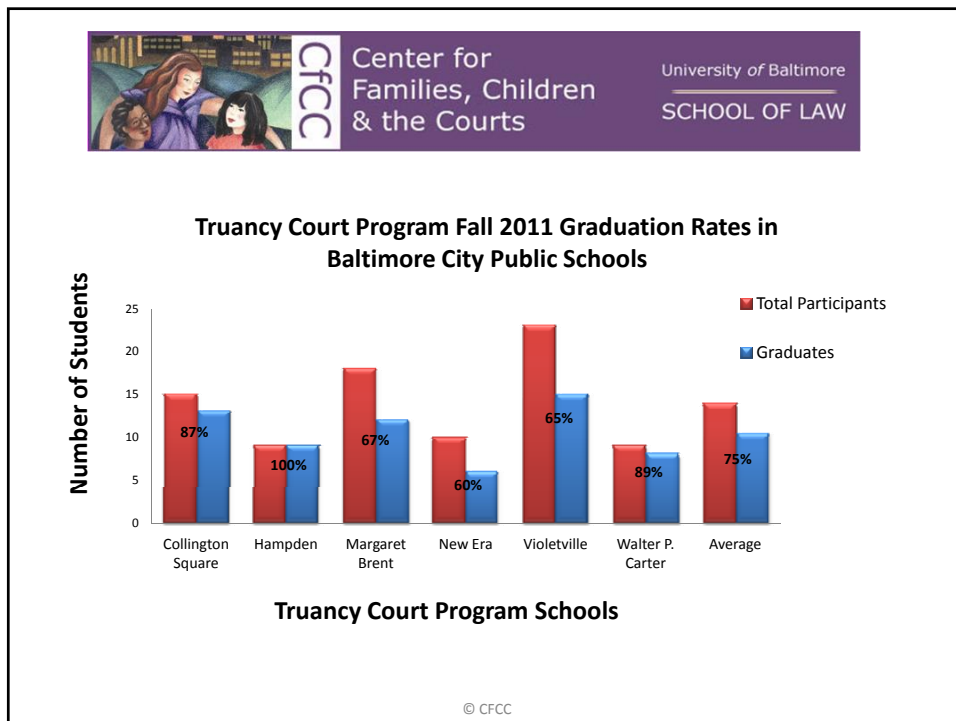
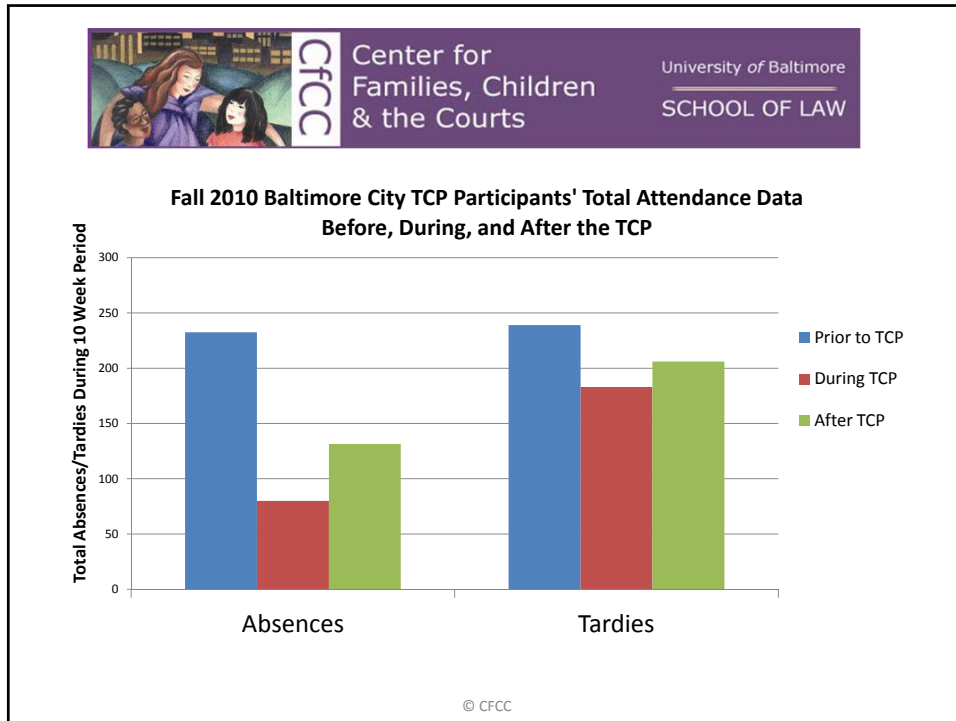


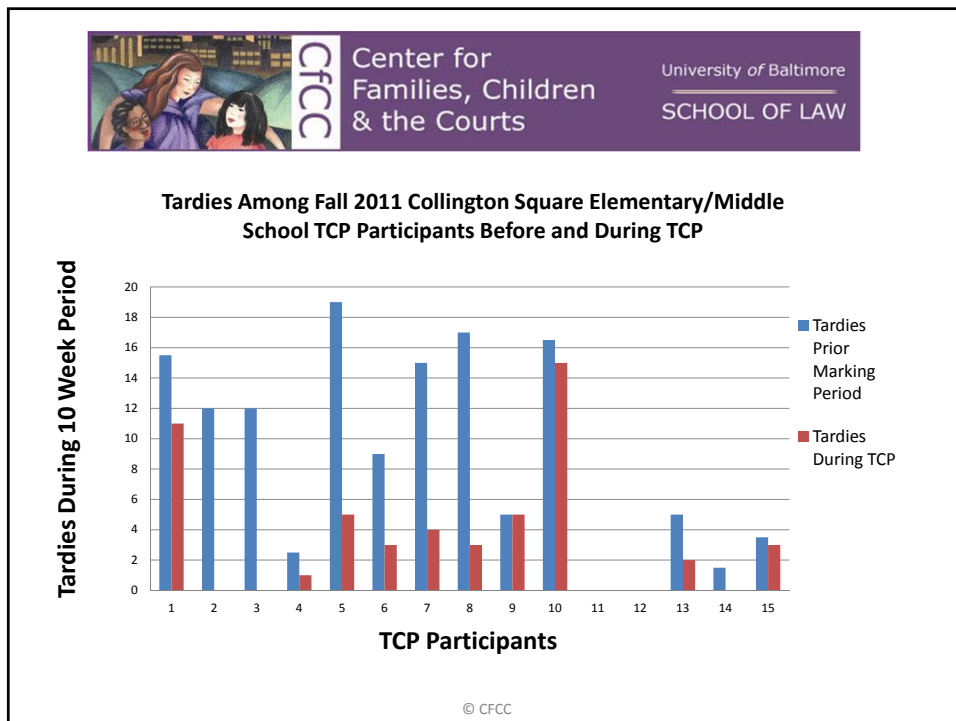
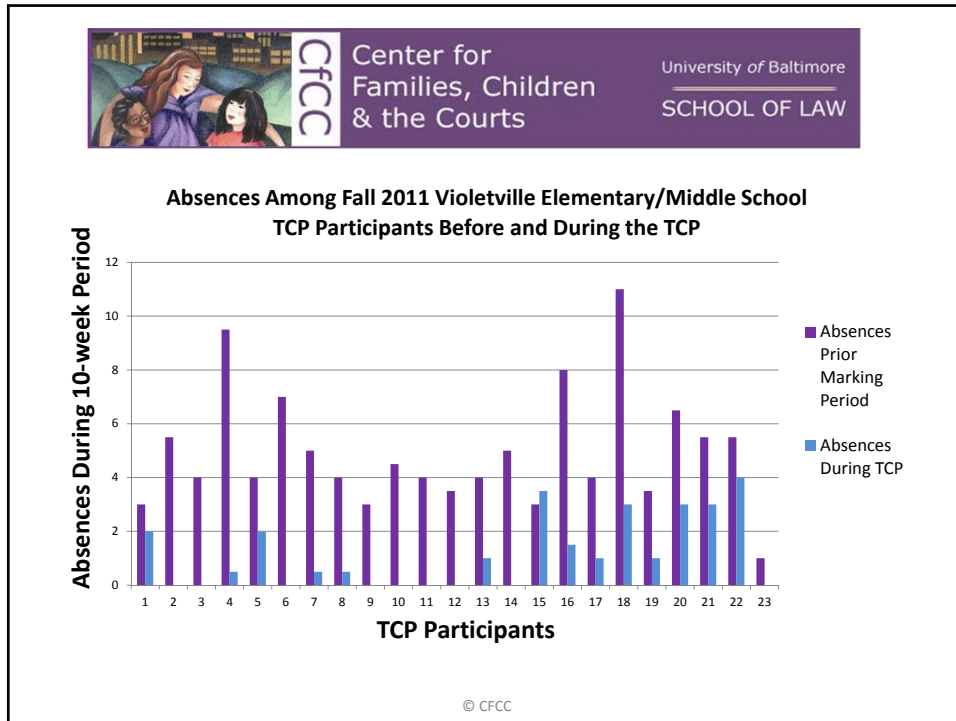
TCP Graduation

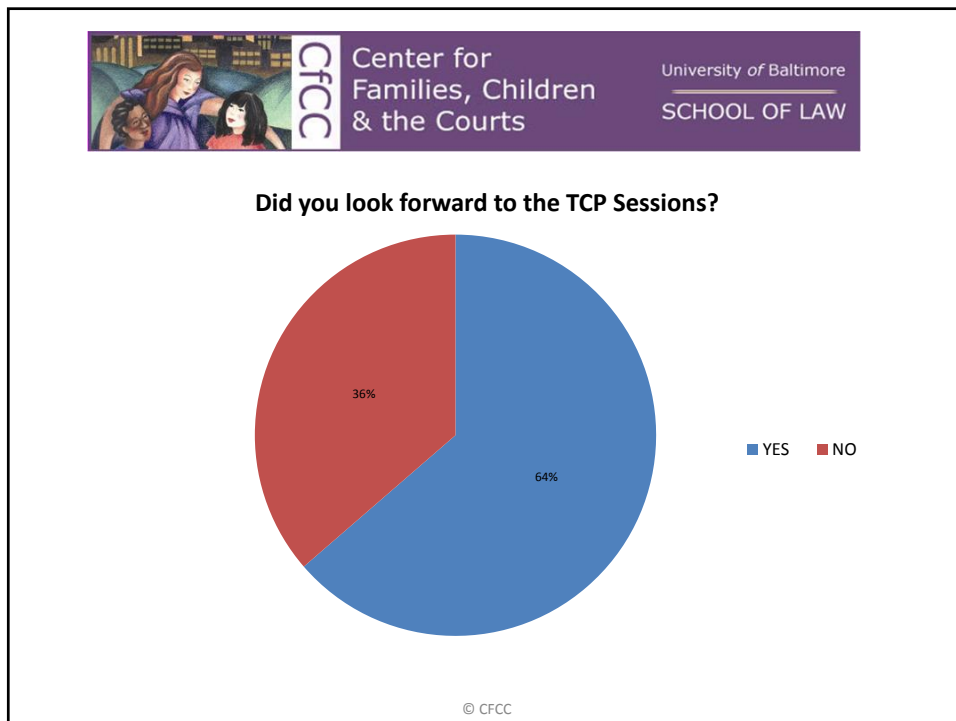
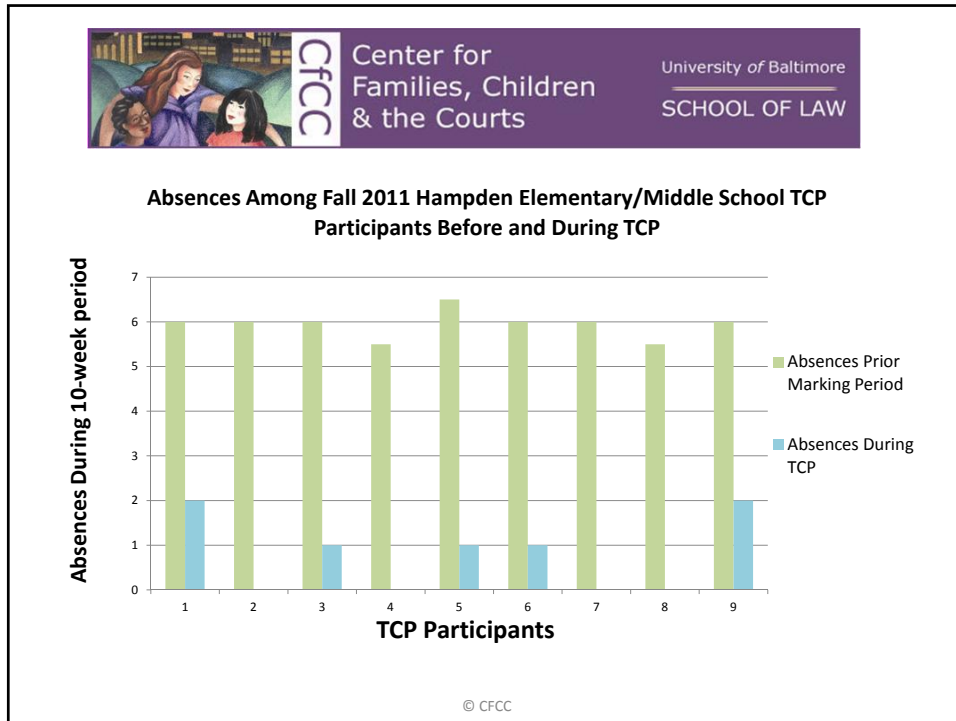


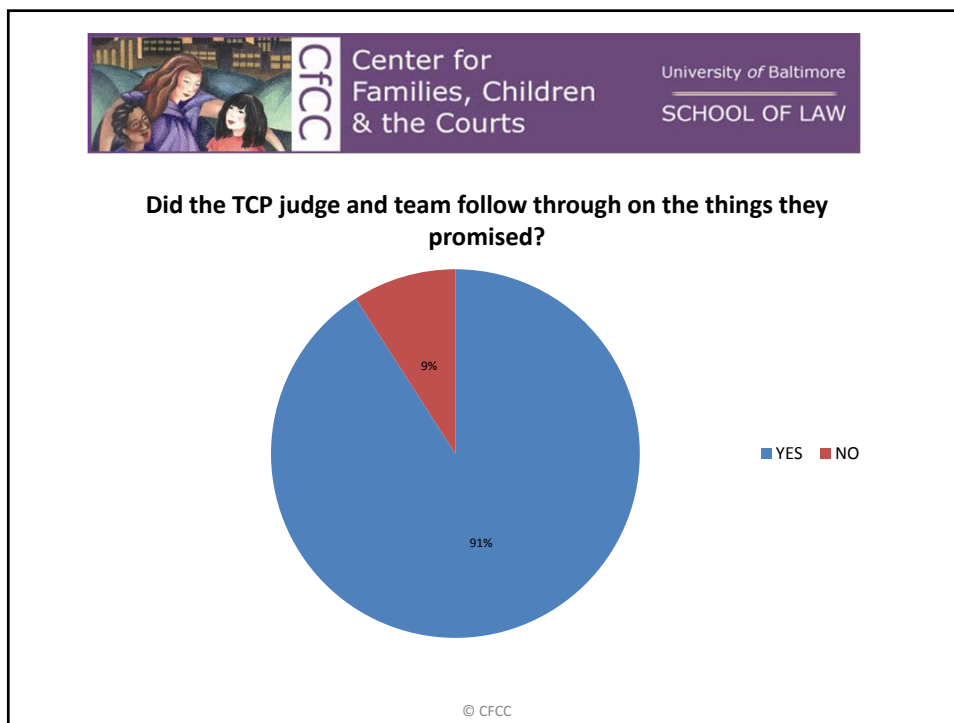
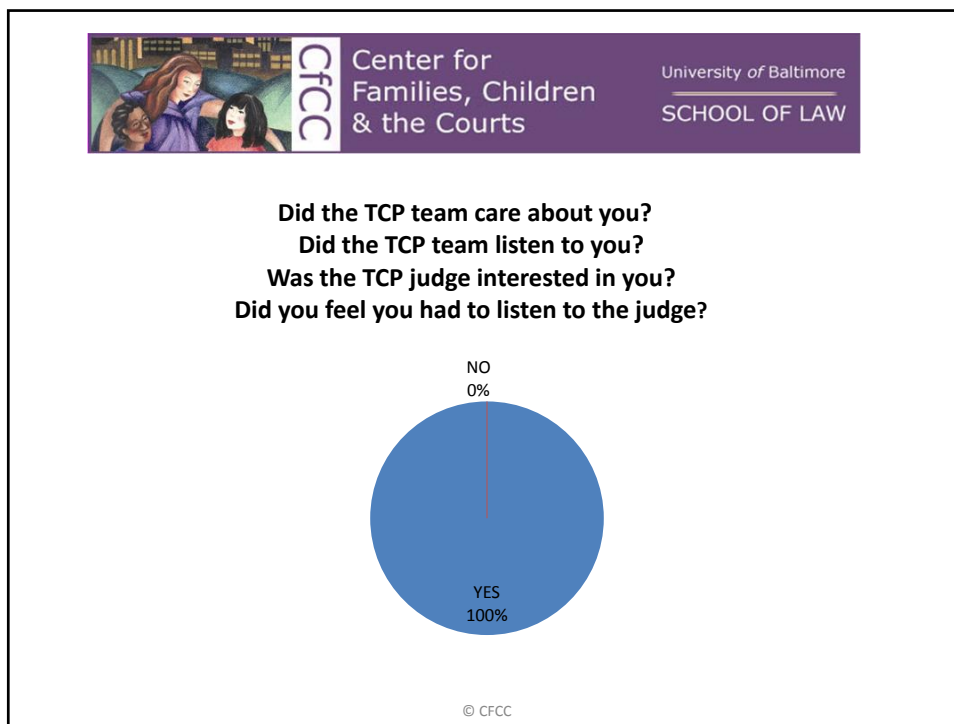
- Benchmark is a 65% decrease in unexcused absences and/or tardies, along with improved grades and classroom behavior.
- 70% of the TCP students graduate.

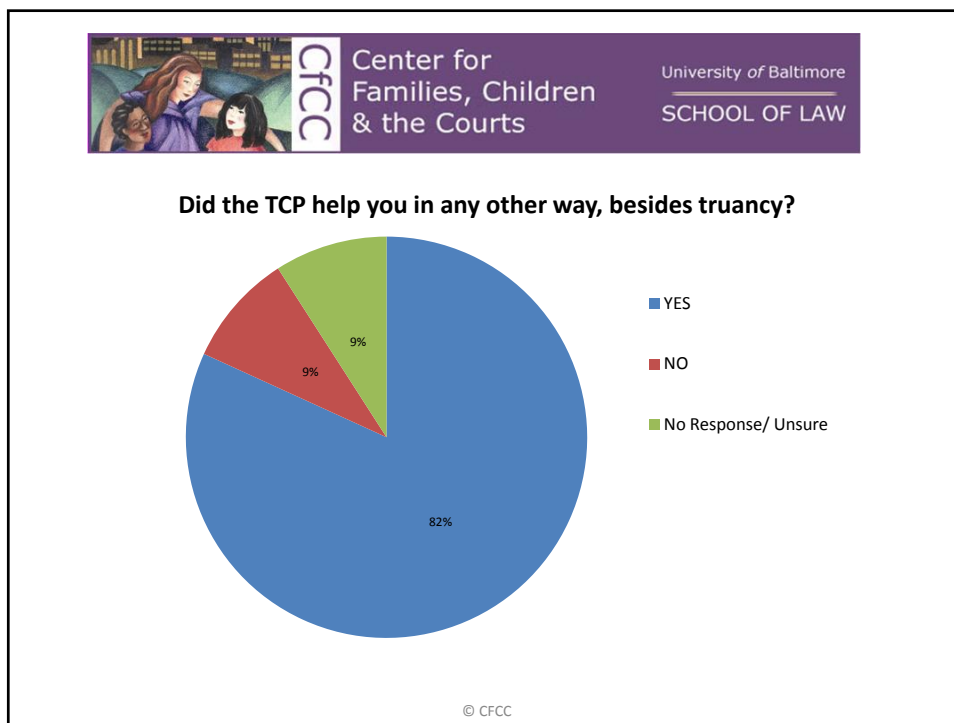
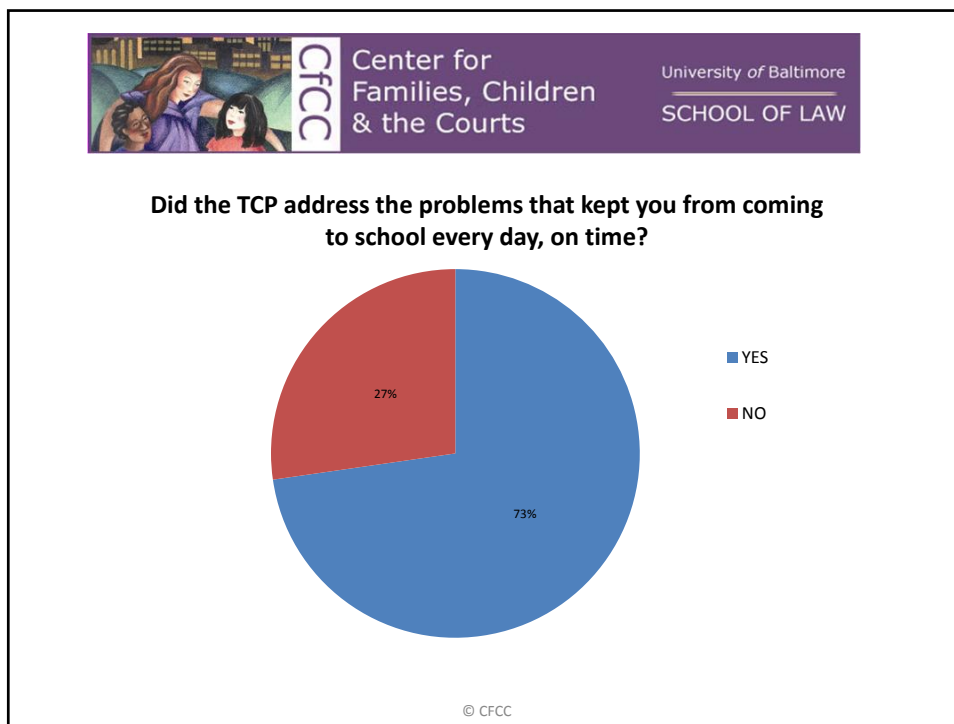
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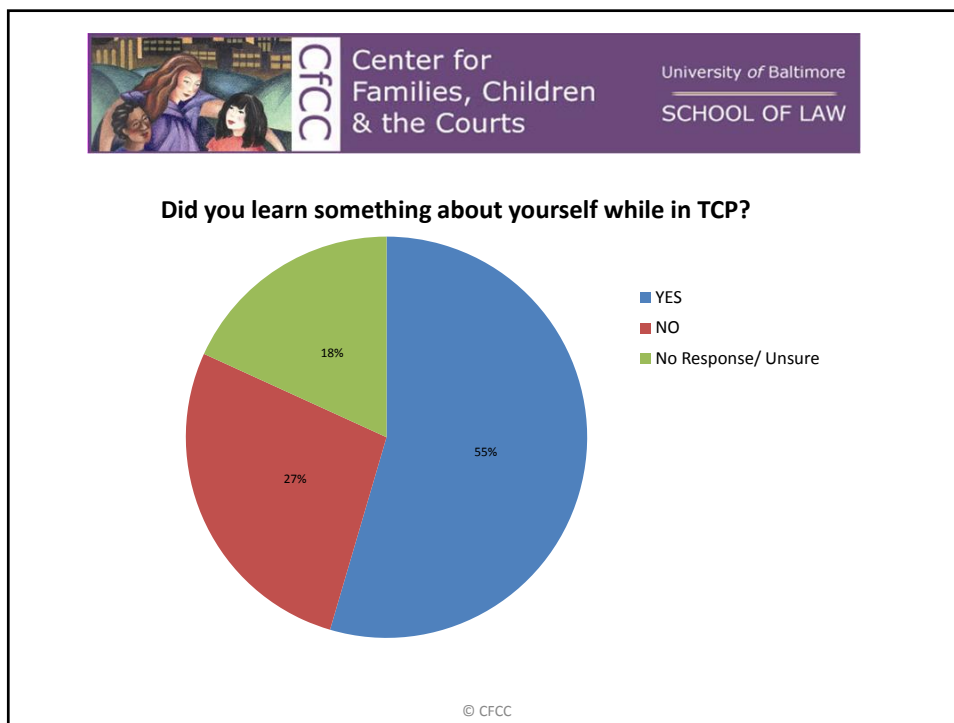
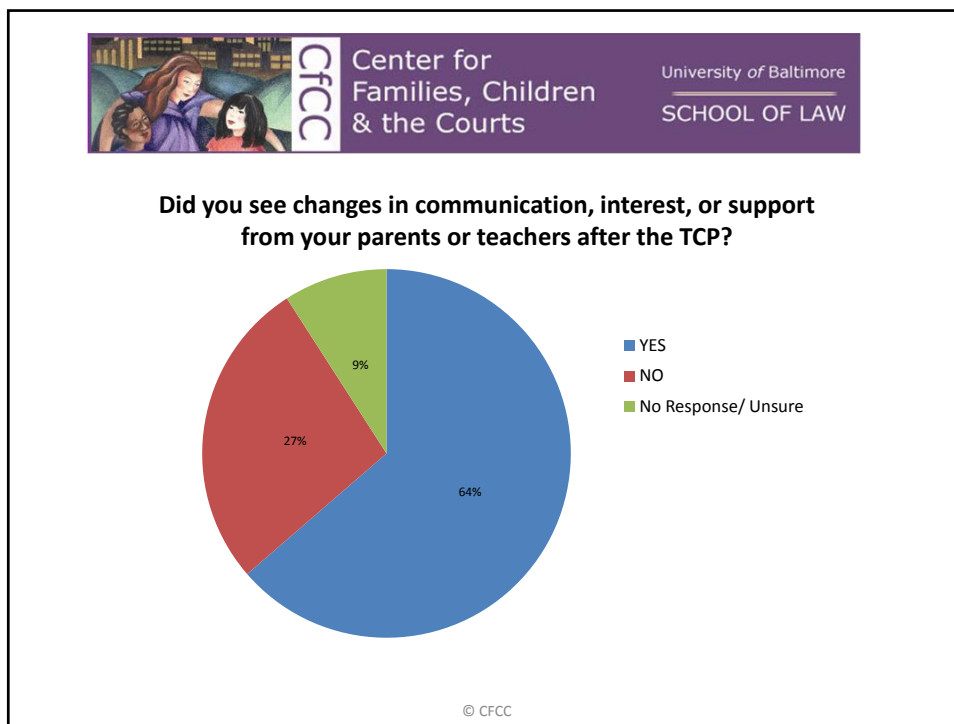


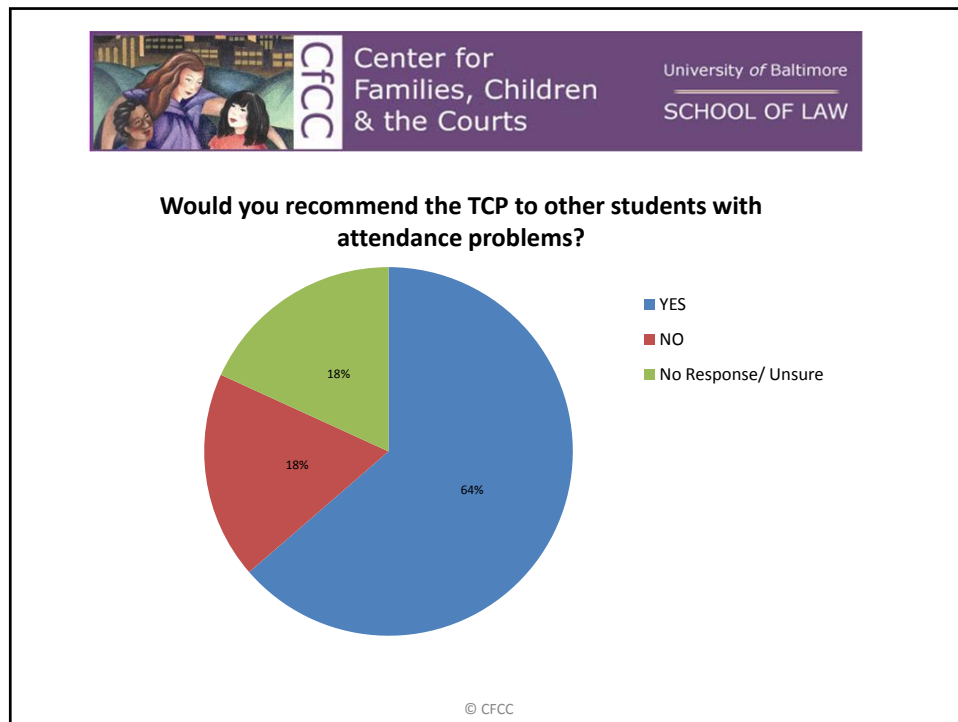












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- Center for Families, Children & the Courts
University of Baltimore
SCHOOL OF LAW
- ### User Surveys - Parents
- All believe that the TCP team cares for their child(ren), listens to and understands what parents have to say, and follows through on 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.
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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



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