

OHIO SUPPORTS ATTENDANCE:
A Community Collaboration of the
Supreme Court of Ohio
& the Ohio Department of Education



School Attendance
TOOLKIT

Prepared by:

*The Supreme Court of Ohio Dispute Resolution Section,
Supreme Court Commission on Dispute Resolution
& the Ohio Department of Education*

2018

THE SUPREME COURT *of* OHIO

OHIO SUPPORTS ATTENDANCE: A COMMUNITY COLLABORATION SCHOOL ATTENDANCE TOOLKIT



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A MESSAGE FROM THE COMMISSION CHAIRPERSON

The Juvenile Justice System has long-served as the forum to which children and their families are sent to adjudicate offenses related to truancy. Recognizing that school-aged children who are charged with a crime are 50 percent more likely to return to court, juvenile courts in Ohio seek in all appropriate cases to avoid formal court action and to use other community resources to improve situations brought to the attention of the court.

This School Attendance Toolkit (“Toolkit”) provides courts and schools with a guide to designing and implementing a successful dispute resolution program to help students be on time and get to school every day. The Toolkit furnishes resources to: (1) promote school attendance through community support and the provision of dispute resolution education and training; (2) intervene when absenteeism occurs but before a student becomes habitually truant; and (3) respond with positive action when truancy and related charges are filed. It incorporates the 2017 legislative changes in H.B. 410 and builds on the Commission on Dispute Resolution and Conflict Management’s successful Truancy Prevention through Mediation Program. The Toolkit also introduces the dispute resolution process of “Attendance Coordination” as the application of a multi-disciplinary coordination process to promote school attendance, decrease chronic absences, reduce habitual truancy, and address underlying issues that prevent students from getting to school.

The Supreme Court of Ohio Dispute Resolution Section and the Commission on Dispute Resolution received assistance from many programs, mediators, courts, schools, agencies, and experienced professionals in creating this guide to promote, intervene and respond to school attendance issues. Special thanks to the Family and Children First Council, the Ohio Department of Education, and the Commission’s “Ohio Supports Attendance: A Community Collaboration Subcommittee” led by Judge Robert Fragale of the Marion County Ohio Family Court.

–Magistrate Richard Altman



A MESSAGE FROM THE SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIRPERSON

School attendance can provide the first opportunity to identify children at risk of entering the Juvenile Justice System. Issues with attendance and behavior at school are an indication that a child may be in need of intervention by school and community partners for services to assist the family in remedying these issues. In compliance with the law, court referral should only be considered after family engagement and corrective measures have been exhausted.

The Ohio Supports Attendance: A Community Collaboration Subcommittee worked to develop a comprehensive School Attendance Toolkit focused on community collaboration, family engagement and successful dispute resolution practices that can be adopted by both school districts and juvenile courts to minimize formal court referrals and meet the needs of families on a case-by-case basis. We identified four primary areas as necessary to consider in designing an effective school attendance program: (1) community support, (2) dispute resolution education and training, (3) effective evaluation and (4) sustainable funding. Workgroups were organized to examine each area, in order to create a positive and less intrusive approach to absenteeism, affording the opportunity for family participation without formal court involvement.

Due to the Subcommittee members' dedication and commitment to our children, this Toolkit was created to offer guidance through collaboration and dispute resolution to those of us interested in the education and the development of our children into productive, engaged adults.

- Hon. Robert Fragale



A MESSAGE FROM THE OHIO DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Ohio's Strategic Plan for Education, *Each Child, Our Future*, ensures each student in Ohio is challenged, prepared and empowered for his or her future by way of an excellent prekindergarten through grade 12 education. We know regular school attendance is key to students' success, and success requires support and partnerships across all systems — parents, caregivers and families; schools and districts; community institutions; and government agencies. That's why I am pleased the Supreme Court of Ohio collaboratively developed this School Attendance Toolkit as another resource to support the attendance needs of Ohio's students to reduce chronic absenteeism.

Along with this toolkit, the Department encourages districts and schools to work with the court system and other local partners to develop processes, policies and supports that meet the unique needs of each student in every community. Aligning resources and supports across systems, including the education and juvenile justice systems, will ensure continuity of care for students facing barriers to regular attendance.

Early intervention and consistent communication from all partners to students, families and community members about the importance of regular school attendance can help ensure each child is supported and confident both inside and outside of the classroom.

*- Paolo DeMaria, Superintendent of Public Instruction
Ohio Department of Education*



I. INTRODUCTION

This Toolkit provides resources for Ohio’s juvenile courts and schools to develop an effective school attendance program and help keep students from entering the juvenile justice system due to school absences. It is not intended to offer legal advice and the illustrations offered within the Toolkit should be viewed as examples. To be successful, each court and school will use the ideas in the Toolkit to develop a program tailored to the individual needs of each unique community.

The first step in designing a stronger and more effective school attendance program is to identify the critical components of programs that have demonstrated success. The National Center for School Engagement compiled its own research along with assessment work conducted by the US Department of Education (DOE), the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), the National Dropout Prevention Center/Network (NDPC/N), and the Washington State Institute for Public Policy (WSIPP). It identified various elements of programs that withstood the test of time and that help students be on time and get to school every day. Successful school attendance programs aimed at reducing patterns of absenteeism incorporate the following elements: community support, education and training, effective evaluation, and sustainable funding.

H.B. 410 requires school districts to adopt a policy to address school absences and further requires the school to consult with the juvenile court in developing such policy. While schools and courts have separate roles and responsibilities, addressing student absenteeism is ultimately a collaborative effort. W.E.B. DuBois once observed that “[e]ducation is that whole system of human training within and without the school-house walls, which molds and develops [people].” Just as a student’s educational success, or lack thereof, impacts the community in which he or she lives, the community in which a child learns and grows can impact his or her engagement and success in school. School attendance programs should be designed in such a way as to encourage and foster collaboration among schools, families, and courts.

In September 2008, Hedy N. Chang from the National Center for Children in Poverty noted that “students have to be present and engaged in order to learn.”¹ Despite the simplicity of this statement, the reasons for student absences are complex and the consequences of student absences are far-reaching. By decreasing absences and keeping students engaged in school, more students graduate from high school, which in turn results in more jobs, more tax revenue, more spending and investments, more home and auto sales, more post-secondary graduates, less crime, and decreased health care costs.² The societal implications of keeping students in school and fostering their success compel courts, schools, and communities to action in making student engagement a priority.

1 Present, Engaged and Accounted For, The Critical Importance of Addressing Chronic Absence in the Early Grades. By Hedy Chang. http://www.nccp.org/publications/pdf/text_837.pdf. September 2008, page 3.

2 Alliance for Excellent Education, Economic Impact Map, <http://impact.all4ed.org/#potential/income/ohio/all-students/>



II. THE IMPACT OF ABSENCE³

Missing school can result in failing to learn concepts. Each day of learning builds on the previous day, so over time, there is a snowball effect that can result in students being unable to move on to more complicated work. Students who are not at school can fall behind in social development.

Concept Deficits

According to Ginsberg, et.al., “students who miss more school than their peers score lower on National Assessment for Education Progress (NAEP). This is true at every age, in every racial and ethnic group and in every state and city examined,” because when a student does not hear, see, or participate in a lesson plan, he or she does not learn the concept being taught. These unlearned concepts are evident through lower test scores.⁴

Aggregate Concept Deficits

Curriculum is developed so that basic concepts are taught first. Complex theories overlay basic concepts and are difficult for a student to understand if he or she does not have the underlying foundation of knowledge. For example, if a child misses early year basic vowel sound lesson plans, the student will struggle with mid-year full word identification. Learning complex concepts is difficult when basic concepts are not understood.

Social Deficits

School provides children with an interactive social environment that includes processes like navigating crowded school halls and communicating with adults. School children learn to take turns with a jump rope at gym class, to share a glue stick in art class, and to quietly listen and learn from teachers presenting curriculum. As a result, “chronic absence in preschool and kindergarten, which is defined as missing 10 percent or more of a school year, is tied to weaker development of social skills needed to persist in school.”⁵

Missing school can set students up to fall behind academically and socially. Absence can impact learning through poor test scores and socialization.

3 Absences Add Up: How School Attendance Influences Student Success. By Alan Ginsburg, Phyllis Jordan and Hedy Chang. http://www.attendanceworks.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Absences-Add-Up_September-3rd-2014.pdf

4 See note 3, above.

5 Mapping the Early Attendance Gap. Charting a Course for School Success. Written by Attendance Works and the Healthy Schools Campaign. <http://www.attendanceworks.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Mapping-the-Early-Attendance-Gap-Final-4.pdf> page 5.



III. ATTENDANCE BARRIERS AND BRIDGES

While many students struggle with being on time and getting to school every day, absenteeism has a disproportionate effect on students with disabilities, students of color, and economically disadvantaged students.⁶ Attendance barriers may be categorized as family, school, and community barriers.

Family Barriers

Examples of family barriers include lack of food, clothing, or services to help with mental health or substance abuse issues. Other family barriers may include homelessness, chronic illness, child welfare involvement or juvenile justice involvement.

Imagine a single father, Joe, who struggled to find a job. Joe obtained employment as a janitor working from 11:00 p.m. until 7:00 a.m. at a facility across town. It takes Joe 45 minutes to travel from work to home. Joe's daughter, 10-year-old Suzy, starts school at 8:00 a.m. Suzy often is late to school because she sleeps at home while Joe works and wakes up late.

Availability of financial and social service resources affects a family's ability to obtain food, clothing, shelter, health care, coping skills, employment, and to achieve mental and physical wellness and effectively respond to challenges in life. Lack of resources restricts families' choices, impairs decision-making skills, limits language learning, and causes many other problems.⁷ Attendance can be a challenge for students when their families face a number of barriers or when the family barriers are perceived as overwhelming.

While it may be argued that Joe has control over his employment and his family's schedule because he chooses which job he takes and what hours he works, in reality, there are few jobs available for him and his job choice is extremely limited. Moreover, single father Joe lacks an adult support system. If Joe had a spouse, family, or friends near him, he might have help getting his daughter to school. Joe's situation highlights how the combination of his family barrier (employment) and his lack of resources (financial, support system) impact Suzy's attendance.

Next, imagine that Joe started a "walk to school" program at Suzy's school where parents took turns walking students to school every morning. Imagine that Suzy's attendance improved with this community-supported resource. What else could Joe do to help Suzy attend school?

6 Chronic absenteeism: An old problem in search of new answers. [Brian A. Jacob](https://www.brookings.edu/research/chronic-absenteeism-an-old-problem-in-search-of-new-answers/) and [Kelly Lovett](https://www.brookings.edu/research/chronic-absenteeism-an-old-problem-in-search-of-new-answers/). <https://www.brookings.edu/research/chronic-absenteeism-an-old-problem-in-search-of-new-answers/>

7 "Bridges out of Poverty. Strategies for Professionals and Communities." Ruby K. Payne, Philip E. DeVol, Terie Dreussi Smith. 2001, page 11.

School Barriers

Immediately upon entering a school building, students form beliefs about school. Culture, rules, staff, environment, and communication within a school each influence students' and families' beliefs about how they will interact with the school. These factors can either enhance a student's experience or may become a school barrier to attendance.

Consider teenager Tyrone, who walks down the hall of his school. Teenager Tasha is upset with him and she walks in front of him and slaps him across the face. Tyrone yells at Tasha to stop. Tasha pushes him. Tyrone pushes back. There are numerous police officers patrolling halls because the school is in a high crime neighborhood. When a police officer hears the yelling, he intervenes and charges both teens with a safe school violation. Following the altercation, Tyrone is found delinquent from the safe school violation charge. Tyrone feels like the court intervention was too heavy-handed and stops liking school. Tyrone's mother asks the school to have police officers leave the school building so that Tyrone will not be scared that he will incur more of a record if other teens act irrationally as Tasha did.

Schools have control over their physical buildings, administration, teachers, support staff, policies, communication, transportation, and overall equity. This scenario underscores the complexity of school barriers as well as the ways in which school barriers can lead to student absence.

Envision a different scenario where Tyrone's school contacted the National Crime Prevention Association and asked for a School Safety and Needs Assessment workshop. Parents, students, school administrators, and community leaders could attend the workshop and develop a plan to make school safer so that the police officers' role is changed or that the teens would have conflict resolution skills to avoid or resolve the altercation. Other more effective alternatives could include peer mediation. Tyrone could have attended, told Tasha he was upset by her actions, and perhaps Tasha would have apologized. Tyrone would have avoided juvenile court interaction, felt safe at school, and strengthened his desire to attend school.

Community Barriers

Examples of community barriers include non-collaborative public agencies, remote or inconvenient services, violent neighborhoods, lack of public transportation, and pollution.

Third grader Carlos attends school in a polluted neighborhood. Due to his environment, he has bad asthma. While Carlos lives in the inner city, the medical services available to him are on the outskirts of town. Carlos' mother, Consuelo, does not have a car. When Carlos needs medical attention, Consuelo has to find a ride to the medical facility. Coordinating transportation, traveling to the medical facility, and traveling home often takes many hours and Carlos is regularly absent from school.

Every community has unique strengths and can support attendance in various ways. Communities that foster collaboration, relationship-building, accessible services, personal accountability, safe neighborhoods, and healthy environmental conditions foster attendance.

What if a medical provider visited Carlos at school? If Consuelo, the school, and medical providers worked together to bring medical services to school, they could overcome the barrier of inconvenient services and lack of transportation. Additionally, this collaboration would mitigate Carlos' asthma complications.

Bridges to Attendance

Despite challenges, many families are able to bridge barriers to attendance. Mauricio L. Miller asserts that professionals should step aside and allow families to lead their own change: "We have a deep human need to direct our own lives, to learn and create new things, and to do better by ourselves and our world."⁸

Charlie’s mom, Rachel, has four children attending three different schools. Rachel’s children attend school every day but they are always late. Rachel writes letters to the school when Charlie is late. If asked what supports would be helpful, she would say transportation.

Courts and schools that come into contact with students and families as part of a school attendance and truancy intervention process can help them build resilience – the capacity of people to effectively cope with, adjust, or recover from stress or adversity.⁹ Social relationships, personal control, positive emotions, problem solving-skills and future-oriented engagement¹⁰ each increase resilience.

Courts and schools have the opportunity not only to refer and decide cases but also to ask families “What are your family strengths?” “What does a good day look like for you?” and “What support would help your child attend school?” In the scenario above, it might help to recognize and validate Rachel’s organizational strengths and to ask how she would like to be supported so that her children can arrive at school on time.

9 Important Facts about Resilience: A Consideration of Research Findings about Resilience and Implications for Assessment and Treatment. Donald Meichenbaum, Ph.D. Page 4. https://www.melissainstitute.org/documents/facts_resilience.pdf

10 Id. Page 5 and 6.

IV. OHIO LAW ON SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

On Dec. 8, 2016, Ohio’s truancy statute, i.e., House Bill 410 (“H.B. 410”) overwhelmingly passed the Senate, and it became effective on April 6, 2017. H.B. 410 amended various Ohio Revised Code sections and enacted O.R.C. section 3313.668.¹¹ Generally, H.B. 410 accomplished numerous standards by:

- Eliminating the law’s distinction between “chronic truant” and “habitual truant.”
- Basing the measure for habitual truancy and excessive absences on the number of hours, not days, that a student is absent.
- Prohibiting suspension, expulsion, or student removal from school solely based on absenteeism.
- Requiring school districts to update local truancy and attendance policies.
- Requiring school districts with a chronic absenteeism rate of 5 percent or above, per the most recent report card issued by the Ohio Department of Education, to establish Absence Intervention Teams (AIT) for habitually truant students. Districts with a chronic absenteeism rate below 5 percent are exempt from establishing Absence Intervention Teams.
- Requiring districts to notify, in writing, the guardian of a student who becomes excessively absent, which means absent with or without legitimate excuse for 38 or more hours in one school month, or 65 hours in a school year.
- Requiring school districts to make at least three (3) meaningful, good faith attempts to secure participation of a student’s parent or guardian on the Absence Intervention Team within seven days of the student meeting the habitual absence trigger. If parents or guardians are not responsive to participating, the district may decide that failure to respond triggers mandatory reporting to child protective services.
- Requiring school districts to report additional data elements to the Department of Education.
- Requiring school districts to file a complaint against the student and any person who fails to ensure the child’s attendance at school, on the 61st day after implementation of an Absence Intervention Plan (“AIP”) provided appropriate steps were taken to re-engage the student.

¹¹ House Bill 410 amended O.R.C. sections 2151.011, 2151.022, 2151.18, 2151.23, 2151.27, 2151.28, 2151.311, 2151.35, 2151.354, 2152.02, 2152.021, 2152.19, 2152.26, 2919.24, 3313.534, 3313.66, 3313.661, 3314.03, 3321.041, 3321.16, 3321.19, 3321.191, 3321.22, 3321.38, 3326.11, 3328.24, 4510.32, and 5919.34.

- Mandating that juvenile courts consider an alternative to adjudication for unruly complaints that are filed based on the child’s habitual truancy.
- Directing the State Board of Education to develop a model policy addressing violent, disruptive, or inappropriate behavior, including excessive absences, that stresses preventative strategies and alternatives to suspension or expulsion that districts may adopt in part or in whole.
- Assigning consequences for failure to send a child to school.
- Defining affirmative defenses to habitual truancy complaints.
- Requiring the Ohio Family and Children First Cabinet Council to establish a pilot program creating multi-disciplinary truancy teams in which school districts may participate in lieu of some required absence intervention plan processes.
- Providing instruction on out-of-school suspension processes.
- Amending Ohio National Guard Scholarship provisions.

In sum, H.B. 410 enacted Ohio’s desire to de-criminalize truancy and improve student attendance and success. This desire stems from vast evidence supporting the ideas that a student’s attendance is critically important for academic success. Below is a chart developed to provide an overview of the action to be taken by Schools, Courts, and the applicable dispute-resolution processes.

HOUSE BILL 410 OVERVIEW

ACTION TAKEN BY THE SCHOOLS

1A If a student misses school without legitimate excuse for 30 consecutive hours, 42 hours in a month, OR 72 hours in a year, then student crosses the “**Habitual Truant**” threshold. [R.C. 2151.011(B)(18)]

1B If a student misses 38 or more hours in **1** one month, 65 or more hours in a school **2** year, with OR WITHOUT legitimate excuse, **3** then student crosses the “**Excessively Absent**” threshold. [R.C. 3321.191(B)(1)]

1C If a student passes Habitual Truant threshold **21 days before last day of school**, then district may design summer AIP or implement plan 7 days before school starts. [R.C. 3321.191(C)(2)(f)]

2A When a student passes the **Habitual Truant** threshold, school must assign student to an **Absence Intervention Team (AIT)** [R.C. 3321.191(C)(2)(a)]

2B Within 7 days of student passing **Excessively Absent** threshold, school must notify student’s parent, guardian, or custodian of absences in writing. [R.C. 3321.191(C)(1)]

3A Within 7 days of student crossing Habitual Truant threshold, school **shall select AIT members** and make **at least 3 meaningful, good-faith attempts** to secure AIT participation of parent, guardian, GAL, or temporary custodian. **AIT members SHALL include:** parent, school representative who has rapport with student, AND a district representative. **AIT members MAY include:** child’s guardian, custodian, GAL, temporary custodian, school psychologist, counselor, social worker, or other representative. [R.C. 3321.191(C)(2)(c - e)]

3B Within 14 days of the AIT assignment, the team shall create an **Absence Intervention Plan (AIP)** for the student to reduce or eliminate absence. An AIP shall **vary based on student need** and **shall state:** “The attendance officer shall file a complaint not later than 61 days after the date the plan was implemented, if the child has refused to participate in or failed to make satisfactory progress on, the intervention plan or an alternative to adjudication.” [R.C. 3321.191(C)(2)(a)] **1 2 3**

4A If a school made **meaningful attempts to re-engage** a Habitual Truant student and the student **refused to participate in AIP or failed to make progress** on AIP, then, 61 days after AIP implementation, **school must file a complaint** with juvenile court. **If 61st day falls in summer, school may extend plan and delay filing** 30 days from first day of next school year. [R.C. 3321.16(B)(1 & 3)]

4B During the AIP implementation phase, if a student is absent **without legitimate excuse** 30 or more consecutive hours or 42 or more hours in a school month, unless AIT says student has made substantial progress, then **school must file a complaint against that student.** [R.C. 3321.16(B)(2)]

4C IF PROGRESS MADE before the 61st day after AIP implementation, **then AIP can be closed or monitored.** School notifies all AIT members of progress and/or closure.

ACTION TAKEN BY THE COURT

5. Prosecutor forwards legally sufficient complaints.

6. Juvenile court must consider an **alternative to adjudication** and consider the complaint only as a matter of last resort. [R.C. 2151.27(G)]

7. ALTERNATIVE TO ADJUDICATION: MEDIATION **1 2 3 4**

8A If agreement is complied with, then **close case and notify school and school district of outcome.**

8B If agreement is reached, then **monitor compliance.**

8C If a student no-shows, fails to comply, or does not reach agreement, then **schedule an adjudication hearing.**

9. No later than 10 days after child is adjudicated an unruly child, juvenile court must **provide notice of any adjudication related to a child’s truancy to the school district and school** in which the student was enrolled when the complaint was filed. [R.C. 2151.354(C)(2)(d)]

10. Any person having knowledge of child’s adjudication as an unruly child for being a habitual truant **may file a complaint alleging the child is delinquent for violating a court order regarding the prior adjudication.** [R.C. 2152.021(A)(2)]

11. Court must provide notice to school of Unruly Delinquency Truancy finding within 10 days of adjudication. [R.C. 2152.19(E)(2)]

Juvenile court must indicate in its annual report the number of children placed in alternatives to adjudication, the number who successfully complete those programs, and the number who fail to complete those programs who are adjudicated unruly. [R.C. 2151.18(B)]

LEGEND: Dispute resolution processes sponsored by courts for use in schools: **1** Pre-filing Mediation **2** Facilitation **3** Attendance Coordination **4** Alternative to Adjudication Mediation



V. COMMUNITY SUPPORT STRATEGIES TO BE DEVELOPED JOINTLY BY COURTS & SCHOOLS

Schools and courts want to help students be on time and get to school every day, but not all students need the same level of support. One way to identify the level of support students need is to connect the number of hours of school a student has been absent to a “tiered” system of support, i.e., the more hours missed, the higher the “tier” or level of support. One national organization, called Attendance Works, uses a three-tiered system that has proven to be successful.¹² Attendance Works is a project of the Child and Family Policy Center, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.

The three-tiered model can be applied to support Ohio’s attendance laws. Ohio’s attendance laws¹³ require schools and courts to respond to absenteeism based on whether absences occur consecutively, during one calendar month, or during an academic year. As students miss more hours of school, they may move from being excessively absent to habitually truant if their absences are not excused. Ultimately, a continued failure to improve attendance may lead to increased involvement with the juvenile justice system. The chart below applies Attendance Works’ three-tiered system of support to Ohio’s attendance laws, and the following section provides aligned strategies to address each tier.

Tier I	Absence. Applies if a student has missed 5 percent or less of school Promotes school attendance
Tier II	Excessive Absence. Applies if a student is considered excessively absent under Ohio law: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Missed 38 or more hours of school in one month with or without a legitimate excuse • Missed 65 or more hours in the school year with or without a legitimate excuse Ohio’s compulsory school attendance laws define an excessively absent student as one who has missed 38 hours in one month with or without legitimate excuse or 65 hours of school in one school year with or without a legitimate excuse.
Tier III	Truancy. Applies if a student is considered habitually truant under Ohio law: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Missed 30 unexcused consecutive hours of school • Missed 42 unexcused hours of school in one month • Missed 72 unexcused hours in the school year Ohio’s compulsory school attendance laws define a habitual truant as a student who has 30 consecutive hours without a legitimate excuse, 42 hours in one month without a legitimate excuse, or 72 hours in a school year without a legitimate excuse.

¹² Attendanceworks.org.

¹³ Ohio Revised Code Chapter 3321 School Attendance

Tiered strategies rely on data. It is helpful to have one person or group in each school monitor and share weekly data that breaks absent students into tiers. By using a tiered approach, schools can assign scarce resources based on need, giving each student the resources he or she needs, no more and no less.

Create accountability by assigning staff within the district to collect and share data based on the level of intervention of “Tier” of absences.

In addition to tracking the number of hours of school missed, it is important to note absence patterns.

Why are absence patterns important?

Student absences may occur in varying patterns and those patterns may tell a story. Students may regularly be on time and get to school every day and then suddenly miss five days in a row. What might cause a five-day consecutive absence? Perhaps a vacation, an illness, or a death in a family, or perhaps new circumstances that give cause for concern and support.

Some students miss 48 hours each calendar month, every Friday and Monday. What might cause such a monthly absence pattern? Perhaps a visitation agreement provides one parent companionship every Friday through Monday and that parent lives out of town or does not believe in education. Maybe a student’s parents work weekends out-of-town and take children to work with them. Perhaps a student’s absence pattern is a red flag to human trafficking.¹⁴

Some students have perfect fall and spring attendance and multiple winter absences. This academic year absence pattern may occur because students walk to school or wait at a bus-stop and lack the appropriate outerwear to stay warm in sub-zero temperatures.

Absence patterns indicate the cause of absence. Weekly data monitoring, in conjunction with absence pattern identification, provides key information about why a student may be absent. The following section applies all or more of the same four strategies to each tier: (1) Engage students and parents; (2) Recognize good and improved attendance; (3) Provide personalized and early outreach; and (4) Remove barriers to student attendance.

14 <http://opd.ohio.gov/Portals/0/PDF/Juvenile/10%20Human%20Trafficking%20Red%20Flags%20List.pdf>

A. TIER I ABSENCE: STRATEGIES TO PROMOTE ATTENDANCE

Tier I intervention strategies are for students who miss less than 5 percent of school. These students are at minimal risk, and they benefit from universally applicable attendance support.

Many of the Tier I strategies can be applied to prevent absences and promote attendance for all students, even those who are regularly attending school. Educating students and families on the importance of attendance and the deficits that come from cumulative absences is an effective strategy for preventing absences before negative patterns occur. In the words of Benjamin Franklin, “an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.”

Tier I intervention costs should be minimal. Because Tier I students miss less school than Tier II and III students, the support provided is minimally restrictive, low-cost, and used to prevent future absence.

Strategy #1: Engage Students and Parents

Support for attendance can start with a positive message: when a student misses school, someone notices, and when a student is present at school, he or she is appreciated and valued. Maya Angelou famously stated “people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.” Student and parent engagement involves making them feel welcome and safe. A smile, wave, and “hello” make people feel welcome. Bulletin boards, banners, and posters reflecting positive, simple attendance messages like those offered by [Attendance Works](#) engage students and families. At a 2017 school attendance conference, Cleveland students who resolved truancy problems and re-engaged in school uniformly stated that the one intervention that made the most difference to them was that when they missed school, “someone noticed.”¹⁵

15 Shelisa Johnson, Erie County Common Pleas Court, Juvenile Division; Diversion Counselor or Mediator/Custody Investigator

Positive support also comes through education on the importance of school attendance. The Ohio Department of Education provides a simple attendance message:

Did You Know?

A student may be considered chronically absent if he or she misses as few as two days of school a month.

When do you think absences seriously affect a student's ability to do well in school? Is it when a student is absent 18 days during a school year? Or when they miss 10 percent of the total school days in a year? Or when they miss 2 days of school per month? These are different ways of saying the same thing and is known as "chronic absenteeism."

A student is less likely to succeed if he or she misses just two days a month, regardless of the reason for the absence. Research shows that children who miss just two days a month throughout the school year in kindergarten and first grade are much less likely to read at grade level by the end of the 3rd grade. By 6th grade they are at risk for dropping out, and by 9th grade, they are less likely to graduate. Good attendance can predict graduation rates even better than 8th grade test scores.

Engaging students and parents depends on effectively conveying messages like that of the Ohio Department of Education's, which clearly indicates that going to school regularly matters.¹⁶

Handouts, attendance discussions at meetings, and back-to-school events are great forums to promote attendance. Discussing acceptable absence reasons and the proper channels to report absence further engages students and families. Before-school and after-school programs also bolster engagement.

16 <http://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Chronic-Absenteeism>

Engagement begins when school starts. In Sandusky, Ohio, schools hold an annual back-to-school rally to stir school excitement.¹⁷ Recognizing that costly school supplies are barriers to attendance, Volunteers of America runs “Operation Backpack,” and supplies backpacks to children.¹⁸ As costly supplies also are a challenge for teachers, schools can ask community leaders to “adopt a classroom” to meet supply needs. Similarly, schools can encourage the community to share other resources for students. At the Cleveland Metro Schools, the Cleveland Browns donated three new turf fields.¹⁹ In Cincinnati, the Cincinnati Bengals issued a grant to support Cincinnati Public Schools.²⁰

Engagement requires that a school and community make expectations clear. Training key people (administrators, teachers, coaches, community leaders, and parents) about attendance policies can empower them to encourage attendance. Words also matter: use words like “absence” when talking with parents to promote urgent understanding that students who miss school miss something important. Gratefully recognize that extended family members are often key supporters when talking about attendance. Resources for communicating with positive messaging can be found at: <http://www.attendanceworks.org/resources/messaging/>. Additionally, encourage families to understand and track students’ attendance, and provide families with tools for positive engagement and actionable data.²¹

In Marion County, the juvenile judges and school districts regularly come together to help students. School and court leaders meet monthly to discuss localized common barriers as well as interventions to overcome those barriers. They identify gaps and overlaps in services, reasons students are missing school, successful efforts, results, statistics, disconnected messages, and ways for courts and schools to send consistent messages. Stakeholders operate under the premise that partnerships promote attendance and that regular communication is a key to success – that communication from the courts must be consistent with communication from the schools. Where appropriate, educational information may be signed by both the court and the school superintendent, reinforcing the partnership and message.

17 Sandusky afterschool program. <http://npsandusky.org/>

18 VOA Operation Backpack. <https://www.voago.org/operationbackpack>

19 Cleveland Browns donate three new turf fields to Cleveland Metro Schools. <http://clevelandmetroschools.org/site/default.aspx?PageType=3&DomainID=3062&ModuleInstanceID=1887&ViewID=047E6BE3-6D87-4130-8424-D8E4E9ED6C2A&RenderLoc=0&FlexDataID=13102&PageID=9145>

20 <http://www.bengals.com/news/article-1/Bengals-issue-grant-to-Cincinnati-Public-Schools/9621c87c-3619-44fe-8b84-258c8bd2ce4f>.

21 <http://www.attendanceworks.org/tools/>

Strategy #2: Recognize Good and Improved Attendance

Attendance incentives motivate students.²² There are universal, inexpensive ways to provide incentives. Friendly competition can be generated among classrooms offering raffles, parties, and public recognition for good and improved attendance. Schools can celebrate attendance progress through bulletin boards, certificates, verbal, and written recognition. Special assemblies are powerful opportunities to publicly recognize good attendance. The value of good attendance is further highlighted by staff who model good attendance habits.

September is National Attendance Awareness Month and it is an effective time to incorporate attendance information into positive messaging. News stations often look for stories to feature, and September can be an ideal time to ask the news to highlight a school's attendance message.

Attendance Works provides numerous suggestions on ways to establish school-wide incentives.²³ Outside Ohio, the Detroit Tigers reward perfect attendance.²⁴

Strategy #3: Provide Personalized and Early Outreach

Attendance communication should begin when students are young. Discussion about how students learn concepts in kindergarten and how those concepts build over time is important. When school staff and parents talk about attendance, attendance gains value. Attendance value is further reinforced when schools contact parents quickly after any absence is noted. Moreover, noting "hours missed" on student report cards and supporting policies that preclude sports for absent students highlight the importance of attendance.

Educational campaigns can promote positive attendance messaging. The Cleveland Metro School District runs the "Get 2 School. You can make it!" campaign with The Cleveland Browns Foundation as the signature partner.²⁵ It is the first city-wide campaign promoting the awareness and importance of school attendance, utilizing billboards, yard signs, radio commercials, social media, phone banking, home visits, and videos featuring Cleveland Browns players sharing the importance of getting to

22 The Power and Pitfalls of Education Incentives. Bradley M. Allan and Roland G. Fryer Jr. The Hamilton Project. Discussion Paper. See discussion of Washington D.C. Input Experiment. http://scholar.harvard.edu/files/fryer/files/092011_incentives_fryer_allen_paper2.pdf. Also, Loveland, K., & Olley, J. (1979). The effect of external reward on interest and quality of task performance in children on high and low intrinsic motivation. *Child Development*, 50, 1207-1210

23 <http://www.attendanceworks.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/AW-Incentives-two-pager-1-4-11.pdf>

24 http://detroit.tigers.mlb.com/det/downloads/y2014/com_schooldonationform.pdf

25 Cleveland Metro School District successful campaign "Get 2 School. You can make it!" <http://www.clevelandbrowns.com/foundation/programs/get-to-school.html>

school. In its first year, the attendance campaign reduced chronic absenteeism by 11 percent.²⁶

Cincinnati Public Schools similarly developed the successful “Count Me In” Campaign.²⁷ Cincinnati families can also receive early childhood education by connecting with Help Me Grow.²⁸ Sandusky runs an afterschool program, which helps working parents with daycare needs.²⁹

Strategy #4: Remove Barriers to Student Attendance

Families, schools and communities each have their own unique barriers that must be identified before they can be overcome. Invite parents, students, and community members to talk about local barriers through platforms such as World Café. The World Café, a social technology platform for engaging people in conversations, asks questions that spark and direct attention, perception, energy and effort.³⁰ It uses simple, effective, and flexible format for hosting large group dialogue on topics of shared interests.³¹ Professionals and families join together to talk about what can be done to improve their lives, analyze the resources available to get ahead, and address barriers as a community. This sense of mutuality allows otherwise unknown resources to be tapped.

After common barriers are identified, ask parents what supports would help improve student attendance. If students are hungry, ask families to engage in discussion about nutrition and make local food bank information available in newsletters or on school tables.³² When caretakers struggle to afford uniforms, ask parents what community action could offset uniform cost. Some organizations, like the Salvation Army, hold uniform drives for the community.³³ When students are bullied, ask parent groups how to best address it. Numerous anti-bullying resources are available online, including those in the Ohio Safer Schools Program.³⁴ Periodically check with families to see if new barriers arise.

Identifying and discussing common barriers will bring forth ideas on ways to overcome them.

26 See note 29, above

27 Cincinnati Public schools successful “Count Me In” Campaign. <https://www.cps-k12.org/schools/policies-guidelines/attendance>

28 “Help Me Grow” early childhood resources. <http://www.helpmegrow.ohio.gov/>

29 Sandusky afterschool program. <http://npsandusky.org/>

30 <http://www.theworldcafe.com/key-concepts-resources/research/>

31 <http://www.theworldcafe.com/>

32 Food assistance: www.twofishandloaves.com; www.midohiofoodbank.org; www.secondharvestfoodbank.org/

33 Salvation Army Uniform Drive. http://www.tiftongazette.com/news/salvation-army-holds-uniform-drive/article_f0319bd6-512c-11e7-b072-733085834ded.html

34 Anti-bullying: saferschools.ohio.gov/content/anti_harassment_intimidation_and_bullying_resources

B. TIER II EXCESSIVE ABSENCE: STRATEGIES TO INTERVENE

Tier II intervention strategies can be applied when a student has excessive absences but before a student is considered truant. Tier II strategies are employed when a student misses, with or without legitimate excuse, 38 or more hours in one month or 65 hours in a school year. At this stage, the school may intervene and work directly with students and families to address absence. Communication is intended to be friendly, non-judgmental, and focused on addressing the absence reason and improving attendance. These students may have risk factors (i.e., chronic asthma), that contribute to their absenteeism. Tier II costs should be low to moderate.

Strategy #1: Engage Students and Parents

Ohio law requires schools to intervene when a student has excessive absences. Excessive absences should be viewed as an early warning of potential attendance problems. Districts must notify families and offer support in accordance with their local policy. For some students, this may mean a meeting with a counselor, but for others, an intervention may not be required, depending on the policy and circumstances. Excessive absence policies should contain supportive and preventative approaches to absenteeism. Schools must:

- **Monitor and Notify.** Schools must notify the parent or guardian of a student who is absent, with or without legitimate excuse, for 38 or more hours in one school month, or 65 hours in a school year;
- **Contact.** School districts must notify parents or guardians, in writing, when a student becomes excessively absent;
- **Intervene.** Schools and districts must follow their local truancy plan for students who are excessively absent. District truancy plans should include preventative and proactive interventions, policies, and procedures regarding attendance and absenteeism.

When a student becomes excessively absent, the district or school must notify the student's parent, guardian, or custodian in writing that the student is missing school.³⁵ Consider any language barriers when providing the required notice. Is English a second language for the student and/or family? If so, could the notice be sent in the family's native language? Consider communication barriers. If a student and family are highly transient, would a letter mailed to a home address be effective? Or, would an email, text message, or letter home in a backpack enhance the communication? Students and families who are highly mobile or experiencing homelessness change addresses, but e-mail addresses may remain unchanged.

³⁵ See R.C. 3321.191(C)(1).

Notice can be given in various ways. Schools can organize robot-calls, in-person phone calls, texts, or correspondence to address student absence. Conversation and correspondence should express that students are missed when they are not in school and that resources are available to help overcome barriers. For Tier II students, maintaining contact with the student's family will help ensure that a family receives the support it needs.

At the same time notice is given, the school may take any appropriate action outlined in district policy as an intervention strategy.³⁶ H.B. 410 requires districts to adopt a new or amended policy to address school absences and further requires the school to consult with the juvenile court in developing such policy. The policy is required to include a number of options such as:

- Proactive and preventative supports for students who are excessively absent;
- Counseling for excessive absence;
- Requesting or requiring a parent or guardian to attend parental involvement programs; and/or
- Requesting or requiring a parent, guardian or other person to attend mediation.³⁷

³⁶ See R.C. 3321.191(A).

³⁷ See R.C. 3321.191(A): Effective beginning with the 2017-2018 school year, the board of education of each city, exempted village, local, joint vocational, and cooperative education school district and the governing board of each educational service center shall adopt a new or amended policy to guide employees of the school district or service center in addressing and ameliorating student absences. In developing the policy, the appropriate board shall consult with the judge of the juvenile court of the county or counties in which the district or service center is located, with the parents, guardians, or other persons having care of the pupils attending school in the district, and with appropriate state and local agencies. (B) The policy developed under division (A) of this section shall include as an intervention strategy all of the following actions, if applicable: (1) providing a truancy intervention plan for any student who is excessively absent from school, as described in the first paragraphs of division (C) of this section; (2) providing counseling for a habitual truant; (3) requesting or requiring a parent, guardian or other person having care of an habitual truant to attend parental involvement programs, including programs adopted under section 3313.472 or 3313.663 of the Revised Code; (4) Requesting or requiring a parent, guardian, or other person having care of an habitual truant to attend truancy prevention mediation programs; (5) Notification of the registrar of motor vehicles under R.C. 3313.13; (6) taking legal action under R.C. 2919.222, R.C. 3321.20 or R.C. 3321.28.

Courts can offer dispute resolution processes including facilitation, school attendance mediation, or attendance coordination. These processes are described in more detail in Section VI and shown on the chart on page 15. Dispute resolution processes involve the use of a neutral third party to facilitate negotiation and communication between parties to assist them in reaching a voluntary agreement. The key to effective dispute resolution is that the neutral third party does not have a stake in the outcome of the dispute. For example, school personnel are not neutral third parties because they have an interest in getting students to school. Students and families are more likely to speak candidly about the underlying issues impacting attendance if they are speaking with a neutral third party who is committed to impartiality, confidentiality, self-determination, and other core values associated with mediation.

Strategy #2: Recognize Good and Improved Attendance

The Erie County Juvenile Court Mediation program has a successful mediation program called TEMP (Truancy Erie County Mediation Program) that excels at recognizing good and improved attendance. TEMP was designed as a bridge to help schools and their families to foster communication without formal court involvement.³⁸ Mediators trained by the Supreme Court of Ohio Dispute Resolution Section's training program for court-connected mediators implemented the TEMP program.

Under the TEMP program, a team is organized that must include the student, a parent, a representative from the student's school (e.g., guidance counselor, principal, teacher), an attendance officer, and a mediator. Individuals offering community support, like grandparents, extended relatives, and mental health case managers, are often included on the team. All parties are contacted to arrange a convenient date and time for mediation. In order to emphasize the need for a parent-school relationship, mediations are held at the student's school, not at the court.

During mediation, a student's team meets to jointly craft a plan addressing attendance barriers. After mediation, team meetings continue to be held at the school, progressing from weekly, to bi-weekly, to monthly and serving to examine and address student success. Parental involvement is encouraged throughout the program to strengthen the parent-school relationship.

38 TEMP partners with five (5) Erie County school districts. The average age of students participating in TEMP is 10 years old. Addressing and prioritizing the family's reasons for absences is what the mediation is intended to do. A family's participation in TEMP is voluntary. Risk levels are determined using the OYAS the student's attendance is then monitored by an Attendance Officer for the second year. Funding for TEMP was awarded through ODYS (Ohio Department of Youth Services) Category I Competitive RECLAIM for three (3) years. Fidelity has been monitored through contracting with the University of Cincinnati Corrections Institute (UCCI).

TEMP uses the following incentives to remove barriers and to motivate students and families:

- Gas cards to facilitate transportation
- Restaurant gift cards to help hungry families
- Family dinner and game-night packages that encourage family time
- School uniforms for families that struggle with school costs
- Winter clothes (coats, boots, hats, and gloves) to aid cold weather school absences
- Haircuts and makeovers to build self-esteem
- School spirit packs that help students identify with their school
- Books to help students improve reading skills

TEMP works intensively with students for one year. The program began in 2015 and, as of April 2017, has served 61 students and 48 families. Thus far, students who have successfully completed TEMP have not had any additional formal or informal contact with the juvenile court.

Strategy #3: Provide Personalized and Early Outreach

TEMP staff³⁹ found that visiting with families weekly greatly aided TEMP in identifying each families' barriers. In other words, TEMP learned about substantial barriers (homelessness, drug addiction, sexual abuse) only after the family was personally engaged through early outreach. TEMP's "lessons learned" underscore the importance of personalized and early outreach for all Tier II students and their families.

Research confirms and validates TEMP's experiences. Valerie Strauss posits that "Schools are defined by the relationships between staff and students... strong relationships can help students and staff feel safe and free of physical threats, we also know that strong relationships have another critical benefit: they make schools 'intellectually safe' for students to learn and thrive."⁴⁰

39 Shelisa Johnson, Erie County Common Pleas Court Juvenile Division; Diversion Counselor Mediator/Custody Investigator; Michelle Deichler Erie County Common Pleas Court Juvenile Division; Diversion Counselor Mediator/Custody Investigator

40 Why relationship-building is vital in schools. By Valerie Strauss. May 28, 2011. https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/answer-sheet/post/why-relationship-building-is-vital-in-schools/2011/05/26/AG7KVODH_blog.html?utm_term=.45df9f36d620

Other districts use various methods to personalize outreach. Many counties anticipate students' financial needs by holding "supplies for scholars" at the beginning of each year.⁴¹ Some schools direct students' need for structure by connecting them with armed service representatives or recruiters. A child's need for attention can be met by attendance buddy programs where teachers check in daily to remind students that they are wanted and missed when they are absent.

Afterschool programs also engage students by connecting them to activities that spark their interest. According to Huang, et.al., "research has long shown that good afterschool programs can improve school-day attendance."⁴² Delaware County recognized the need for afterschool programs and through the United Way of Delaware County, they launched the Strengthening Families Initiative, which enhances the lives of residents through comprehensive afterschool programming.⁴³

Schools can personally engage families by talking with caretakers at conferences, visiting families at home, learning about a family's unique barriers to attendance, and connecting families with resources. Schools can connect parents who are open to learning skills with programs such as "The Parent Project."⁴⁴ School staff can improve engagement with families experiencing poverty by participating in the interactive, online game "Spent," which challenges people to financially survive 30 days as a person experiencing poverty.⁴⁵ Personalized, early outreach coupled with sharing and understanding over time successfully reduce absenteeism.

Strategy #4: Remove Barriers to Student Attendance

Family and community barriers to attendance may exist outside of a school's control and cannot be changed by school staff alone. Solutions addressing barriers, however, can be influenced by the school community.

Partnerships build bridges over barriers. Building begins when communities assess available resources. Are there medical, dental, mental health, or ophthalmologic entities that could benefit from providing services in the school building? Do local companies wish to support school needs? Can local sports teams support students in some way? Are community services available but unknown to student families? Talk with parents about available resources and with community businesses and service providers about building relationships.

41 <https://www.liveuniteddelawarecounty.org/take-action/sfs>

42 Huang, Gribbons, Kim, Lee & Baker, 2000; Welsdh Et. Al. 2002). Building a Culture of Attendance: Schools an Afterschool Programs Together Can and Should Make a Difference! <http://www.expandinglearning.org/expandingminds/article/building-culture-attendance-schools-and-afterschool-programs-together-can-and>

43 <https://www.liveuniteddelawarecounty.org/take-action/strengthening-families>

44 www.parentproject.com

45 Educational program about poverty challenges. <http://playspent.org/>

Toledo Public Schools' students struggled with health care issues, so the district reached out to ProMedica Health Care System and suggested a partnership. In 2015, ProMedica donated \$600,000 to Toledo Public Schools so that there could be full-time nurses in every school building. ProMedica saw the opportunity as a great way to reach out to the community.⁴⁶ Cleveland schools struggled with finding books to read, so they reached out to the Cleveland Indians and a book drive was started.⁴⁷ Schools benefit from carefully considering how building bridges can best increase the availability of resources in a given school year.

Identify needed resources and contact providers. Reach out to medical, dental, mental health, and ophthalmologic entities, community businesses and service providers and ask if they want to support and partner with your school. Invite community-based providers (shelters, food pantries, lending closets, and faith communities) to share their information with school families.

C. TIER III TRUANCY: STRATEGIES TO RESPOND TO HABITUAL TRUANTS

Efforts to promote attendance, educate about the importance of attendance, and intervene early will prevent some, but not all, truancy. There will still be instances where excessively absent students become habitual truants and where some students who are habitual truants are referred to the juvenile court.

Tier III interventions are for students who are habitually truant: missing, without legitimate excuse, 30 or more consecutive hours, or 42 or more hours in one school month and 72 or more hours in a school year. These interventions are also useful for students who face risk factors such as child welfare intervention, juvenile justice interaction, homelessness, or an incarcerated parent.

46 <http://www.toledoblade.com/Education/2015/04/30/Toledo-Public-Schools-to-hire-full-time-nurses.html>

47 <http://www.news5cleveland.com/sports/baseball/indians/cleveland-indians-carlos-carrasco-hosting-book-drive-to-benefit-cleveland-schools-libraries>

Consider 13-year-old Sam. Sam, who attends Middlegate and misses 42 consecutive hours of school; Middlegate quickly identifies Sam as a habitual truant because they review attendance data weekly. Middlegate communicates with Sam's mother, Tracy, first via text, then email, and then through a letter letting her know about Sam's absence. On Sam's fifth day of absence, his principal, Ms. Bright, reaches out to Sam's teacher, Mr. Sharp, and the school nurse, Mrs. Dove. Bright, Sharp, and Dove become Sam's Absence Intervention Team (AIT). Middlegate sends an e-mail to Tracy indicating that mediation will take place Wednesday at 10:00 a.m. Tracy arrives at school Wednesday and sits down at a table with Bright, Sharp, Dove, Sam and a mediator. They discuss that Sam has pneumonia and should recover by Friday. While Sam is recovering, Tracy is nervous that when Sam returns to school, he will move around too much, get tired, and get sicker. The AIT listens to Tracy's concerns and designs an Absence Intervention Plan (AIP) wherein Dove will monitor Sam and contact Tracy if Sam is too tired. The AIP identifies how Sam will complete his missed work. The AIT confirms in writing that the AIP terms will be reviewed 30 and 60 days later and if sufficient progress is not accomplished, on day 61 a complaint will be filed with the local juvenile court. All AIT members sign the AIP and provide Sam and Tracy with a copy. The AIT explains that they expect Sam to succeed and will monitor future success.

Tier III response strategies call for enlisting the services of the court diversion program after a school has attempted intervention without success and filed an unruly child complaint based on habitual truancy.

Tier III supports should be highly individualized and tailored to a student and family's needs. Tier III costs may be moderate to high. When dealing with habitually truant students, H.B. 410 requires that schools engage parents or guardians in important ways related to attendance:

- **Contact.** School districts must make at least three meaningful, good-faith attempts to secure participation of a student's parent or guardian and decide whether a failure to respond triggers mandatory child protective service reporting.
- **Absence Intervention Teams (AIT).** School districts must implement truancy policies by establishing Absence Intervention Teams (AITs) for habitually truant students. After the absences of a student surpass the threshold for a habitual truant, a school principal, chief administrator, or district superintendent must assign the student to an absence intervention team within 10 days.

- Absence Intervention Plans (AIP). Within 14 school days of AIT assignment, the team must develop an Absence Intervention Plan (AIP) for that student to reduce absences.⁴⁸

Middlegate satisfied their statutory requirements by using the mediation process to meet and develop an AIP. Tracy left the meeting feeling more confident that Sam's needs would be met. Sam returned to school as soon as he was healthy. On the 60-day mark, Sam had met the goals laid out in the AIP.

In the example of Sam and Tracy, the court provided the mediator to assist in developing the AIP. If the AIP had failed, a formal complaint could be filed against Sam for being habitually truant, but H.B. 410 requires the juvenile court to consider alternatives to adjudication in such circumstances.

There are a number of examples of court diversion programs. Lucas County Juvenile Court hired several educational specialists to work with students struggling with attendance. Educational specialists provide support and services to students and families involved in the judicial system. They act as a liaison between courts, school districts, and health and human services agencies to improve the educational outcomes for youth involved in juvenile court. Educational specialists also consult with school staff regarding individualized education and behavior-management plans. Greene County has Truancy Interventionists housed at the court and paid for by the schools. The Truancy Interventionists travel to the schools according to pre-arranged schedules to meet with the AITs and assist in formulating AIPs. In this Toolkit, for uniformity of titles, the Educational Specialists and Truancy Interventionists are referred to as Attendance Coordinators. See Section VI.C. 3 below.

The Mahoning County Juvenile Court is collaborating with Rayen Early College to participate in a three-year pilot program aimed at decreasing truancy and preventing dropout. The program identifies students who struggle with attendance, behavior, and grades using an "Early Warning System" and provides early interventions to help students stay on the path to graduation.⁴⁹ The Early Warning System tracks indicators such as the number of unexcused absences, suspensions, and classes with a failing grade. Creative collaborations, such as the one between Mahoning and Rayen, will be tested in upcoming years to determine which court interventions best help students succeed.

48 <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/download?key=6350&format=pdf>, page 7-9.

49 <http://www.youngstown.k12.oh.us/JuvenileCourt.aspx>

Strategy #1: Engage Students and Parents

Tier III engagement takes coordination because Tier III students face significant barriers. Coordinating with community agencies involves learning about families, developing intervention plans with community agencies, and making referrals and sharing data when appropriate. Engagement also involves connecting students to peers or tutors who can help them.

When strategizing about how best to provide coordinated engagement, reach out to agencies and learn more about them. Are there open houses for community programs that school counselors or teachers can attend? Can agencies present program mission statements at monthly school staff meetings? Learning about available resources is key.

Additionally, investigate the different ways in which community agencies can link with schools. During AIP meetings, consider using Skype or telephone conferencing with a service provider so that referrals are immediate. Think about whether mental or physical health providers need to be included on AIPs; recommendations from mental or physical health providers may be useful before AIPs are finalized. Think broadly when engaging Tier III students and families because their barriers to attendance may be deep and require strong interventions.

Delaware schools partnered with mental health service agencies to provide mental health services in schools.⁵⁰ After noting that students struggle with mental health diagnoses, as well as stressful and sometimes traumatic events that cause emotional stress. Lucas County recognized that students are best engaged in mental health services when those services are provided in school.⁵¹ Students and families can best be engaged when schools work with outside agencies in a strategic and coordinated fashion.

As in Tier II intervention, dispute resolution processes are an effective Tier III strategy to address excessive absences, and are described in Section VI. (See also the chart on page 11) Dispute resolution processes are useful when a student surpasses the threshold for a habitual truant. A neutral third party, such as a mediator, can provide an impartial perspective that encourages candor between the school and student so that the underlying reasons for absence can be addressed. The student must be referred to an AIT, which will create an intervention plan within 14 days based on the individual needs of the student and work with the student for 60 days. AITs will include a representative from the student's school or school district, a representative from the school district or school who knows the student, the student's parent or designee, or the student's guardian or custodian. The team also may include a

50 <http://www.thecenterforchilddevelopment.com/delaware-schools-embrace-mental-health-needs-children/>

51 RFS Charitable Foundation Behavioral Health providing school-based and outpatient behavioral health services. <https://www.rfstackle.com/>

school psychologist, counselor, social worker, dispute resolution professional, or a representative of a nonprofit agency designed to assist in reducing school absences. Courts have found dispute resolution processes to be useful for the AIT in creating an absence intervention plan.

Under H.B. 410, the AIP must state that if the student refuses to participate in or fails to make satisfactory progress on the intervention plan or an alternative to adjudication, the attendance officer must file a complaint no later than 61 days after the date on which the plan was implemented. Although a school is not permitted to file a complaint ahead of the 61st day unless the student is absent without legitimate excuse 30 consecutive hours or 42 hours in a month during the implementation period, it is important to monitor the plan and do intermittent check-ins. In Marion County, the court does not wait until 60 days has passed, but, rather, checks the progress of the absence-intervention plan at a 30-day interval to see how the plan is working.

Tier III dispute resolution processes create the additional opportunity to mediate as part of a court's alternative to adjudication after a complaint has been referred to the juvenile court. The following dispute resolution processes may be considered as additional alternatives to adjudication when a student is habitually absent from school:

- School Attendance Mediation as Part of an Absence Intervention Plan;
- Facilitation;
- Attendance Coordination; and
- Alternatives to Adjudication–School Attendance Mediation Post-Referral to Juvenile Court.

Strategy #2: Recognize Good and Improved Attendance

A well-drafted AIP will identify specific individual goals that can be reviewed weekly. Attendance Works has school success plans available for review or use.⁵² School community members, especially those who are on a student's AIT, should monitor a student's attendance and check in with that student.

Following the creation of an AIP, if a Tier III student reaches a goal, that achievement should be recognized. Celebrating student achievements is important so that students know they are seen and cared for.

Tier III students may have additional barriers identified after AIP implementation. Tier III students can reach their goals only if they are consistently linked with necessary support resources to overcome barriers. They can be linked with tutors,

52 <http://www.attendanceworks.org/tools/for-parents/student-success-plan-facilitator-hand-out/>

school supplies, uniforms, summer programs, meal programs, class supplies, and transportation. Noticing and addressing a student's needs are also a recognition of a student's importance, serving as a positive, reinforcing step that encourages attendance.⁵³

Funding may be drawn from McKinney Vento⁵⁴ dollars, which can be used to pay for resources for homeless students. Similarly, Toledo Public Schools received federal funding to place tutors in shelters, pay for school supplies and uniforms, and provide other services for students experiencing homelessness.⁵⁵

Strategy #3: Provide Personalized and Early Outreach

Tier III students and families require personalized and early outreach to overcome barriers to attendance. To ensure that Tier III students and families receive the information and resources they need, it is best to designate one person that will make continued, positive, and regular contact with the student and the student's family. This person should check in with the student and family whenever the student misses school to find out if new barriers have surfaced or new risk factors have arisen.

Research indicates that “students whose families received a home visit had 24 percent fewer absences than similar students whose families did not receive a visit. The same students also were more likely to read at or above grade level compared to similar students who did not receive a home visit.”⁵⁶ Sometimes staff are concerned about making home visits. Educating staff about home visits can reduce tension and provide guidance. The Parent Teacher Home Visits website provides training and resource information about home visits.⁵⁷ Furthermore, teaching staff about the challenges of poverty also helps staff deal with home visits. Many schools utilize Bridges out of Poverty Training to provide insight on poverty.⁵⁸

Training staff about complex reasons for absence assists in recognizing warning signs. Sex trafficking, for instance, is a difficult issue that may manifest itself in different ways. Knowing the warning signs that identify a victim of human trafficking, like unexplained absences, travel to different cities, physical trauma signs, exhaustion, or

53 See footnote 15

54 <https://nche.ed.gov/legis/mv.php>

55 <http://www.toledoblade.com/Education/2017/08/01/Toledo-Public-Schools-nabs-400-000-grant-to-aid-homeless-students.html>

56 <http://flamboyanfoundation.org/focus/family-engagement/fep-student-outcome-evaluation/>

57 <http://www.pthvp.org/what-we-do/pthv-model/>

58 Bridges out of poverty training. <http://mha.ohio.gov/Portals/0/assets/Supports/Housing/Training/Bridges-Out-of-Poverty-3.23.2016.pdf>

rehearsed responses to questions, can aid school staff in spotting trafficked students.⁵⁹ Once an issue like sex trafficking is identified, students can be linked to resources such as the Daughter Project.⁶⁰

Personalized outreach also may involve connecting students to existing projects or programs suited to meet their needs. Dayton has a privately funded, nonprofit program called “The Victory Project” that mentors disengaged young men with a ground-breaking curriculum.⁶¹ When Tier III youth are challenged, it is important to know what resources are available and to have the ability to connect students.

Strategy #4: Remove Barriers to Student Attendance

AIPs are created to identify and strategize unique, personally tailored ways to overcome a student’s barriers. Monitoring allows the AIT to remain informed about a student’s barriers over time and respond if intervention strategies need to be adjusted. Increased support for students and families may be necessary for Tier-III student needs to be met.

Teen and pre-teen students rely heavily on peer relationships. Consequently, interpersonal issues, such as dating abuse, bullying, and suicide can be problematic in student populations. Resources are available to address these and other complex student issues. The Office of Victims of Crime, Office of Justice Programs and U.S. Department of Justice, in conjunction with various sponsors, offer healthy relationship resources on the Love Is Respect website. The Ohio Department of Education offers anti-bullying resources online for schools.⁶² Ohio Mental Health and Addiction Services provides resources for schools for suicide prevention.⁶³ Ohio has a wealth of support available to handle the troubling issues facing students and schools today.

Other barriers to attendance include stays in juvenile detention or the department of youth service. Students in detention present unique challenges for courts and school districts. In response, the Ohio Department of Education has created a position in the Office of School Improvement – a Correctional Education Consultant (CEC). CECs are the single point of contact for educators involved with department of youth services and students in detention centers. This position was created to ensure that districts have needed supports. The CEC will provide technical assistance and training to schools and ensure that students in detention centers are receiving quality education.⁶⁴

59 <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oese/oshs/factsheet.html>

60 The Daughter Project. <http://thedaughterproject.org/>

61 <http://www.victoryproject.org/>

62 https://saferschools.ohio.gov/content/anti_harassment_intimidation_and_bullying_resources

63 <http://mha.ohio.gov/Portals/0/2016-Suicide-and-Schools.pdf>

64 Karl Koenig, National Technical Assistance Center for Education of Neglected or Delinquent Children and Youth. Coordinator. Karl.Koenig@ode.state.oh.us 614-752-1597

If a juvenile court diversion program is not successful and a complaint is adjudicated by the court, the court will notify the school. Under H.B. 410, the juvenile court provides notice of any adjudication related to a child's habitual truancy to the school district and school in which the child was enrolled when the complaint was filed.

VI. DISPUTE RESOLUTION EDUCATION, TRAINING AND PROCESSES TO SUPPORT ATTENDANCE

While addressing barriers can be daunting, there are resources available to help. Attendance Works provides an accountability plan that schools can utilize to address barriers⁶⁵ by examining policies to reveal otherwise invisible systemic issues. Schools can thus examine restorative justice principals to find out if there are actionable items that could increase equity.⁶⁶

A. DISPUTE RESOLUTION EDUCATION AND TRAINING RESOURCES FOR SCHOOLS

Give someone a fish and you feed them for a day; teach someone to fish and you feed them for a lifetime. Similarly, improving a student's interest in attending school is important for success with interventions. One way to engage students in solving their own problems is to provide them with dispute resolution options such as mediation. Alternatively, students can be taught conflict resolution skills so that they can independently resolve their own problems without the help of a neutral third party. Schools can elect to provide conflict resolution education in the classrooms by integrating conflict resolution education as part of a students' curriculum, training school personnel on ways to incorporate conflict resolution options into the classroom environment, sharing access to the resources available within communities that support student attendance, educating families on the importance of school attendance and their responsibilities towards the education of their children, and training teachers to teach conflict resolution skills. Schools and courts should also ensure that dispute resolution professionals who serve as neutral third parties are properly trained. The following strategies are examples of existing dispute resolution education and training that schools and courts incorporate into school attendance programs. The Supreme Court of Ohio's Dispute Resolution Section provides access to the Commission on Dispute Resolution's training programs and resources below.

1. Conflict Resolution Curriculum for Students

Conflict resolution education (CRE) helps students learn the skills they need to find solutions to their problems and to effect change. Through conflict resolution education, school attendance programs take the first step towards promoting school attendance and ensuring that students learn the skills they need to be successful in life.

Students K-12. The Supreme Court of Ohio, together with the Ohio Department of Education, the Ohio Board of Education, and other educational organizations, has worked for nearly 30 years to provide Ohio schools with constructive, nonviolent methods for resolving disputes. The former Commission on Dispute Resolution and

65 Addressing Chronic Student Absence in Your Local Control and Accountability Plan. <http://www.attendanceworks.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/Accountable-For-Attendance-FINAL1.pdf>

66 Restorative Justice Programs. <https://www.ousd.org/cms/lib/CA01001176/Centricity/Domain/134/BTC-OUSD1-IG-08b-web.pdf>.

Conflict Management helped develop curriculum for teachers to include conflict resolution principles and skill-building activities in their teaching styles to provide all students with the opportunity to learn to define and analyze conflict, recognize the role of perceptions and biases, identify feelings and factors that cause escalation, handle anger and other feelings appropriately, improve verbal communication skills, improve listening skills, identify common interests, brainstorm multiple solutions, evaluate the consequences of different options, and work on win-win solutions. Teachers report that the inclusion of conflict resolution principles in classrooms helps students better understand the relationship between academics and the real world. Program materials are available from the Dispute Resolution Section.

2. Ohio Center for Law-Related Education - Youth for Justice

Most schools associate OCLRE with the successful and long-standing Mock Trial and Moot Court Programs used in middle schools and high schools throughout Ohio. OCLRE programs do not directly address truancy; however, one of the programs, “Youth for Justice”,⁶⁷ centers on student empowerment and helping students learn and develop skills that assist them as they work collaboratively to solve problems that directly affect them and their peers. Youth for Justice is a program that can serve as a vehicle through which students examine various issues that contribute to the larger problem of truancy. The Xenia Community School District is piloting the Youth for Justice Program as a way to curb truancy.

3. In-Service Training for Teachers and School Personnel

In-service training is intended as a development effort in which key stakeholders (school administration, school personnel, court personnel, community partners, families and students) can be educated on the benefits of school attendance and the barriers that may hinder attendance. A goal of in-service training is to help all stakeholders understand their respective roles and know how their roles affect and influence others. In-service training also illuminates areas of need within a community and helps to identify useful resources for students and families. Program materials are available from the Dispute Resolution Section.

4. Peer Mediation⁶⁸

Peer mediation is a process by which two or more students involved in a dispute meet in a private, safe and confidential setting to work out problems with the assistance of a trained student mediator. The Dayton Mediation Center has developed the “Peer Mediation Program Manual: A Manual for considering and developing the peer mediation program in your school.” There are numerous peer mediation models including an online peer mediation platform or the peer mediation

67 http://www.oclre.org/aws/OCLRE/pt/sp/resources_youthforjustice

68 For example, see: <http://peermediationonline.org>; or <https://www.ncpc.org/resources/bullying/strategies/strategy-peer-mediation-in-high-schools/>

program resources from the National Crime Prevention Council. School-based programs instructing youth in mediating peer conflicts give youth participants communication, anger management, leadership, and decision-making skills that help them to remain resilient against crime, violence, and substance abuse.

5. Conflict Resolution Curriculum Training for Teacher In-Service Training on Dispute Resolution Processes

In service training on dispute resolution processes focuses on four concepts: (1) student attendance obligations; (2) the legislative framework for attendance in Ohio; (3) program best practices such as preparing for difficult situations and attaining mastery in dispute resolution participation; and (4) the unique characteristics of dispute resolution as applied to issues of attendance, including the collaborative role of family, school, court and community in educating a child, as well as the ultimate program goal of increasing the likelihood of educational success.

Core curriculum for school personnel in-service training includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Laws applicable to attendance
- Court and school requirements under H.B. 410
- School engagement
- Intervention strategies
- Collaboration between school and court
- Reasons for student absenteeism
- Human trafficking
- Ways to identify barriers to attendance
- Dispute resolution processes and goals
- The Uniform Mediation Act
- Core values of mediation
- Necessary participants to mediation.

This is typically carried out as a one-day (7-hour) training to allow time for instruction on core concepts. Program materials are available from the Dispute Resolution Section.

6. Conflict Resolution Education for Families

Conflict resolution education for families focuses on five goals: (1) the legislative framework for attendance in Ohio; (2) obligations regarding student attendance as a parent/guardian/family member; (3) the importance of a family/school partnership in educating the child; (4) the value of attendance and connectivity as it relates to success in education and in life; and (5) the unique characteristics of dispute resolution processes as applied to issues of attendance.

Suggested core curriculum includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Recognizing barriers to attendance
- Identifying resources to overcome barriers
- Benefits of school attendance
- Laws applicable to school attendance
- Obligations of the school, families and the courts
- School engagement
- Intervention strategies
- Dispute resolution processes and goals

This is typically carried out as a three-hour training to allow time for parents and families to attend and to allow instruction on core concepts. Courts and/or schools can provide this training. The curriculum is available from the Dispute Resolution Section.

B. DISPUTE RESOLUTION EDUCATION AND TRAINING RESOURCES FOR COURTS

1. School Attendance Mediation Training for Courts

School Attendance mediators are trained in fundamental mediation concepts, such as those outlined in the Fundamentals of Mediation Training offered by the Supreme Court of Ohio's Dispute Resolution Section. Fundamentals of Mediation training is available to court-connected mediators at no cost to the participants. For more information or to obtain training, contact the [Dispute Resolution Section](#). Additionally, after Fundamentals of Mediation is completed, mediators are encouraged to observe mediations and to engage in specialized School Attendance Mediation Training, also available through the Dispute Resolution Section.

School Attendance Mediation training is administered as a two-day multi-disciplinary training. Day one of the program covers mediation concepts, relevant statutory analysis, attendance barrier evaluation, school-culture study, and role plays. Day two studies coalition building, word choice, mediator tools, skill-building, and agreement-writing. Training ends with a debriefing and evaluation.

As a result of attending School Attendance Mediation training, participants will be able to:

- Mediate school attendance issues
- Know the legislative framework for Attendance in Ohio
- Collaborate with community resources
- Gain competency in conducting attendance mediations
- Use mediation in a school environment and culture
- Reinforce mediation core values and standards for school attendance cases

Check the Dispute Resolution Section website for training dates and information.

C. DISPUTE RESOLUTION PROCESSES SPONSORED BY COURTS FOR USE BY SCHOOLS

Dispute resolution processes provide flexible and practical assistance in resolving and preventing conflict between schools and families. There are numerous dispute resolution processes available to courts and schools including facilitation, mediation, and school attendance coordination. These processes are described below and may be useful during various stages of school attendance disputes. For examples of where each process may be useful, see the HB 410 Overview chart on page 11. To set up training or request training resources, contact the [Dispute Resolution Section](#).

1. Facilitation

What is Facilitation?

Facilitation is a process that focuses on the tasks needed to run a productive and impartial meeting.

What happens in Facilitation?

Facilitation is a process that focuses on the tasks needed to run a productive and impartial AIP meeting. It also can focus participants in an alternative to adjudication on tasks needed to successfully reengage in school and avoid being adjudicated unruly. In facilitation, a neutral party (the facilitator) moderates discussions by ensuring the fluid and orderly exchange of information and ideas from all participants.

By providing focused guidance, a facilitator can help participants to better understand their goals and how to work together towards reaching them. Most importantly, the facilitator maintains civility and keeps the process focused and organized so that participants may concentrate on the substantive content of their discussions.

When is Facilitation Used?

In school attendance interventions, facilitation can be used when AIP meetings are convened and throughout the AIP implementation (see chart on page 11, step 3b). In addition, facilitation can be beneficial as an alternative to adjudication if, for example, as a diversion measure, courts have identified possible referral or community resources that may be beneficial in working with students and families. (See chart on page 11, step 7).

What is the purpose of Facilitation?

The purpose of facilitation in an AIP is to assist AITs in the efficient, organized and collaborative development of AIPs. The purpose of facilitation as an alternative to adjudication after a formal court referral has been made is to assist students and families in identifying and working with resources to remove barriers to school attendance.

Facilitation promotes conflict prevention by providing for focused and organized discussions. Having a facilitator oversee a meeting's process allows participants the freedom to concentrate on substantive issues, saving time and ensuring quality exchange of information and ideas. Facilitators can manage the AIT dynamic to ensure a collaborative, supportive environment in which to reach consensus on pressing issues.

What are Facilitation Goals?

- Create collaborative relationships
- Plan appropriate AIP processes
- Create and sustain a participatory environment
- Guide the AIT to appropriate and useful outcomes
- Build and maintain professional knowledge
- Model a positive professional attitude
- Avoid formal court adjudication as unruly or contributing to the delinquency of a minor

2. School Attendance Mediation as part of an Absence Intervention Plan

What is School Attendance Mediation?

Mediation is a process in which a mediator facilitates communication and negotiation between parties to assist them in reaching a voluntary agreement regarding their dispute.⁶⁹ Mediation addresses a dispute between the parties where a disagreement has arisen. It is distinguished from facilitation where there need not be a dispute.

Mediation in the context of school attendance refers to mediation that is used to address excessive school absences. Not all absence from school is a crime, as absent

69 R.C. 2710.01

means “not present at a usual or expected place.”⁷⁰ One who is truant, however, “neglects his or her duty or out of school without permission.”⁷¹ This toolkit refers to mediation not as truancy mediation, but as school attendance mediation because often the barriers to school attendance can be removed and do not reflect a person neglecting a duty.

When is School Attendance Mediation Used?

School attendance mediation can be used anytime an AIP meeting is scheduled or an AIP is being implemented. (See chart on page 11, item 3b). When school-attendance mediation is used prior to the referral to juvenile court it also is known as Truancy Prevention Mediation. Truancy Prevention through Mediation (TPTM) was first introduced by the Commission on Dispute Resolution and Conflict Management in the 1990s. A family is asked, or can request, to come in for a mediation very early in the pattern of attendance issues. The emphasis is on early intervention and respectful help, as opposed to late, disciplinary or punitive intervention.

School attendance mediation also can be used after a school refers a truant student to a juvenile court. (See chart on page 11, item 7) When school-attendance mediation is used after the school refers a student to a juvenile court, it also is known as truancy mediation.

It is recommended that school attendance mediation starts at the elementary grade level, before attendance issues develop into patterns. Additionally, when students in elementary school are absent, it is more often the result of a barrier, not of the student’s decision-making. Once mediation is established in the elementary schools, mediation also can be used in middle and high school.⁷²

What is the purpose of School Attendance Mediation?

The purpose of school attendance mediation is to address a student’s absences in a supportive, non-judgmental, and non-punitive way. With the help of a neutral third party, known as a mediator, families and school staff can meet in a confidential setting to identify the issues that become barriers to school attendance. Communication is focused on learning why the student is absent and how the situation can be improved. Once barriers are identified, families and staff can work together to find solutions. School attendance mediation has been shown to be effective because it allows those most intimately affected by student absenteeism to take part in creating solutions and it increases student attendance rates.

70 Merriam-Webster.com

71 Id.

72 Tammy Martin-Kosier, J.D., school attendance mediation mediator and trainer, Commission on Dispute Resolution and Conflict Management trainer and mediator.

What happens in School Attendance Mediation?⁷³

School attendance mediation often takes place in the school, during or immediately before or after school hours. This enables the inclusion of school personnel with a trusted relationship with the student, such as a teacher, coach, mentor, or guidance counselor, any of whom may be invited to attend. Mediation may also take place in a community center to provide a neutral location, as in Lucas County.⁷⁴

In elementary school, the teacher is often the only person meeting with the parents and the mediator, but depending on the age, maturity, and needs of the student, the student may be invited to attend. This mediation model is based on a co-parenting approach. The teacher represents the school's needs, experiences, and issues. The parent/caregiver represents the family needs, experiences, and issues. The discussion centers around the child's academic experience and performance, including barriers to attendance and how to remove them.

Confidentiality is maintained, including the discussions during mediation and any written agreements.

The mediator is a trained neutral person who facilitates discussion and helps the participants generate mutually acceptable solutions.

What are School Attendance Mediation Goals?

- To take a proactive and preventative approach to attendance and academic issues within the community, school, and family
- To create a collaborative relationship between families and schools to enhance a child's educational experience, aimed at "opening the schoolhouse doors" to offer support, encouragement and resources to support attendance
- To encourage honest and open communication between parents and school personnel to identify issues impacting the child's educational experience and success
- To promote effective problem-solving and workable, customized solutions to the issues
- To clearly establish the importance and necessity of regular and timely attendance and its relationship to academic success
- To establish the pattern of regular attendance early in a child's school career, minimizing the impact of later disruptions or issues that may otherwise derail academic performance and/or attendance

73 Dispute Revolution! A History of Ohio's Leadership in Court-Connected Dispute Resolution (2018).

74 Ibid.

- To address the needs of children missing school early enough to reverse the detrimental effects of absenteeism, which include diminished performance in school, behavior in school, delinquent behavior, and subsequent court involvement
- To identify and address issues and concerns at school and home which may prevent/impede regular school attendance
- To engage families in services, if necessary, to support seamless engagement and utilization of same
- To promote ownership of responsibility and clearly delineate these responsibilities in an action plan
- To monitor compliance with an action plan.

Courts can use school attendance mediation to help students be on time and get to school every day.

3. Attendance Coordination

What is Attendance Coordination?

Attendance coordination is a child-focused dispute resolution process for juvenile courts in which a mental health or legal professional with mediation training and experience assists families by facilitating the resolution of their school attendance disputes in a timely manner, educating parents about children’s needs, and referring families to community resources. Attendance coordination can be considered when an Absence Intervention Plan meeting is scheduled and an AIP is implemented or as an alternative to adjudication once a court referral is made.

Attendance coordination is introduced in this toolkit as the application of a multi-disciplinary “coordination” process to promote school attendance, decrease chronic absences, reduce habitual truancy, and address underlying issues that prevent students from getting to school. Attendance coordination for juvenile courts as a dispute resolution option borrows from the framework of domestic relations courts’ Parenting Coordination⁷⁵ and probate courts’ Eldercaring Coordination.⁷⁶

In Greene County, there are two truancy interventionists housed at the court and paid for by the schools that perform functions similar to an attendance coordinator. The truancy interventionists travel to the schools on pre-arranged schedules to meet with the AITs and assist in formulating AIPs. In this toolkit, for uniformity of titles, educational specialists and truancy interventionists who serve similar functions as attendance coordinators are collectively referred to as attendance coordinators.

⁷⁵ Sup.R. 90 – 90.12

⁷⁶ The ACR Guidelines for Eldercaring Coordination can be found at ACRnet.org

This toolkit recommends that individuals who provide the services similar to those described in attendance coordination be identified as attendance coordinators because there is a corresponding structure and framework that can be adopted from Parenting Coordination and Eldercaring Coordination training.

What is the purpose of Attendance Coordination?

The purpose of attendance coordination is to improve the ways in which attendance issues are responded to locally, with a focus on keeping students out of the court system and using a collaborative approach to provide community-based services to help students remain in school. An attendance coordinator employs a multi-disciplinary dispute resolution process with social service overlays, such as education, coaching and coordinating, as services necessary to maintain student attendance.

What happens in Attendance Coordination?

An attendance coordinator works with a student, his or her school, parents/guardians/family members, and community agencies to find ways to support the student so that regular school attendance is possible. The attendance coordinator can assist with the identification of resources, providing referrals if necessary. Attendance coordinators assist parties using assessment, education, case management, conflict management, and coaching skills. Attendance coordination is not mediation.

What are Attendance Coordination Goals?

- To resolve absence barriers
- To connect students and family needs with community, medical, mental health or other needed resources
- To assist students, families and schools to reach a voluntary solution to their dispute
- To foster collaborative and supportive working relationships
- To locate, organize, and help refer schools and families to resources that promote school attendance

The attendance coordinator's job description located in Appendix D is an example of the responsibilities and essential functions of an attendance coordinator.

4. Alternatives to Adjudication – School Attendance Mediation Post-Referral to Juvenile Court

Despite best efforts at intervention, there may be students who require further response through involvement with Ohio's juvenile courts as a result of their habitual absence from school. When an unruly child complaint based on habitual truancy is filed against a student, court diversion programs offer students and families the opportunity to get back on track in a productive way that focuses on personal empowerment rather than punishment by a third party.

As discussed previously, school attendance mediation is a useful diversion mechanism in the continuum of intervention for attendance-related issues. It can be valuable and effective not only at the school level when an AIP is being developed (See chart on page 1, item 3b), but also at the post-filing stage as an alternative to adjudication (See chart on page 11, item 7). Continued emphasis should be placed on partnership, empowerment, and strength-based approaches to resolve formal court referrals. If school attendance mediation was unsuccessful prior to court referral, a court could consider changing variables, like using a different mediator or co-mediators, involving different or new community resources, or conducting mediation at a different location to reengage, schools and families in this effort. Collaborative problem solving and promotion of a community approach to academic success are paramount, even at the court level.

The use of school attendance mediation in the court context can be beneficial when the previous attempts at resolving the issues at the school level have not achieved acceptable attendance levels. There are several reasons for attempting to mediate again at this level:

- School attendance mediation as an alternative to adjudication in court can provide a level of oversight on previous AIPs
- Court-sponsored school attendance mediation can provide a level of legitimacy and formality to the importance of compliance with attendance requirements and action plans
- Courts can use school attendance mediation to allow the parties to consider and respond to changed circumstances or new information that may be present

School attendance mediation will have the same process and goals regardless of whether it takes place prior to court referral or as an alternative to adjudication. However, in the latter case, when mediation is part of a court's diversion program, a formal complaint has been filed, while in the former, there is not a formal complaint.

Best practices⁷⁷ for school attendance mediation as an alternative to adjudication are as follows:

- Mediation should be mandated or strongly recommended as a matter of course through a court-connected diversion program, although screening for appropriateness of mediation should occur in every case, as exceptions exist
- Mediation can be offered at any point from adjudication to disposition as ordered by a court or requested by the parties
- Mediations may be held in the court building or other court associated locations

77 See Footnote 74

- The participants will typically be a neutral third party, the parent/guardian, child (if appropriate), and a school official/attendance officer, not a teacher. In some cases, if the dispute involves the parent or guardian in conflict with the child/student, a court may consider referring a case to school attendance mediation in which the only participants are the parent or guardian and the child/student⁷⁸
- The Action Plan from the intervention mediation should be reviewed at the court-connected mediation so that the parties and the court can review what worked and what did not work. This should be done from a trouble-shooting standpoint rather than a punitive one
- The court should provide a level of oversight for compliance with the mediated agreement
- School attendance mediation as an alternative to adjudication can include other court personnel to assist in creative-problem solving and identification of resources.

Whether at the school or court level, the ultimate goal remains the same: empowering a student and his or her family to make decisions affecting their lives.

78 See Footnote 74

VII. SUSTAINABLE FUNDING AND RESOURCES

Building a program that helps kids to be on time and get to school every day takes resources. The Ohio Code of Judicial Conduct is intended to establish standards for ethical conduct of judges and is a useful resource in identifying sustainable funding and resources in a school attendance program.⁷⁹

Court and School Resources

Funding Considerations: In developing and implementing effective court and school funding strategies supporting attendance, it is important to pursue an evidence-based course of action. To determine a funding source, conduct this exercise:

- Identify all key stakeholders
- Identify resources already in place
- List resources needed to implement the program
- List resources presently committed to the program
- Determine whether current resources are effective
- Determine whether additional resources are needed. If so, what entity(ties) will provide the resources: the school, court, the private sector, and/or state or federal agencies?
- Identify who is responsible for each resource
- Determine whether there are shared costs
- Determine whether costs require a one-time payment or long-term investment

The purpose of this exercise is to find a way to support program funding. There could be instances in which only one stakeholder covers the cost of implementation, but effective collaboration still exists between all stakeholders.

The Ohio Children’s Trust Fund (OCTF) is a quasi-governmental entity and Ohio’s public child abuse and neglect prevention funding source. The OCTF funds a wide array of child abuse and neglect prevention programs, including parent education, family strengthening, human trafficking prevention, early child care initiatives, and various other types of programming. Applying for funding from the OCTF depends on the type of program proposed. The OCTF has three main funding streams:

- For statewide programs, applicants can apply to the OCTF board for an OCTF statewide grant for up to \$100,000. Information regarding these applications can be located on the OCTF website: https://jfs.ohio.gov/OCTF/Vendor_Proposal.stm

⁷⁹ www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/legalresources/rules/conduct/judcond.pdf

- The OCTF offers \$15,000 in grants each year for human trafficking prevention programs. Applications for one of these grants are available on the OCTF website: <https://jfs.ohio.gov/OCTF/Human-Trafficking-Prevention-Youth-Art-Exhibit.stm>
- The OCTF delivers the bulk of its services through a regional model. Under this model, county representatives, who make up a regional council, have identified needs in each region and have established strategies to address those needs. Local organizations can apply for funding from these Councils to fund programs that address the needs of the region within the scope of the council's strategies, which vary by region. The most up-to-date applications are available on the OCTF website: <https://jfs.ohio.gov/OCTF/Funding-Opportunities.stm>

The OCTF involves the community:

- The OCTF Regional Councils use volunteers to help ensure that programs are appropriate and effective. Volunteers help guide the direction of future programming.
- Volunteers and parents also get involved in the OCTF's April Child Abuse and Child Neglect Prevention Awareness Month activities. During the month of April, the OCTF generates awareness in the general public about child abuse and neglect prevention through a series of kickoff events, fundraisers, and other activities. OCTF's Kids Bake for Kids' Sake, in which kids throughout the state bake goods to be sold at local bake sales that benefit the OCTF, provides additional opportunities to involve children, businesses, and volunteer groups.

Ohio Department of Youth Services (DYS) offers subsidy grants, made up of funds from both RECLAIM Ohio and the Youth Services Grant. Youth Services grant funds have been in existence since 1981 and are known as the "base" portion of the Subsidy Grant because, unlike the RECLAIM "variable" funds, their allocations do not vary based on the number of felony adjudications and bed days used. The Youth Services Grant is allocated annually to juvenile courts based on a formula that uses county population: Each court is allocated a base amount of \$50,000 and the remainder of the line item is allocated to the courts with a population of more than 25,000 on a per capita basis.

The funds received through RECLAIM and the Youth Services Grant can be used for a vast array of treatment, intervention, diversion, and prevention programs. Examples of such programs include day treatment, alternative schools, intensive probation, electronic monitoring, and residential treatment. The primary limitation on the use of Subsidy Grant funds is that they cannot be used to supplant local funds. In addition, RECLAIM funds cannot be used for construction or renovation, while a limited amount of Youth Services Grant funding can be used for such expenditures.

Annually, the juvenile courts submit one Subsidy Grant funding application that addresses use of both RECLAIM Ohio and Youth Services Grant funds.

Each year, more than 80,000 youth admissions are funded through RECLAIM Ohio and/or the Youth Services Grant. Based on reported expenditures by the courts in Fiscal Year 2013, the top program areas used were probation and intensive probation, residential treatment, mental health counseling, substance abuse, monitoring and surveillance, diversion, restitution, community service and work detail, and sex offender treatment.

Federal Funding Resources

Title I, Part D: Program for Neglected, Delinquent and At-Risk Youth (ND). Ohio receives funding through Title I, Part D to help support educational services for youth ages 5-17 who reside in state or local institutions, or meet certain criteria. Funding amounts are determined by what is known as the October Child Count. This is currently a formula program; however, the Ohio Department of Education is exploring a competitive grant considering nonacademic, preventative measures for neglected, delinquent and at-risk youth such as trauma informed care and restorative justice models.

Title IV: Student Support and Academic Enrichment (SSAE): Safe and Supportive Schools. Title I eligible schools may apply to receive additional funds to improve school conditions for student learning. Examples of allowable expenditures include mental health counseling, promotion of supportive school climate, dropout prevention, re-entry and transition programs for justice-involved youth, and community partnership development.

Title I, Part A: Improving Local Programs Operated by Local Educational Agencies (LEAs). This program is designed to help disadvantaged children meet high academic standards and ensure that all children have equal opportunities to obtain a high-quality education. Funding assistance to LEAs is based on census poverty data.

Parent Resources

When parents understand barriers, and are encouraged to network and share information with one another, they often devise inexpensive or free ways to overcome barriers. The key to encouraging parents is to engage them.

One way to engage parents is the World Café discussed previously. The World Café, a social technology platform for engaging people in conversations, uses a method applied by numerous organizations to ask questions that spark and direct attention, perception, energy and effort.⁸⁰

80 <http://www.theworldcafe.com/key-concepts-resources/research/>

Another way to tap parent resources is to utilize the Parent Professional Partnerships model developed by Dr. Mary Murray and Tanya Braden.⁸¹ The Parent Professional Partnerships model seeks to build and strengthen parent and professional relationships, positively impact policy and practice, improve responsiveness to families while building upon their strengths in the delivery of services and supports, and improve outcomes for students and their families. This model has been utilized to unite parents of students with special needs in school systems. The parent and professional collaboration theory is that coordinated plans for students should not be designed solely by professionals but should instead incorporate a parent's knowledge about a child.⁸² The Parent Professional Partnerships model is based on the parent and professional collaboration theory and it is an organic way to unearth available resources.

Community Resources

Communities support school attendance and are committed to providing resources for a number of reasons. First, truancy is a risk factor for serious juvenile delinquency,⁸³ crime imposes property loss, medical care, mental health care, lost productivity, and criminal justice costs on society.⁸⁴ Second, property values are often related to the value of nearby schools,⁸⁵ so communities have financial reason to support attendance interventions.

Once courts and schools identify the school attendance barriers impacting their communities, courts and schools identify resources within the community that may be available to respond to the barriers. Community resources can include national franchises, state resources or local businesses, along with resources unique to individual communities. One example of matching a national community resource to a barrier is Whirlpool's donation of washers and dryers to provide clean clothing to students.⁸⁶ Another example is the Cleveland Browns Foundation's numerous commitments including the donation of turf fields, player support and tickets.⁸⁷

81 <http://www.toledoblade.com/Education/2017/07/01/Special-education-plan-links-parents-teachers-nbsp.html>

82 <https://www.utoledo.edu/education/grants/partnerproject/focus/docs/Parent%20and%20Professional%20Collaboration%20Research%20Brief%20-%20Final.pdf>

83 <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/ojdp/188947.pdf>

84 http://achalfin.weebly.com/uploads/8/5/4/8/8548116/chalfin_econcost.pdf

85 <http://www.realtor.com/advice/buy/the-right-school-district-how-much-do-schools-affect-real-estate-prices/>

86 <https://www.aol.com/article/news/2017/05/01/whirlpool-is-giving-washers-and-dryers-to-60-schools-across-the-/22063613/>

87 Cleveland Browns donate three new turf fields to Cleveland Metro Schools. <http://clevelandmetroschools.org/site/default.aspx?PageType=3&DomainID=3062&ModuleInstanceID=1887&ViewID=047E6BE3-6D87-4130-8424-D8E4E9ED6C2A&RenderLoc=0&Flex-DataID=13102&PageID=9145>

Community resources may also be regional such as Promedica’s support in providing nurses to staff schools in Toledo. The Promedica partnership responds to transportation barriers that would otherwise prevent students from going to mental and medical health appointments.⁸⁸ The Juvenile Court in Delaware County and the Delaware County Schools get local support from the Center for Child Development, which provides mental health resources to students and families.⁸⁹

Creative Funding

The United Way, foundations, bar associations, corporations, and other sources can also support community programs. Organizations are encouraged to search for local funding options and to think outside of the box when determining how to fund a program. Appendix E identifies some of the creative ways Ohio courts have funded programs.

88 Toledo Public Schools partner with health system. <http://www.toledoblade.com/Education/2015/04/30/Toledo-Public-Schools-to-hire-full-time-nurses.html>

89 Delaware Schools embrace students’ mental-health needs. <http://www.thecenterforchild-development.com/delaware-schools-embrace-mental-health-needs-children/>



VIII. EFFECTIVE EVALUATION

Effective evaluation is an important component in designing a school attendance program to reduce referrals to the juvenile justice system and improve student attendance. Courts and schools implement creative and innovative diversion programs, and research of local juvenile court practices regarding evaluation demonstrates that the ability of courts to objectively measure the efficacy of their programs varies. (See Appendix E.) While anecdotal information about the success of a diversion program or school intervention promotes optimism, consistent and periodic objective evaluations assist courts and schools in allocating or obtaining resources and making short-term and long-term decisions.

In addition, while Ohio law requires courts and schools to collect data, compliance with the legal requirements alone does not fully elucidate the efficacy of court diversion programs. Courts, then, may elect to collect evidence-based results to demonstrate the benefits of pre-filing truancy prevention programs and post-referral alternatives to adjudication diversion efforts. Similarly, schools may elect to collect data beyond that which is required by law in order to measure the success of interventions aimed at improving school attendance.

A. REQUIRED DATA COLLECTION FOR COURTS

Under H.B. 410, Juvenile Court Case Reports shall specify:

- The number of children placed in alternatives to adjudication
- The number who successfully completed alternatives to adjudication
- The number who failed to complete alternatives to adjudication and were adjudicated as unruly

B. RECOMMENDED DATA COLLECTION FOR COURTS

In order for courts to evaluate alternatives to adjudication, it is recommended that they go beyond the numbers and report on alternatives offered both prior to and subsequent to formal court referral.

1. Before Children are Placed in Alternatives to Adjudication:

- Total number of Absence Intervention Plans (AIP) in the court's jurisdiction
- Number of AIPs in which the court provided a neutral third party (See chart on page 11, step 3b)

- Dispute resolution process provided by a neutral third party at the AIP stage:
 - Facilitation
 - Mediation
 - Attendance Coordination
 - Other
- Number of cases in which agreements are reached between the school and family at the dispute resolution process provided by a neutral third party at the Absence Intervention Plan meeting (settlement rate)
- Number of referrals to juvenile court within 90 days following agreement (success rate)
- Number of children placed in alternatives to adjudication (required reporting)

2. After Children are placed in Alternatives to Adjudication:

- Total number of children placed in alternatives to adjudication (required reporting)
- Number of children in alternatives to adjudication in which the court provided a neutral third party (see chart on page 11, step 7)
- Dispute resolution process provided by neutral third party as an alternative to adjudication:
 - Facilitation
 - Mediation
 - Attendance Coordination
 - Other
- Number of students who successfully completed alternatives to adjudication (required reporting)
- Number who failed to complete alternatives to adjudication and were adjudicated unruly (required reporting)

C. REQUIRED DATA COLLECTION FOR SCHOOLS AND PILOT PROGRAMS

Beginning in the 2017-2018 school year, school districts must report to the Department of Education any of the following occurrences:

- When notice pursuant to R.C. 3321.191(C)(1) is submitted to a parent

- When a child has been absent without legitimate excuse for 30 or more consecutive hours, 42 or more hours in one school month and 72 or more hours in a school year
- When a child who has been adjudicated an unruly child for being an habitual truant violates the court order regarding that adjudication
- When an absence intervention plan has been implemented for a child under R.C. 3321.191

Schools selected as pilot program truancy teams by Ohio Children and Family First shall collect and submit the following data on children who are not attending school:

- Demographic information
- Truancy reasons
- Interventions utilized
- The student's participation in interventions identified by the team
- The student's attendance at school during or after the interventions are applied
- The success rate of those interventions
- The number of parents or guardians who participated in the team process
- The number of parents or guardians who identified a designee to participate on their behalf
- The number of parents or guardians who refused participation
- The number of complaints filed in juvenile court
- Any other information deemed useful

The Ohio Family and Children First Cabinet Council shall collect data on pilot program results, including:

- The number of children referred to juvenile court before the pilot was initiated
- The number of children referred to intervention teams
- Interventions utilized and success of the interventions
- The number of children who successfully reengage with the school, and
- The number of children referred to juvenile court by the team

D. RECOMMENDED DATA COLLECTION FOR SCHOOLS

Schools that are not part of a designated pilot program may benefit from collecting information that the pilot sites are collecting. Data can help identify the family barriers, school barriers and community barriers that impact school attendance and lead to juvenile court involvement. Data can provide useful information for developing evidenced-based practices to reduce formal referrals to juvenile courts and to measure the success of absence intervention teams. Data also can inform decision-making on how to focus resources allocated to bridging school attendance barriers.

E. RECOMMENDED UNIFORM DATA COLLECTION PRACTICES FOR COURTS AND SCHOOLS

1. Use Uniform Absence Reasons

This Toolkit uses absence reason categories that promote a uniform and standardized nomenclature that may be adopted by courts and schools throughout Ohio. There are myriad reasons why students do not attend school, and often students, families, courts and schools refer to the reasons using different terminology. The chart below suggests 8 categories. Uniformity in the reasons for absence helps to better gauge the success of school attendance programs.

UNIFORM ABSENCE REASONS	EXAMPLES
1. Personal Issues Involving Parent or Guardian	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of child care (children taking on parental roles) • Divorce • Home dysfunction • Domestic abuse • Substance abuse by parent or guardian • Child neglect • Worry about something happening to another family member when the student is at school • Poverty (economic deprivation and lack of basic resources, such as clothing, food or shelter), • Lacked clean clothing • Child that stays with another family member or friend and is not at home.
2. Child Having Problems with Other Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teasing • Cliques • Swearing (use of foul language) • Comments related to race • Comments related to religion
3. Child Does Not Get Up on Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No alarm clock • Oversleeps
4. Problems Getting to School on Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Playing on the way to school • Stubborn or stalling • Waiting for friends • Transportation issues • Car does not start • Missing the bus • Not walking to school when it is cold out • Car is not accessible because it is used for other family activities other than school transportation (like parent work)

<p>5. Child Does Not Feel Safe or the Parent Does Not Feel the Child is Safe at School</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bullying • School phobia • Separation anxiety
<p>6. Illness, Health-Related Problems, Learning Disabilities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asthma • ADH • Headaches • Stomach ache • Allergies • Ongoing medical care or appointments • Medication side effects • Depression • Hypochondria • Lack of immunizations • Vision problems • Lice • Bed wetting • Stuttering • Death in the family
<p>7. Academic Concerns</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frustration with lack of academic achievement • Students being so far behind in course work that they are unable to keep up in class • Lack of curriculum understanding (e.g., poor grounding in kindergarten-through-6th-grade basics)
<p>8. Diminished Value of Education</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of good-attendance pattern in parents' or guardians' own education history • Lack of understanding about state attendance requirements • Failure to provide notes about absences

2. Analyze the Data

Data collection can be accomplished through surveys, direct outreach, and the use of technology. Measure data each school year to show changes that occur within the same group of students.

In the tiered strategy sections above, Joe and Suzy dealt with the family barriers of job loss, lack of finances, and lack of support systems, Tyrone dealt with the school barriers of staffing and policies, and Carlos dealt with the community barriers of inadequate access to medical care, unreliable transportation, and pollution. Each student and family has unique attendance barriers, and data can help effectively evaluate the ability of local courts and school attendance programs to bridge the barriers.

Data can be analyzed for trends or patterns. Do absences spike at a specific time each year? Is illness, school climate, transportation, or bullying an attendance barrier? Looking at aggregated, personally unidentifiable data provides insight into the barriers and bridges to school attendance impacting an individual community as well as the state as a whole.

3. Share the Results

Once data is captured, consider how and with whom to share the results. Distribution of blinded individual and aggregate data about peers can be a driver of change.⁹⁰

Sharing the results of court diversion programs and absence intervention strategies can promote trust between communities, families, and other stakeholders who commit resources to reduce juvenile court involvement and promote student attendance. Sharing the results of dispute resolution and other programs can help support resources dedicated to such programs. Evidence-based information can be used in discussions with funding authorities and in the allocation of resources.

In conclusion, effective evaluation is an important component to designing a school attendance program. While programs may be sustainable in the short-term without effective evaluation, the long-term success and the allocation of resources requires effective evaluation. In the words of Will Durant, “We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act but a habit.”⁹¹

90 The Alternative, Most of what you believe about poverty is wrong. Mauricio L. Miller. Page 179

91 Will Durant Quotes. (n.d.). BrainyQuote.com. Retrieved June 18, 2018, from BrainyQuote.com website: https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/will_durant_145967.



APPENDIX

Appendix A School Attendance Program Design Guide

Appendix B Reference Guide to Tier I, Tier II and Tier III Strategies

Appendix C Sample Forms and Letters

Form 1	Welcome Back to School!
Form 2	Ways to Support Your Child
Form 3	Excessive Absence Letter 7 Days
Form 4	Invitation to Participate in Mediation
Form 5	Absence Intervention Team Checklist
Form 6	Parent Invitation to AIT Meeting
Form 7	Attempts to Obtain Parent Participation in AIT Meeting
Form 8	Absence Intervention Plan
Form 9	Notice to Participate in School Attendance Mediation
Form 10	Agreement to Mediate
Form 11	Mediation Outcome Report and Agreement
Form 12	Complaint
Form 13	Entry Referring Case to Diversion
Form 14	Diversion Requirements Letter to Students and Parents
Form 15	Notice to Appear for Mandatory Mediation
Form 16	Post-filing Agreement to Mediate
Form 17	Mediation Feedback Form

Appendix D Dispute Resolution

- School Attendance Program Brochure
- School Attendance Mediation Flow Chart
- Attendance Coordinator Job Description

Appendix E Statewide Promising Practices



APPENDIX

A

School Attendance Program
Design Guide





SCHOOL ATTENDANCE PROGRAM DESIGN GUIDE

Proposed Program Description

Preliminary Goals

Preliminary Objectives

People who should be involved in planning (School)	Purpose of their involvement
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
9.	
10.	

People who should be involved in planning (Court)	Purpose of their involvement
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
9.	
10.	

School Goals	No	Yes	Maybe
Improve Attendance			
Improve Student Learning			
Other			

Court Goals	No	Yes	Maybe
Find the best forum			
Reduce backlog			
Reduce the length of time to trial			
Save judicial resources			
Expedite categories of cases			
Other			

School Resistance	
<input type="checkbox"/> Budget Restrictions	
Strategies:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Training of personnel and Others	
Strategies:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Political Considerations	
What are they:	
Strategies:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Impact on Related Operations	
What are they:	
Strategies:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Turf Issues	
What are they:	
Strategies:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Other	
What are they:	
Strategies:	

Court Resistance	
<input type="checkbox"/> Budget Restrictions	
Strategies:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Training of personnel and Others	
Strategies:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Political Considerations	
What are they:	
Strategies:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Impact on Related Operations	
What are they:	
Strategies:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Turf Issues	
What are they:	
Strategies:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Other	
What are they:	
Strategies:	

Sponsorship	Yes	Maybe	Need Info.
School District			
Court			
Bar Association			
Dispute Resolution Center			
Private Practitioner			
Private Company			
Government Agency			
Combination of Service Providers			
Other			

Funding	Yes	Maybe	Need Info.
School District			
Private Contributions			
Grants			
State or Local Appropriated Funds			
Combination of Funding Sources			
Other			

Service Providers	Yes	Maybe	Need Info.
Volunteers			
Private Practitioners			
Private Company			
Community Mediation Center Staff/Volunteers			
Court Staff			
Combination of Systems			
Other			

Criteria for Selection of Service Providers	Yes	Maybe	Need Info.
Education			
Experience			
Training			
Skill-Based Critiques			
Combination			
Other			

Compensation for Services	Yes	Maybe	Need Info.
Paid by the Court			
Paid by the Schools			
Compensation Limits			
Stipends			
No Compensation			
Combination of Compensation Models			
Other			

Review Relevant Laws, Policies & Procedures	Yes	Maybe	Need Info.
Describe and Define integration of mediation into existing system			
Standardize rules for district and/or county			
Other			

Plan To Sustain Program	Future (permanent) funding sources
<input type="checkbox"/> Face-to-Face Assessment By Whom:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Attorney/Party Determination When/How:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Judicial Determination When/How:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Questionnaires Completed by whom:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Criteria	

Program Integrity	Action Necessary for Implementation
Party Participation	
Letter from School	
Letter from Court	
<input type="checkbox"/> Encouragement	
<input type="checkbox"/> Court Orders	

<input type="checkbox"/> Compliance Monitoring	
<input type="checkbox"/> Education	
<input type="checkbox"/> Other	
Confidentiality	
<input type="checkbox"/> Agreement to Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> Procedures	
<input type="checkbox"/> Leg./Rules/Orders	
<input type="checkbox"/> Code of Ethics	
<input type="checkbox"/> Education Efforts	
<input type="checkbox"/> Media Guidelines	
<input type="checkbox"/> Other	
Liability and/or Immunity	
<input type="checkbox"/> Insurance	
<input type="checkbox"/> Legislation	
<input type="checkbox"/> Court Rules	
<input type="checkbox"/> Case Law	
<input type="checkbox"/> Other	

Quality Control Program	Action Necessary for Implementation
Recruitment	

<input type="checkbox"/> Target Groups	
<input type="checkbox"/> Recruitment Strategies	
<input type="checkbox"/> Other	
Selection Standards	
<input type="checkbox"/> Qualifications	
<input type="checkbox"/> Education	
<input type="checkbox"/> Training	
<input type="checkbox"/> Practical Experience	
<input type="checkbox"/> Skills Critique	
Selection Methodologies	
<input type="checkbox"/> Minimum Qualifications	
<input type="checkbox"/> Interviews	
<input type="checkbox"/> Recommendations	
<input type="checkbox"/> Skills Critique	
<input type="checkbox"/> Written Tests	
Training	
<input type="checkbox"/> Requirements Necessary	
<input type="checkbox"/> Methodology/Content	
<input type="checkbox"/> Qualifications of Trainers	
<input type="checkbox"/> In-house or Contracted	
Evaluation Techniques	
<input type="checkbox"/> User Surveys	

<input type="checkbox"/> Mentorships	
<input type="checkbox"/> Observation	
<input type="checkbox"/> Solicit Feedback	
<input type="checkbox"/> Peer Review	
<input type="checkbox"/> Case Reviews <input type="checkbox"/> Mock Sessions	
<input type="checkbox"/> Self-Assessment	
<input type="checkbox"/> Staff Debriefing	
<input type="checkbox"/> Review of Agreements	
<input type="checkbox"/> Other	

Evaluation Audiences	What Do They Want To Know?
Courts	
Schools	
Funders	
Public	
Administrators	

Others	
--------	--

Evaluation Purposes	Methods of Data Collection
Program Effectiveness Defined as:	
Program Efficiency Defined as:	
Service Provider Effectiveness Performance Defined as:	

<p>Service Provider Efficiency</p> <p>Defined as:</p>	
<p>Party Satisfaction</p> <p>Defined as:</p>	
<p>Research</p> <p>Questions to be answered:</p>	
<p>Other</p>	

Tasks	Priority	Things To Do-Date Completed
Identify Leaders		

Establish Working Planning Groups		
Identify Key Issues for Consideration		
Educate the School Staff, Court Staff, Judiciary and Public		
Develop Case Processing Plan		
Develop Program Staff/Facilities Plan		
Develop Recruitment Plan		
Develop Training for Mediators		
Develop Evaluation Plan for Mediators		
Develop Program Evaluation Methodology		
Promulgate Legislation, Rules, Orders, Procedures		

Other		
-------	--	--

Authorization	Rules	Leg. Order or Procedures	Action Needed
<input type="checkbox"/> Referral			
<input type="checkbox"/> Mandatory/Voluntary			
<input type="checkbox"/> Timing of Referral			
<input type="checkbox"/> Process Available			
<input type="checkbox"/> Confidentiality			
<input type="checkbox"/> Service Provider Qualifications			
<input type="checkbox"/> Service Provider Selection			
<input type="checkbox"/> Service Provider Training			
<input type="checkbox"/> Participation of Parties			
<input type="checkbox"/> Cost of the Service			
<input type="checkbox"/> Other			

<input type="checkbox"/> Other			
<input type="checkbox"/> Other			

APPENDIX

B

Reference Guide to Tier I, Tier II & Tier III Strategies





TIER I

Tier I	Absence	Best Practices	Actions	Resources
<p>Tier I: Applies if a student has missed 5 percent or more of school. Can also apply to promote school attendance in the absence of absence. Tier I supports are meant to be universally applicable to all students and costs should be minimal.</p>	<p>Strategy #1: Engage Students and Parents</p>	<p>Cultivate an atmosphere where students feel respected and safe. Offer programs before and after school to engage students. Provide enrichment activities for students, such as field trips, assemblies, and dances. Greet students and families at the door in the morning. Create visuals (bulletin boards, banners, posters) that reflect attendance messaging and modify during the year to sustain impact. Communicate attendance expectations and how absences can add up in back-to-school materials and at events. Explain how to report an absence and what acceptable reasons for absence are.</p>	<p>Talk to parents when school begins about the value of attendance. Provide tools and resources so that parents and students can track absences. Create community by holding potlucks, PTA meetings and parent/teacher conferences. Prepare and send-out flyers and info-graphics about attendance. Encourage parents and students to sign a pledge card with specific attendance goals. Train administrators, teachers, coaches and parents on attendance policies. Engage coaches to encourage attendance. Recognize extended family members' roles in student success. Use words like "absence" instead of "attendance" when talking with parents to promote urgent understanding that children who miss school miss something important.</p>	<p>Sandusky back to school rally http://dys.ohio.gov/Portals/0/PDFs/CommunityPrograms/Competitive_RECLAIM/Cat1/20170403_Erie_Co_Cat_1_COMBINED_Final_REVISED.pdf VOA Operation Backpack https://www.voago.org/operationbackpack Adopt a Classroom www.adoptaclassroom.org Cleveland Browns donate three new turf fields to Cleveland Metro Schools http://clevelandmetroschools.org/site/default.aspx?PageType=3&DomainID=3062&ModuleInstanceID=1887&ViewID=047E6BE3-6D87-4130-8424-D8E4E9ED6C2A&RenderLoc=0&FlexDataID=13102&PageID=9145</p>
	<p>Strategy #2: Recognize Good and Improved Attendance</p>	<p>Generate friendly competition among classrooms offering raffles, parties and public recognition for good and improved attendance. Celebrate individual progress through monthly bulletin boards, certificates, verbal and written acknowledgments. Recognize students and parents with good attendance at special assemblies.</p>	<p>September is National Attendance Awareness Month. Present school data at hosted events to promote positive messaging in September. Incorporate information about attendance into daily interactions with families. Hold attendance contests with incentives. Host special attendance events. Develop media and public outreach to take place in September.</p>	<p>Detroit Tigers School Incentive Program http://detroit.tigers.mlb.com/det/downloads/y2014/schooldonationform.pdf</p>

Tier I	Absence	Best Practices	Actions	Resources
	<p>Strategy #3: Provide Personalized and Early Outreach</p>	<p>Call parents when a student is absent. Note attendance on report cards and conference reports. Discuss chronic absence at parent programs and in communications all year long. Host a transition meeting for kindergartners and new families so they learn about school, teachers and attendance expectations. Explain the importance of early grade learning and how knowledge builds over years.</p>	<p>Identify early childhood and family resource centers in your area. Provide a list of pediatricians, women's health practitioners, child care centers and preschools for younger children at transition meetings.</p>	<p>Sample "back to school" letter http://www.attendanceworks.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/Attendance_1PG_0911_FINAL.pdf "Help Me Grow" early childhood resources http://www.helpmegrow.ohio.gov/Sandusky_afterschool_program http://npsandusky.org/ Provide Mentors to Children https://www.bgca.org/ Cleveland Metro School District successful campaign "Get 2 School. You can Make it!" http://www.clevelandbrowns.com/foundation/programs/get-to-school.html Cincinnati Public schools successful "Count Me In" Campaign https://www.cps-k12.org/schools/policies-guidelines/attendance</p>
	<p>Strategy #4: Remove Barriers to Student Attendance</p>	<p>Invite parents and community to address most frequently cited barriers in the school. Open the schoolhouse door and work with community agencies to help vulnerable children and families by surrounding them with resources so that families feel supported and welcomed.</p>	<p>Develop a Programmatic Response to System Barriers. Address hunger and nutrition with a breakfast program and food pantry. Foster community safety with a safe walk to school program. Coordinate on-campus flu shots, dental check-ups and asthma management. Host a uniform and coat drive. Prevent bullying with a anti-bullying campaign. Adopt a school climate initiative to improve student discipline approaches and create a welcome environment.</p>	<p>Ohio United Way http://ouw.org/211-map/ Food assistance www.twofishandloaves.com www.midohiofoodbank.org; www.secondharvestfoodbank.org/ Salvation Army Uniform Drive http://www.tiftongazette.com/news/salvation-army-holds-uniform-drive/article_f0319bd6-512c-11e7-b072-733085834ded.html Anti-Bullying saferschools.ohio.gov/content/anti_harassment_intimidation_and_bullying_resources Ohio career and technical education http://www.ohioacte.org/ Ohio Means Jobs https://jobseeker.ohiomeansjobs.monster.com/</p>

Tier I	Absence	Best Practices	Actions	Resources
	Effective Evaluation	<p>Create a school attendance team to review attendance data. Identify Tier I, II and III students. Review qualitative and quantitative data listing absence reasons. Identify common barriers to attendance. Develop a school plan addressing the most frequently cited attendance barriers. Juvenile Courts must consider an alternative to adjudication for any complaints filed alleging that a child is unruly based upon habitual truancy; only consider a complaint as a matter of last resort.</p>	<p>Make Data Review a Habit. Include administrators, teachers, students, and engaged parents on a school attendance team that collects and analyzes data monthly to identify chronically absent students. Provide a list of possible attendance barriers to teachers or attendance officers so that when a child is tardy or not at school, the absence reason (i.e. barrier) can be documented and tracked. Analyze data monthly to indicate early warning signals. Model attendance by having the school attendance team track and publish their own attendance.</p>	<p>Attendance Tracking Software Program Examples www.rediker.com www.myattendancetracker.com www.capterra.com www.jollytech.com www.engineerica.com/accuclass www.i-attend.com</p>



TIER II

Tier II	Excessive Absence	Best Practices	Actions	Resources
<p>Tier II: Applies if a student is considered excessively absent under Ohio law:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Missed 38 or more hours of school in one month with or without legitimate excuse. • Missed 65 or more hours in the school year with or without legitimate excuse. Tier II supports should be uniquely attuned to the student, as well as the family and costs should be low to moderate. 	<p>Strategy #1: Engage Students and Parents</p>	<p>Notify families via phone or letter about attendance concerns. Provide parents with easy-to-understand information and or assistance in reaching out to social services or community resources that address barriers. Maintain contact with the student's family to ensure they are receiving needed support. Identify the academic need of the student and develop a plan to provide appropriate services. Juvenile courts provide notice of any adjudication related to a child's truancy to the school district and school in which the child was enrolled when the complaint was filed.</p>	<p>Collaboratively build an Attendance Intervention Plan (AIP): When absent 38 or more hours in 1 month or 65 hours in a school year, create an Attendance Intervention Team ("AIT") for the student and schedule a meeting with the student, student's parent and the AIT to create an AIP. AIP can be mediated with parents, students, teacher, and other school personnel to foster collaboration, team building, and buy-in. Request parental permission to engage the student in intensive support. Develop a process to create AIPs, such as a truancy mediation program.</p>	<p>Dayton Truancy Mediation Program Daytonmediationcenter.org</p> <p>Marion County Truancy Mediation https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WbHCZfYCB3E</p> <p>Delaware County Truancy Mediation http://www.co.delaware.oh.us/court/juvenile/index.php/programs/mediation/types-of-meditation/truancy-mediator</p> <p>Ottawa County Juvenile Court Truancy Mediation Program http://www.ottawacountyjuvenilecourt.com/programs.htm#1</p> <p>Lucas County Truancy Mediation http://www.co.lucas.oh.us/231/Juvenile-Mediation</p> <p>Erie County Truancy Mediation http://dys.ohio.gov/Portals/0/PDFs/CommunityPrograms/Competitive_RECLAIM/Cat1/20170403_Erie_Co_Cat_1_COMBINED_Final_REVISED.pdf</p>
	<p>Strategy #2: Recognize Good and Improved Attendance</p>	<p>Establish specific individual goals and recognize goal achievement. Engage students in tracking their own attendance daily. Recognize good and improved attendance weekly. Develop strategies with students based on age, interest, and other individual factors. Juvenile courts submit the number of children placed in alternatives to adjudication, the number who successfully complete those programs, and the number who fail to complete those programs and were, therefore, adjudicated unruly in the annual report.</p>	<p>AIP Components: Identify student-specific goals and interventions. Provide notice that AIP will be monitored and reconvene in 60 days on a date certain. Provide AIP document to parents. Incentivize: Find out what each Tier II child is interested in and brainstorm whether there are unique incentives that can be provided when that Tier II student reaches goals.</p>	<p>Erie County sends students with attendance issues to truancy mediation. In this process, mediators empower students to set personal attendance goals and to identify what interests them (i.e., sports, music, theatre, clothing, etc.). Subsequent meetings are scheduled with the students. When students reach their goal, they receive their individualized incentive.</p>

Tier II	Excessive Absence	Best Practices	Actions	Resources
	<p>Strategy #3: Provide Personalized and Early Outreach</p>	<p>Assign students an attendance buddy. Recruit students to engage in after-school activities. Schedule parent/ staff conferences to discuss absences. Assess unique student/family needs. Refer families to appropriate services. Arrange transportation to and from school with other families or staff. Visit homes and connect families with needed resources. Work with students and families to develop strategies for improved attendance.</p>	<p>Check in with Tier II students weekly and acknowledge attendance success. Customize the AIP to the student's needs. Visit Tier II families in their homes once an AIP is put into place. Incentivize students that reach AIP goals. Educate staff about the challenges impoverished families face. Connect students seeking structure with armed services representatives or recruiters. Offer or refer parents to parenting classes.</p>	<p>Strengthening Families Initiative https://www.liveuniteddelawarecounty.org/take-action/strengthening-families Supplies for Scholars http://www.delgazette.com/news/59651/supplies-for-scholars-2 Educational Program about Poverty Challenges http://playspent.org/ U.S. Military Services http://www.military.com/join-armed-forces/us-military-overview.html The Parent Project www.parentproject.com</p>
	<p>Strategy #4: Remove Barriers to Student Attendance</p>	<p>Identify a student's unique barrier(s). Involve public agencies and community partners to address barriers. Collaborate with school nurses to follow-up on medical-related absences. Surround families with community resources to overcome barriers. Connect families with school-based resources, such as extracurricular activities and sports, that support good attendance. Partner with local business to support needed student programs.</p>	<p>Reach out to local health care (hospitals, doctors, dentists, ophthalmologists) and mental health providers. Request that health care providers and the school forge a symbiotic partnership where low-income students are served at school. Invite community-based providers (i.e., shelters, food pantries, lending closets, faith communities) to provide information or set up tables at school meetings. Build relationships with community business and service providers so that the school can contact providers when issues arise.</p>	<p>Toledo Public Schools Partner with Health System http://www.toledoblade.com/Education/2015/04/30/Toledo-Public-Schools-to-hire-full-time-nurses.html Indians Book Drive for Cleveland schools http://www.news5cleveland.com/sports/baseball/indians/cleveland-indians-carlos-carrasco-hosting-book-drive-to-benefit-cleveland-school-libraries</p>
	<p>Effective Evaluation</p>	<p>Review attendance every week for chronically absent students. Determine the underlying cause(s) of the continued absences. Evaluate whether chronically absent students need a Tier III response.</p>	<p>Identify Tier II students in software attendance programs. Generate reports weekly that track Tier II students. Examine Tier II reports weekly to find out whether a previously reported barrier or new barrier is causing absence.</p>	<p>Empower Families to Create Their Own Student's Success Plan http://www.attendanceworks.org/tools-for-parents/student-success-plan-facilitator-handout/</p>

TIER III

Tier III	Truancy	Best Practices	Actions	Resources
<p>Tier III: Applies if a student is considered habitually truant under Ohio law:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Missed 30 unexcused consecutive hours. of school • Missed 42 unexcused hours of school in one month. • Missed 72 unexcused hours in the school year. Tier III supports should be highly tailored to meet the needs of students and their families. Costs could be moderate to high. 	<p>Strategy #1: Engage Students and Parents</p>	<p>Determine whether Tier III students and families should be agency involved. Coordinate with community agencies to support Tier III families by making appropriate referrals, developing comprehensive intervention plans and sharing data when appropriate.</p> <p>Connect student to supports such as mentoring.</p>	<p>Invite agencies to attend AIT/ AIP meetings. Telephone conference community agencies when doing meetings with families to find out if there are possible ways to link families to resources.</p>	<p>Delaware Schools Embrace Students' Mental Health Needs http://www.thecenterforchilddevelopment.com/delaware-schools-embrace-mental-health-needs-children/</p> <p>RFS Charitable Foundation Behavioral Health Providing School-Based and Outpatient Behavioral Health Services https://www.rfstackle.com/</p>
	<p>Strategy #2: Recognize Good and Improved Attendance</p>	<p>Incorporate positive, tailored reinforcements into plans supporting a student's improved attendance.</p> <p>Celebrate improvements in schools and encourage peer sharing.</p>	<p>Link homeless students with tutors, school supplies, uniforms, summer programs, meal programs, class supplies and transportation. Build collaborative relationships between schools, child protection agencies and the court system to encourage communication about foster children.</p>	<p>TPS nabs \$400,000 grant to aid homeless students http://www.toledoblade.com/Education/2017/08/01/Toledo-Public-Schools-nabs-400-000-grant-to-aid-homeless-students.html</p>

Tier III	Truancy	Best Practices	Actions	Resources
	<p>Strategy #3: Provide Personalized and Early Outreach</p>	<p>Designate one person for each Tier III student that will make continued, positive and regular contact with the student and the student's family. Check in on AIP's bi-weekly to examine whether strategies are proving helpful. Call families and determine the reason for absence whenever a Tier III student misses school.</p>	<p>Students whose families received a home visit had 24 percent fewer absences than similar students whose families did not receive a visit. The same students were also more likely to read at or above grade level compared to similar students who did not receive a home visit. http://flamboyanfoundation.org/focus/family-engagement/fep-student-outcome-evaluation/ Educate staff about the reasons for student absence so that staff can recognize warning signs.</p>	<p>Parent Teacher Home Visits http://www.pthvp.org/what-we-do/pthv-model/ The Victory Project is a privately funded 501(c)3 after-school program, mentoring disengaged young men in Dayton with groundbreaking curriculum http://www.victoryproject.org/ Bridges Out of Poverty Training http://mha.ohio.gov/Portals/0/assets/Supports/Housing/Training/Bridges-Out-of-Poverty-3.23.2016.pdf Sex Trafficking FAQs https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oese/oshs/factsheet.html The Daughter Project http://thedaughterproject.org/ Inspire Girls to Be Strong, Smart and Bold http://www.girlsinc.org/</p>

Tier III	Truancy	Best Practices	Actions	Resources
	<p>Strategy #4: Remove Barriers to Student Attendance</p>	<p>Implement AIP. Monitor AIP. Adjust AIP if it is not proving helpful. Increase support for attendance counselors and prevention services. Implement restorative justice and behavioral intervention support.</p>	<p>Review accurate, up-to-date data. Utilize positive messaging emphasizing that daily attendance leads to a successful future. Build staff capacity through professional development so that staff have requisite skills and knowledge. Share accountability between schools and families.</p>	<p>Addressing Chronic Student Absence In Your Local Control and Accountability Plan http://www.attendanceworks.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/Accountable-For-Attendance-FINAL1.pdf Restorative Justice Programs https://www.ousd.org/cms/lib/CA01001176/Centricity/Domain/134/BTC-OUSD1-IG-08b-web.pdf Empower Youth to End Dating Abuse http://www.loveisrespect.org/ Encourage Respect http://operationrespect.org/classroom-lessons/ Anti-Bullying Programs https://saferschools.ohio.gov/content/anti-harassment_intimidation_and_bullying_resources Suicide Prevention Programs http://mha.ohio.gov/Portals/0/2016-Suicide-and-Schools.pdf</p>
	<p>Effective Evaluation</p>	<p>Identify students with a history of missing 20 percent or more school and who are at risk due to other major challenges. Review attendance reports daily and ensure that Tier III students are in school daily. Follow up on each absence for all Tier III students.</p>	<p>Identify Tier III students in software attendance programs. Generate reports weekly that track Tier III students. Examine Tier III reports daily to find out whether a previously reported barrier or new barrier is causing absence. Ask high school students if they are on track to graduate and to attend college. Forge relationships with agencies so that risk-factor information can be regularly and easily shared.</p>	<p>Pathways to Success Initiative seeks to improve educational outcomes for foster students through partnerships with child welfare, school and the courts. http://www.co.lucas.oh.us/2618/Pathways-to-Success-Initiative</p>



APPENDIX

C

Sample Forms & Letters





Welcome back to school! The [school district] and the [____ County Court] hope this will be an exciting and successful school year for you and your family.

We want to take this opportunity to let you know that in 2017 Ohio changed its law on school attendance in an effort to improve school attendance. This letter also includes information about when the Court will get involved with your family if your student misses too many hours of school. Here are some important points to know about the law:

- **Attendance is important.** It is important that your student be on time and get to school every day. As early as elementary school, students who miss just 2 days a month, regardless of the reasons for the absence, are more likely to fall behind academically and less likely to graduate. This is true regardless of race, ethnicity, language, family income, and other variables. When children miss school, it disrupts their learning and routine. Our community is stronger if our children graduate and successfully enter the workforce or attend college. Their success starts by being on time and getting to school every day.
- The new law focuses on habitual truancy. **Habitual truancy** is when a student is absent without a legitimate excuse 30 or more consecutive hours, 42 or more hours in one month, or 72 or more hours in one school year.
- This year the school will add up all the time that your student misses from school. This includes hours that your child is late to school in the morning and hours your child misses at the end of the day if they leave school early.
- If your student becomes habitually truant, our school must create an **Absence Intervention Plan**. This is a student-centered, personalized plan that addresses barriers to attendance when a student becomes habitually truant. The plan is developed collaboratively by the school, the family, and the student. The plan spells out agreed upon strategies for improving attendance.
- The new law also addresses excessive absences. **Excessive absences** occur when a student is absent with or without a legitimate excuse for 38 or more hours in one month or 65 or more hours in the school year.
- **The goal of House Bill 410 is to provide a supportive and preventative approach to truancy. However, there is still the potential for court involvement even with an Absence Intervention Plan.** Once a plan is in place, a complaint against the student will be filed in Juvenile Court 61 calendar days after the plan has been implemented if the absence intervention team determines the student and his/her family did not successfully implement that plan. A complaint may be filed before the 61st day if the student has been absent without legitimate excuse for 30 or more consecutive hours or 42 or more hours in a school month during the plan's implementation.
- At the elementary level, **contributing charges may be filed against a parent** when the student has 72 unexcused hours.

If you have questions about this change in the law please contact [____ at ____].
Have a great school year!

Sincerely,

[School Superintendent]

[Judge]



IN THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS, _____ COUNTY, OH, _____ DIVISION

[date]

VIA EMAIL

Dear [Parent or Guardian] [and STUDENTS grades 6-12?]

Our goal this year is to ensure that every student attends school regularly. Showing up for school has a huge impact on a student's academic success starting in kindergarten and continuing through high school. Even as children grow older and more independent, families play a key role in making sure students be on time and get to school get every day and understand why attendance is so important for success in school and in life.

We realize some absences are unavoidable due to health problems or other circumstances. But, we also know that when students miss too much school – regardless of the reason – it can cause them to fall behind academically. Your child is less likely to succeed if he or she misses just 2 days a month, regardless of the reason for the absence. Research shows that children who miss just two days a month throughout the school year:

- In kindergarten and 1st grade are much less likely to read at grade level by the end of the 3rd grade
- By 6th grade are at risk for dropping out of school
- By 9th grade are less likely to graduate. Good attendance can predict graduation rates even better than 8th grade test scores.

We don't want your child to fall behind in school and get discouraged. Please ensure that your child attends school every day and arrives on time. Here are a few practical tips to help support regular attendance:

- Make sure your child keeps a regular bedtime and establish a morning routine
- Lay out clothes and pack backpacks the night before
- Ensure your child goes to school every day unless he or she is truly sick
- Avoid scheduling vacations or doctor appointments when school is in session
- Talk to teachers and counselors for advice if your child feels anxious about going to school
- Develop back-up plans for getting to school if something comes up. Call on a family member, neighbor, or another parent to take your child to school

Let us know how we can best support you and your child so that he or she can be on time and get to school every day. We want your child to be successful in school!! If you have any questions or need more information please contact me at [phone number.]

Sincerely,

[Name]

[Mediation Program Coordinator or other designated contact]

[phone number] and [email]

A copy of this letter is posted on the school's website [link to letter].



SCHOOL LETTERHEAD

[date]

To the Parents/Guardians of: _____
[Address]
[VIA EMAIL]

Re: Excessive Absence

Dear [Parents/Guardians Name],

Regular school attendance is required by Ohio law and is a key factor for student success in school. We are here to support you in helping your child be on time and get to school every day. This letter is to notify you that your child is missing too much school. As of today your child has missed:

() 38 or more hours of school in one month with or without a legitimate excuse

() 65 or more hours in the school year with or without a legitimate excuse

According to state law your child is considered excessively absent. Ohio's compulsory school attendance laws define an excessively absent student as one who has missed 38 hours in one month with or without a legitimate excuse or 65 hours of school in one school year with or without a legitimate excuse.

Since your student meets one of the requirements above, we encourage you to review the school's attendance policy and to contact us if you need help. We hope you understand that further absences may lead to notification of an Absence Intervention Meeting with you, a district representative, a representative from your child's school, and potentially others.

If you have questions or concerns regarding the information in this letter, please call our office at [phone].

Support services are available if you need them. If you need to be connected to support services for your family, please [*contact _____ or visit our web site, etc.*]

Thank you in advance for your concern in your child's educational process. We want your child to be successful in school. Their success starts by being on time and getting to school.

Respectfully,

Principal



[school letterhead]

Date:

To the Parents/Guardians of: _____

[Address]

[VIA EMAIL]

Re: **Invitation to Participate in School Attendance Mediation**

Dear [Parent or Guardian]:

Regular school attendance is required by Ohio law and is a key factor for student success in school. We are here to support you in helping your child be on time and get to school every day. You are receiving this **Invitation to Participate in School Attendance Mediation** because your child is experiencing challenges attending school.

The purpose of school attendance mediation is to address your child's school absences in a supportive, non-judgmental, and non-punitive way. With the help of a neutral third party, known as a mediator, families and school staff can meet in a confidential setting to identify the issues that become barriers to school attendance and to find ways to resolve those issues so that your child may succeed in school. Please see the enclosed brochure form more information about mediation.

The in-person meeting is scheduled for:

Date: _____ Time: _____ AM/PM Place: _____

You are welcome to bring any information that you think may be helpful.

If you have questions, please feel free to contact:

Contact: _____ Phone #: _____

Complete and Return to the Contact Listed Above

Student's Name: _____ Date of Birth: _____

I WILL attend at the above date and time I WILL NOT attend at the above date and time

I AM AVAILABLE to attend at a different time as follows: Date(s): _____ Time(s): _____

Parent Signature: _____ Date: _____



_____ City Schools

Absence Intervention Team

CHECKLIST

Student: _____ Date of Birth: _____ Grade: _____

School: _____ ID# _____ Phone #: _____

Within seven (7) **school** days of the triggering absence:

- | <u>Date</u> | <u>Activity</u> |
|-------------|--|
| _____ | Determine members of the Absence Intervention Team (AIT) |
| _____ | Determine date of Absence Intervention Team Meeting |
| _____ | Contact parents (specify method(s) used: _____) |
| | _____ 2 nd Attempt (method: _____) |
| | _____ 3 rd Attempt (method: _____) |

Within ten (10) **calendar** days of the triggering absence:

- | <u>Date</u> | <u>Activity</u> |
|-------------|---|
| _____ | Assign Student to Absence Intervention Team |

Within fourteen (14) **school** days of the **assignment** of the student to the Absence Intervention Team:

- | <u>Date</u> | <u>Activity</u> |
|-------------|---|
| _____ | Conduct the Absence Intervention Team meeting |
| _____ | Develop and Implement the Absence Intervention Plan (AIP) |

Within twenty (20) **school** days of the Implementation of the AIP (This is only a review process; student still has time to complete the plan):

- | <u>Date</u> | <u>Activity</u> |
|-------------|---|
| _____ | Conduct a REVIEW of the Absence Intervention Plan (by phone if necessary) |
| _____ | Take appropriate steps based on the student's attendance progress |

Within sixty-one (61) days **after** Implementation of the AIP:

- | <u>Date</u> | <u>Activity</u> |
|-------------|---|
| _____ | AIT determination as to whether student successfully implemented the AIP |
| _____ | If AIT determined student did not successfully implement the plan, direct district truancy officer to file a complaint with the juvenile court. |



Parent Invitation to Attend Absence Intervention Team Meeting

Student: _____ Date of Birth: _____ Grade: _____

School: _____ ID# _____ Phone #: _____

To: _____ Date _____

You are invited to attend an Absence Intervention Team Meeting to discuss your child’s attendance and to create an Absence Intervention Plan. The purpose of this meeting is to identify reasons for absences and to create an action plan that will help you, your child, and the school work together to improve your child’s attendance. As of today, your child has missed:

- () 30 unexcused consecutive hours of school
- () 42 unexcused hours of school in one month
- () 72 unexcused hours in the school year

According to state law your child is considered habitually truant. Ohio’s compulsory school attendance laws define an habitual truant as a student who has missed 30 consecutive hours without a legitimate excuse, 42 hours in one month without a legitimate excuse, or 72 hours in a school year without a legitimate excuse. When students miss too much school – regardless of the reason – it can cause them to fall behind academically.

Since your student meets one of the requirements above, the school district and parent or guardian must create an Absence Intervention Plan to help remove attendance barriers and find attendance solutions for your child. This meeting is meant to be a positive, information-gathering meeting in your child’s school building and will include a school district representative, educational support provider from your child’s school, and you, the parent or guardian. Community resources will also be discussed at this time, if needed.

The meeting is scheduled as a:

____ Face-to-face meeting ____ Telephone conference

Date: _____ Time: _____ AM/PM Place: _____

Members of the Absence Intervention Team will include:

_____	_____
Name	Title
_____	_____
Name	Title
_____	_____
Name	Title
_____	_____
Name	Title

You are welcome to bring any information that you think may be helpful.

If you have questions, please feel free to contact:

Contact: _____ Phone #: _____

Complete and Return to the Contact Listed Above

Student's Name: _____ Date of Birth: _____

I WILL attend at the above date and time I WILL NOT attend at the above date and time

I AM AVAILABLE to attend at a different time as follows: Date(s): _____ Time(s): _____

Parent Signature: _____ Date: _____

SAMPLE

Attempts to Obtain Parent Participation in Absence Intervention Team Meeting

Student: _____ Date of Birth: _____ Grade: _____

School: _____ ID# _____ Phone #: _____

The meeting is scheduled as a:

____ Face-to-face meeting

____ Telephone conference

Date: _____ Time: _____ AM/PM Place: _____

Documentation of Attempts to Contact Parents

Form of Contact	Date(s)	Outcome
Correspondence		
Telephone Calls		
Home Visits		
Other		



Absence Intervention Plan

Student: _____ Date of Birth: _____ Grade: _____

Address: _____ Phone Number: _____

Parent/Guardian: _____ Date Parent Notified of Absences _____

School: _____ Date of AIT Meeting: _____

Attendance History: _____ hours excused _____ hours unexcused

Our goal is to create a plan that will help the student, the school and the family work together to improve attendance. Working together as a team, we have identified the following reasons for absences and actions to improve attendance:

Reasons for past absences: _____

Actions to be taken by Parent/Guardian to resolve attendance issues: _____

Actions to be taken by Student to resolve attendance issues: _____

Actions to be taken by School Personnel: _____

Plan Review Date: _____

Plan Expiration Date: _____

Parent/Guardian Signature

Student Signature

District/School Rep. Signature

Other Signature

Participants (if not included above):

Role:



[court letterhead]

Date:

To the Parents/Guardians of: _____

[Address]

[VIA EMAIL]

Re: **Notice to Participate in School Attendance Mediation – Action Required**

Check one: A complaint **HAS NOT** been filed with the juvenile court

A complaint **HAS** been filed with the juvenile court

Dear [Parent or Guardian]:

Regular school attendance is required by Ohio law and is a key factor for student success in school. We are here to support you in helping your child be on time and get to school every day. You are receiving this **Notice to Participate in School Attendance Mediation** because your child is experiencing challenges attending school.

The [Court Name Here] offers a School Attendance Mediation Program as a means of reducing student absenteeism and increasing educational success in the [school district name here]. Mediation is an opportunity for a parent or guardian and a representative of the school to meet with a neutral third party, called a mediator, to reach a voluntary solution to their dispute. Enclosed is a brochure explaining this important Program, and see the reverse side of this letter for more information about mediation.

If school absence continues to be a problem after mediation, a contributing charge may be filed against you and the case may be scheduled for a court hearing before a judge or magistrate who will decide the case.

[Name of Student Here] has missed [# of hours] hours of school this school year. **There will be a school attendance mediation at [Time] on [Date] at [Name of School].** [NOTE: If the student is in middle or high school, add “Please make sure your child is at school that day so that he/she is able to attend this mediation.”]

Please contact [Name of Mediation Coordinator and Title] at [Telephone Number or email] should you have any questions. We look forward to working with you to help your student be on time and get to school every day.

Very truly yours,

Administrative Judge

Facts about Mediation:

- A mediator helps the participants identify what is important to them, discuss what may be getting in the way of going to school, and create solutions that fit their unique circumstances.
- Participants are the ones who are most familiar with their own individual needs, and so they are best suited to come up with a solution.
- When participants reach a voluntary solution, they are most likely to stick to the solution because it resolves the underlying problem that gets in the way of school attendance.
- Often, resources are available to help resolve the underlying problem that is getting in the way of school attendance. Ask your mediator if there are resources available.
- Mediation can be used anytime there is a problem with school attendance, whether early on when school absences begin to be a problem, or after a complaint is filed in the juvenile court as part of a diversion program.
- A mediator is usually not allowed to share what was discussed in mediation with a court or judge, although there are some exceptions which a mediator will talk about with you.

Agreement to Mediate

Student: _____ School: _____ Grade: _____

We understand and agree to the following:

- Mediation is a problem-solving process. The mediator is neutral and does not represent school staff, the family or the student. The mediator is not a judge and will not provide legal advice.
- A mediation is not a court proceeding.
- The parties have the right to consult with an attorney at any time during the process.
- The mediator has no authority to force the parties to reach an agreement.
- An agreement is reached only if the parties believe that the agreement is fair and in the child's best interests.
- The mediation process is confidential and privileged to the extent allowed by law. In most cases, that means that nothing said or shared in the mediation other than the school records can be used in any court proceeding. The mediator is required to report any allegation of abuse or neglect of a child to the _____ County Department of Job and Family Services and will report any felonies to law enforcement. Additionally, the mediator will stop the mediation if there are any threats of harm made.
- The goal of mediation is to identify reasons for absences and actions to improve attendance that everyone at the mediation is able to agree to. Any agreement reached will be written up in an Absence Intervention Plan that will be signed by the student, if age-appropriate, the parent/guardian and a district/school representative. Each person who signs the Absence Intervention Plan will receive a copy of it, if age-appropriate.

Signature:

Date:



Mediation Outcome Report and Agreement

The case was assigned to mediation on _____. The results of the mediation session are set forth below:

Date	Session	Agreement
_____	Occurred ____/Terminated ____	Yes ____ (Full ____ Partial____)/No ____

The following participants attended the mediation session:

_____ Participant	_____ Date

If an agreement was reached, all parties to the dispute received a copy of the agreement:
Yes_____ No_____ Not Applicable_____

We agree to the following:

IN THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS, _____ COUNTY, OHIO
_____ DIVISION

The State of Ohio :
 :
 :
vs. :
 :
_____ : Case No.: _____
Defendant (Parent/Guardian) :
Address :
 :
and : Judge _____
 :
_____ :
Defendant (Parent/Guardian) :
Address :
 :
and :
 :
_____ :
Defendant (Child/Student) :
Address :
DOB: :

COMPLAINT

Due to the failure of [Student's Name] to attend school or class without legitimate excuse for absence, it is alleged that said student is:

- () An unruly child for being a habitual truant: A child of compulsory school age who is absent without legitimate excuse for 30 or more consecutive hours of school, 42 or more hours in one school month, or 72 or more hours in one school year. R.C. 2151.011/2151.022(B).

- () A delinquent child for being a habitual truant: A child of compulsory school age who is absent without legitimate excuse for 30 or more consecutive hours of school, 42 or more hours in one school month, or 72 or more hours in one school year and has previously been adjudicated an unruly child for being a habitual truant. R.C. 2151.011(B)(17),

- () The parent, guardian or other person having care of a child of compulsory school age failed to cause the child's attendance at school in violation of section 3321.38 of the Revised Code.

The undersigned, duly appointed by the Board of Education of the [School District Name], as the attendance officer for said school district, makes complaint that the parents of said child, a child of compulsory school age and in charge of said child, have failed to cause said child to attend school or class as required by law, in violation of Ohio Revised Code 3321.38 and that said student, a child of compulsory school age, has failed to attend school or class in violation of the law.

A representative of the school gave written notification to the parent and child pursuant to R.C. 3321.19(C). See attached.

STATE OF OHIO

COUNTY OF _____, SS:

The undersigned being dully sworn states that the information in this complaint is true.

Signature of School representative

Sworn to and subscribed before me this _____ day of _____, 20_____.

Signature of Notary Public

TO THE CLERK:

Please have [Name of Process Server] of [Court Name/Sherriff Name], personally serve the parents and/or guardian, and the minor child with a copy of the complaint and summons at the address(es) listed above. If the child is under the age of fourteen (14), please have the complaint and summons served on the parents or guardians.

Signature of School Representative

IN THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS
_____ **COUNTY, OH**
_____ **DIVISION**

In the Matter of:

:

:

:

:

:

Case No.: _____

Judge _____

JOURNAL ENTRY

It is hereby **ORDERED** that this case is stayed and referred to [the Diversion Department, Juvenile Court] for further proceedings.

Judge or Magistrate

CC: Assignment Commissioner
School Attendance Liaison



Youth Name: _____
Parent/Guardian Name: _____
Case Number: _____

DIVERSION REQUIREMENTS

A complaint was filed against [Parent Name] and [Youth Name] and was referred to the Diversion Program. The Diversion Program is an opportunity for [Parent Name] to avoid being convicted of Contributing to the Unruliness of a Child (an M1) and for [Youth Name] to avoid being adjudicated a delinquent or unruly child. Diversion is a way to avoid paying fines and costs and other formal sanctions like community control sanctions and detention.

If you would like to participate in this program, a Diversion Officer will set rules and conditions for you to follow during the Diversion Program. If you successfully complete the Diversion Program the case will be dismissed. This means that [Parent Name] will avoid possible conviction and [Youth Name] will not have a juvenile “record.”

If you do not follow the Diversion Program rules and do not successfully complete the program, the case will proceed through the court process, during which time a Judicial Officer may find [Parent Name] to be guilty of Contributing to the Unruliness of a Child and [Youth Name] to be a delinquent or unruly child and may tell you to pay fines, court costs, complete community control sanctions and spend time in detention. Community control sanctions may include going to treatment programs, wearing a GPS monitor or alcohol monitor, house arrest, curfew, or any other condition that the Judicial Officer finds appropriate.

The Diversion time period can be lengthened or shortened by the Court for you to complete the program. The conditions of the program may be changed to fit your needs.

[Youth Name] Information and Responsibilities

During the Diversion period, which generally lasts for 60 days, [Youth Name] is required to do all of the following:

- Pay a Diversion Fee of \$20.00
- Obey the laws
- Go to school every day and be on time
- Obey all of the school’s rules
- Follow your parent’s rules
- Do not have or use illegal drugs or alcohol
- Do not hang out with people that you get into trouble with
- Keep in contact with your Diversion Officer and notify them if you change your address or get into trouble
- Attend all scheduled appointments
- Follow your Diversion Officer’s instructions
- Meet with your Diversion Officer with a parent when directed to review compliance

Based on the screening tools [Youth Name] took, [Youth Name] is also required to complete the following Diversion Conditions:

_____ AOD Assessment (alcohol/drug) and recommended treatment
_____ ART (anger management)

- _____ Family Intervention
 - _____ Mental Health assessment and recommended treatment
 - _____ Case Management
 - _____ Trauma Group
 - _____ Thinking for a Change
 - _____ Random Drug Tests
 - _____ Community Services _____ hours; date completed _____
 - _____ PROOF (cell phone “selfie” check-in)
 - _____ Written Assignment; date completed _____
 - _____ Apology Letter; date completed _____; date sent to victim _____
 - _____ Restitution to be investigated; payments made _____
 - _____ Parent/Guardian to complete the Parent Project class
 - _____ Other: _____
-

[Parent Name] Information and Responsibilities

To successfully complete this program [Parent Name] must do ALL of the following during the next 90 days:

- Plead Guilty or No Contest to the complaint
- Make sure your student is in school every day (unless you have a doctor’s excuse or other legitimate excuse – this excuse must be documented and the documentation given to the school on [Youth’s Name] next day back to school or the absence will be unexcused)
- Make sure [Youth Name] is at school on time every day
- Complete the Parent Project Parenting Class
- Undergo drug tests if deemed appropriate by your Diversion Officer
- Undergo any recommended assessments and recommended treatment as deemed necessary by your Diversion Officer
- Meet with the Judge or Magistrate to review [Youth’s Name] attendance (This may be every week, every other week, or once a month)

If [Parent Name] successfully completes the above requirements, the State will dismiss your case without any cost to you.

You will NOT successfully complete the diversion program if ANY of the following occur:

- [Youth Name] has more than twenty-one (21) hours of unexcused absences
- You fail to attend a diversion conference (without being excused from the conference by the Diversion Officer)
- You do not complete the Parent Project
- You do not complete any recommended treatment

If you do not successfully complete the Diversion Requirements the following may happen:

- Conviction of Contributing to the Unruliness of a Child, M1
- Placed on Community Control Sanctions
- Ordered to serve 9 hour of community service
- Ordered to pay Court Costs (which may be more than \$100)
- Ordered to pay a fine of \$100
- Ordered to complete any of the recommended treatment (this may include treatment for mental health, anger management, substance abuse, etc.)

- Sentenced to 180 days in jail. You may be ordered to serve at least three days in jail. You may be ordered to serve more jail time depending on the severity of [Youth Name's] truancy and/or your level of cooperation with making sure your child attends school.
- If [Youth Name] continues to have unexcused absences, you may be charged with a violation of a Court Order and the Court may impose up to the remaining 180-day jail sentence. You may also face additional fines, community service and treatment requirements.

We understand what we must do to successfully complete the Diversion program. I, [Parent Name], agree to make arrangements for [Youth Name] and myself to attend all required appointments. We understand what may happen if we do not successfully complete the Diversion Program and we are committed to successfully completing the program.

Youth/Child Signature

Parent/Guardian Signature

Diversion Officer Signature



IN THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS, _____ COUNTY, OHIO
_____ DIVISION

IN THE MATTER OF:

DATE:

GRADE:

Number of consecutive hours absent:

Number of hours absent in one school month:

Number of hours absent in one school year:

NOTICE TO APPEAR FOR MANDATORY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE MEDIATION

This **NOTICE** is to advise you that you must appear for mediation on:

Date:

Time:

Place:

This mediation is a requirement of the School Attendance Mediation Program of the [School Name] and supported by the [Name of Court] through its Diversion Program. If you are the parent of the child named above and you fail to appear for mediation, you may be subject to further court action.

Upon arrival, please check-in at the school office.

School Attendance Mediation Program Coordinator: [Name and Contact Information]

IN THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS, _____ COUNTY, OHIO
JUVENILE DIVISION

Agreement to Mediate

Mediation Party: _____

Mediation Party: _____

Mediation Party: _____

Mediation Party: _____

We understand and agree to the following:

- Mediation is a process. The role of the mediator is that of a neutral facilitator and not that of a judge, magistrate, arbitrator, lawyer or therapist.
- The parties have the right to consult with an attorney at any time during the process. The mediator is not authorized to give the parties legal advice.
- The mediator has no authority to force the parties to reach an agreement.
- An agreement is reached only if the parties believe that the agreement is fair and in the child's best interests.
- The mediation process is confidential and privileged to the extent allowed by law, which means that in most cases, no new information shared in the mediation may be used against any party in any court proceeding. Exceptions to that are: (1) any threats of harm made against one's self or others; (2) any unreported allegations of child abuse or neglect, and (3) any admission to committing or planning to commit a felony. The mediator is required to report any allegation of abuse or neglect of a child to _____ County Department of Job and Family Services.
- If a settlement is reached, it will be written up in a Mediation Agreement. Each party shall receive a copy of the Mediation Agreement and a copy shall be provided to the Court. No other record of the proceedings shall be kept by the Court or the mediation participants.

Signature:

Date:



Mediation Feedback

1. Did you think the process was helpful? Yes No Somewhat
 2. Was mediation appropriate for this type of conflict? Yes No Somewhat
 3. Would you recommend mediation to someone else? Yes No Somewhat
 4. During the mediation, did you feel your concerns were listened to and heard by the mediators? Yes No Somewhat
 5. Did you and the other persons come to any agreement, either spoken or written during the meeting? Yes No Somewhat
 6. If you did come to agreement, are you satisfied? Yes No Somewhat
 7. If you are not satisfied, why? _____

 8. If you did not come to agreement, why? _____

 9. Do you feel clearer in your thinking about the situation now? Yes No Somewhat
 10. Do you better understand the other person's perspective and circumstance? Yes No Somewhat
 11. Did you learn anything new about the other person? Yes No Somewhat
 12. Did anything happen during mediation that made you uncomfortable? Yes No Somewhat
 13. If yes, please explain: _____
 14. What will change for you as a result of this mediation? _____

 15. Do you have anything else you would like to tell us? _____

- Name (optional) _____

THANK YOU
We appreciate your comments.



APPENDIX

D

Dispute Resolution





Do You Have Problems with
School Attendance?

Do You Need Help Getting Your
Child to School on Time?

WE CAN HELP.

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE PROGRAM

House Bill 410 is Ohio's effort to improve school attendance.

Why is Attendance Important?

As early as elementary school, students who miss just two days a month, regardless of the reason for the absence, are more likely to fall behind academically and less likely to graduate. This is true regardless of race, ethnicity, language, family income and other variables.

By decreasing absences and keeping students engaged in school, more students graduate from high school, which in turn results in more jobs, more tax revenue, more spending and investments, more home and auto sales, more post-secondary graduates and less crime and decreased health care costs. Engaged students make for engaged citizens.

What Can I Expect?

If a student misses 38 or more hours in one school month or 65 hours or more in one school year, parents, guardians or custodians will receive written notification from a school's attendance officer.

Depending upon the school's policy, various interventions may be used at this time to help students return to the classroom.

What is Habitual Truancy?

Habitual truancy is when a student is absent without a legitimate excuse for 30 or more consecutive hours, 42 or more hours in one school month, and 72 or more hours in a school year.

What Happens When a Student Becomes Habitually Truant?

A student must be assigned to an **absence intervention team** within seven days of becoming habitually truant. The team must then create an **absence intervention plan** within 14 days after the assignment of a student to an absence intervention team.

What is an Absence Intervention Plan?

An absence intervention plan is a student-centered, personalized plan developed to address barriers to attendance. The plan is developed collaboratively by an absence intervention team comprised of individuals based upon the student's needs. The plan lists resources and agreed upon strategies for getting the student to school on time every day.

The absence intervention team has 60 days to implement the plan. If a student refuses to participate or fails to make satisfactory progress on the intervention strategies, the attendance officer may file a complaint with the juvenile court.

How Can Schools Help?

Schools can provide interventions, such as facilitation and mediation, to help students get back to school and stay in school.

What is Mediation?

Attendance mediation is a confidential process where a specially trained mediator helps parents and schools work together to resolve a student's attendance issues by assisting in the constructive exchange of communication and negotiation between individuals.

What Is Facilitation?

Facilitation is a process that focuses on the tasks needed to run a productive and impartial meeting. In facilitation, a neutral party (the facilitator) moderates discussions by ensuring the fluid and orderly exchange of information and ideas from all participants. A facilitator may assist an absence intervention team with developing an absence intervention plan.

Why is the Court Involved?

School attendance officers are required to file an unruly child complaint, based on habitual truancy, if all of the following apply: 1) a student is habitually truant; 2) the school district or school made meaningful attempts to re-engage the student through intervention strategies; and 3) the student refused to participate or failed to make satisfactory progress on the intervention strategies.

What Are Courts Required to Do?

Courts are required to first consider alternatives to adjudication, including methods to divert a child from the court system, if such alternatives are available, and shall address an unruly child complaint based on habitual truancy only as a matter of last resort.

School attendance mediation is one alternative to adjudication.

How Does School Attendance Mediation Work?

After an unruly child complaint based on habitual truancy is filed, you will receive a notice in the mail to attend a school attendance mediation at your child's school.

At the mediation, parents and school personnel work together on a plan to help the child get to school on time every day and remain in school.

A mediation agreement can help you and your child increase attendance and success — not only in your child's education — but in life as well.

School Attendance Mediation FAQs

What is the Goal of School Attendance Mediation?

To help the student and family get attendance back on track and stay out of the juvenile justice system.

Who Attends a School Attendance Mediation?

- Child's parent or custodian
- Child's teacher
- Your child (if age appropriate)
- Other invited people, as needed
- Mediator

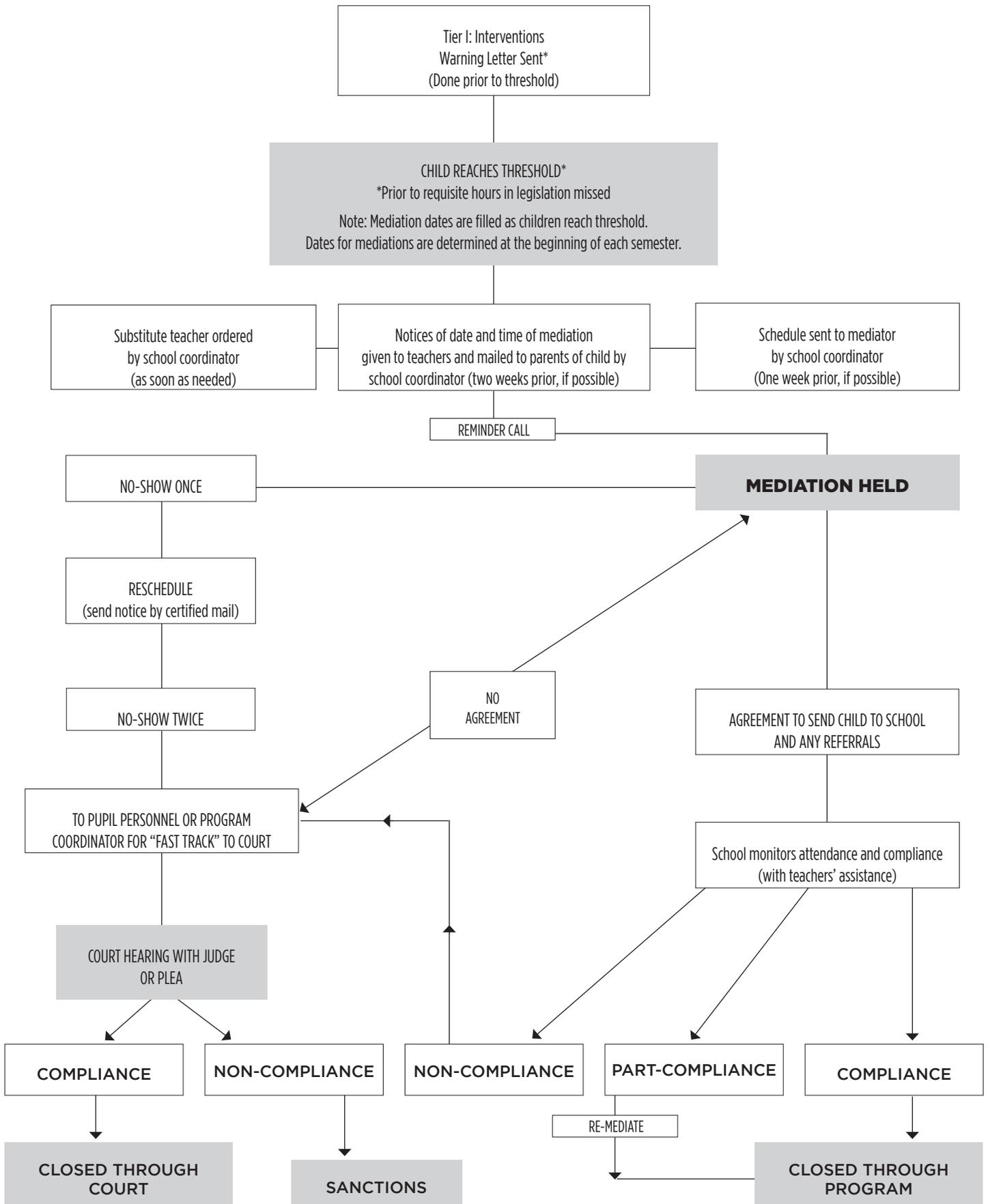
What Does a Mediator Do?

- Listens and stays neutral
- Helps communication and encourages information sharing
- Keeps information confidential
- Helps parents and teachers identify issues and problem-solve together
- Documents the agreement or plan made between parents and teachers that will help the child come to school on time every day

CONTACT US

For more information about the School Attendance Program:

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE MEDIATION PROGRAM FLOW CHART





Attendance Coordinator Job Description

Title: Attendance Coordinator

Reports To: Juvenile Court Designee

Employment Status: Full-Time and/or Part-Time

Qualifications:

- Possess a bachelor's degree
- Background in education, social work, and/or criminal justice preferred
- Professional experience with families consisting of mediation, counseling, casework, or legal representation in family law matters
- At least 12 hours of fundamentals of mediation training
- Completed truancy mediation training
- Experience working with children and agencies that serve children
- Excellent interpersonal skills, written, verbal communication skills
- Team player, works well with others
- Ability to build rapport with students and families
- CPI Training/willingness to be training and continue to update certification
- Ability to accept constructive criticism
- Motivated to work on own/build schedule/be accountable for all time on job
- Show professionalism at all times
- Ability to maintain confidentiality
- Proficient computer and phone skills
- Must maintain an excellent documentation system/log of all time on job/for each student/situation
- Able to collect data and use it for accountability and for grant administration
- Understand laws related to truancy, absenteeism
- Willingness to work in many different settings
- Willingness to go to home setting of students and work with student and families

General Description

Responsibilities and Essential Functions:

- The Attendance Coordinator (AC) will help the school districts determine processes that will best satisfy the requirements of House Bill 410 and other laws and regulations that are imposed.
- The AC will work with schools and juvenile courts and be a part of building processes and consistent with absence intervention procedures for students who are at risk of being truant or who have already demonstrated truancy habits.
- The AC will work with students, schools, parents/guardians/families, and community agencies to find ways to support students so that regular school attendance is possible

- The AC will be the point person involved who can help to find ways to eliminate the barriers that keep students from going to school

Other Duties and Responsibilities

- Serves as a neutral third party, including facilitating conversations and conducting truancy mediation as appropriate in accordance with the core values of mediation and Ohio's Uniform Mediation Act
- Serves as a role model for students on how to conduct themselves as citizens and as responsible, intelligent, human beings
- Helps instill in students the belief and practice of ethical principles and democratic values
- Assists other personnel as may be required for the purpose of ensuring an efficient and effective work environment
- Other duties as assigned

Abilities Required:

- Demonstrates professionalism and maintains a positive work attitude
- Effectively uses verbal, nonverbal, writing and listening skills
- Completes paperwork accurately, including verifies and correctly enters data
- Organizes tasks and manages time effectively
- Maintains an acceptable attendance record and is punctual
- Shall remain free from any alcohol or non-prescribed controlled substance in the workplace throughout his or her employment

Working Conditions

Exposure to the following situations may range from remote to frequent based on circumstances and factors that may not be predictable:

- Bending, crouching, kneeling, reaching and standing
- Lifting, carrying, and moving work-related supplies and equipment
- Operating and/or riding in a vehicle
- Travelling to meetings and work assignments
- Working under time constraints to meet deadlines
- Exposure to adverse weather conditions and temperature extremes
- Potential for exposure to blood-borne pathogens and communicable diseases
- Potential to adverse contact with aggressive, disruptive and/or unruly individuals

APPENDIX

E

Statewide Promising
Practices





Appendix E: Statewide Promising Practices

1. Ashtabula County

Interview: Tammy Martin-Kosier, Mediation Coordinator Ashtabula County Juvenile Court
(TMKosier@ashtabulacounty.us)

Website: http://courts.co.ashtabula.oh.us/courts_mediation.htm

Program Type: Mediation, Truancy Prevention through Mediation Program

2015-2016 stats: About 60

Stakeholders: Ashtabula County Juvenile Court, Schools, Education Service Center

A. Program Features

In Ashtabula County, the mediation coordinator is notified by the attendance officer following *5 unexcused or excused absences* by the student. The mediation is conducted at the education service center with invitations being sent for the student, parents, any school officials (often case management), and, in some cases, mental health social workers also attend the session. The mediation is set to produce some form of agreement between the parties on how to improve the attendance of the student. Tammy Martin-Kosier conducts all mediations as the school sets up six mediations at once for her convenience. In case of her absence, the court has designated a volunteer mediator who steps in to conduct the mediations. The mediations are catalogued and maintained in Excel and PDF format by the juvenile court. This is a relatively small county in terms of population, thus, mediation services are managed by two individuals who coordinate the program, which is maintained with the assistance of volunteer mediators for small claims and truancy mediations.

B. Funding

Ashtabula County does not use external funding sources to maintain its mediation program. The truancy program is maintained by one staff (salary) mediator and one volunteer mediator who serves as an alternate.

C. Monitoring and Evaluation

The schools and the court keep track of the students and families who received mediation services following the diversion process. The current statistics in Ashtabula show that more than *90 percent* of students remain in school following the intervention.

2. Clark County

Interview: Raymon Payton, Juvenile Court Mediation Director

Website: <http://www.clarkcountyohio.gov/index.aspx?NID=481>

Program Type: Mediation, Truancy Prevention through Mediation Program & Truancy Court

2015-2016 stats: 400 - 500

Stakeholders: Clark County schools, Juvenile Court, Clark County Prosecuting Attorney's office

A. Program Features

The juvenile court receives referrals from the schools to conduct mediations for students with 7 - 10 absences in a given quarter. The court has two full-time mediators and one part-time mediator. In Clark County, the mediators conduct their sessions with families and school representatives at the school. Truancy Court or Truancy Reviews also are conducted with the assistance of probation officers, prosecuting attorney's office personnel, and school representatives each Thursday at the juvenile court (families/students and judge also present). The truancy-court-review process is the second step of intervention before further court filings are introduced against the family or student. The program extends to elementary-, middle-, and high-school levels.

B. Funding

In Clark County, the truancy reduction program is paid for by the court and schools with the assistance of the Department of Job and Family Services. This program does not rely on external funding for training or maintenance.

C. Monitoring and Evaluation

In the 2014-2015 academic year, the Clark County program had 328 mediations and 91 resulted in truancy filings (27 percent). In the 2015-2016 school year, the program was able to reduce school absences in 80 percent of its mediated cases. The juvenile court mediation services keeps track of students with a 90-day follow-up period, as well as information gathered from schools following these interventions.

3. Cuyahoga County

Interview: Danielle Cosgrove, Director of Cleveland Mediation Center,
danielle.cosgrove@clevelandmediation.org

Website: <http://www.clevelandmediation.org/>

Program Type: Mediation, SUCCESS Mentor, Peer Mediation Program (and Cleveland WAVE)

2015-2016 Stats: 200 - 300

Stakeholders: United Way Cleveland, Cleveland Mediation Services, and Cleveland Metropolitan Schools

A. Program Features

Cleveland Mediation Services (CMS) worked with a number of schools on school absences in Metropolitan Cleveland. At the beginning of each year, CMS visited the schools and worked on building trust and cooperation between the center and school staff. Then, the CMS coordinator (Christine) eventually began to receive referrals directly from the schools once students were absent five days in a given period of time. The coordinator would then tailor services for the student that could include receiving a SUCCESS mentor to provide some assistance to the student and family, as well as mediation services and conflict resolution training (“wrap-around” program). The SUCCESS program in particular matched students with a teacher or administrator from another location. The mediations on the elementary-school level typically included parents and administrators. In addition to these services, CMS would hold pizza parties for the students participating in these programs.

In the past, Cuyahoga County was a pilot project site and had extensive support to promote peer mediation, truancy mediation, and conflict management training for schools. However, today, Cuyahoga County lacks a comprehensive program on truancy with many stakeholders operating their own programs on truancy.

B. Funding

Cleveland Mediation Services received funding from United Way to run these programs in a number of Cleveland metropolitan schools. However, United Way is no longer providing funding for all educational programs as of July 2016. United Way donors often were designating their funding to specific causes (not education), which led to the eventual blanket cut of all community mediation services to Cleveland Metropolitan Schools. Cleveland Mediation Services

has not collaborated closely with Cuyahoga County Juvenile Court or any other public stakeholders on these programs.

C. Monitoring and Evaluation

Christina Galindo served as the CMS coordinator for the truancy program. She was responsible for monitoring the students receiving services in any given academic school year. She also was in charge of assigning volunteers and coordinating the program.

4. Delaware County

Interview: April Nelson, Juvenile Court Mediator, anelson@co.delaware.oh.us

Website: <http://www.co.delaware.oh.us/court/juvenile/index.php/programs/mediation/types-of-meditation/truancy-mediator>

Program Type: Mediation, Truancy Prevention through Mediation

2015-2016 stats: School liaisons (3) met with 1,965 students; staff mediator scheduled 218 mediations, of which 121 were held.

Stakeholders: Delaware County Juvenile Court, Delaware City Schools (5,600 students), Olentangy Local School District (19,900 students), Buckeye Valley Local School District (2,240 students), and Big Walnut Local School District (3,600 students).

A. Program Features

In Delaware County, the school liaisons work closely with the school districts to monitor attendance. Liaisons will meet with middle school and high school students after the student reaches 6 unexcused absences; parents of elementary children receive a letter from the liaison if the school requests one (the school already has sent a 5-day notice). If initial intervention by the school liaison does not improve attendance, then the school liaisons request a truancy mediator to assist the student and family. In the elementary schools, the mediator conducts the mediations with the parents, the school liaison, and a school representative. At the middle-school and high-school levels, the mediator conducts the mediations with the parents, student, school liaison, and a school representative. The mediator does not mediate without a parent or guardian present; the liaison will meet with the student individually in that situation. The goal of the mediation is a written attendance contract, signed by the liaison, the parent/guardian, the student (where attending), and school personnel. The liaison and the school will continue to monitor the student for the remainder of the year.

B. Funding

The court mediator and two of the three liaisons are part of the court budget. The Educational Service Center provides funding to the court for the third liaison (who also is the county truancy officer who is assigned to the county schools); participating county schools pay a fee to the ESC. This program has been running successfully for about 10 years.

C. Program Evaluation & Monitoring

The school liaisons keep track of student attendance of those pupils who participated in either intervention stages. In this past academic year, the school liaisons intervened in nearly 1,965 cases

and only 136 resulted in truancy or unruly filings at the court. Each year, the truancy mediation program produces similar success rates.

5. Erie County

Interview: Michelle Deichler and Shelisa Johnson, Juvenile Court Mediators;
mdeichler@eriecounty.oh.gov.

Website: <http://www.eriecounty.oh.gov/departments-and-agencies/legal-resources/juvenile-court/juvenile/programs/mediation/>

Program Type: Mediation, Truancy Prevention through Mediation Program

2015-2016 stats: 27 - 40

Stakeholders: Erie County Juvenile Court, Erie County Schools

A. Program Features

In Erie County, schools refer students to the juvenile court for mediation after 10 - 14 unexcused absences. Then, court mediators contact the family to schedule a pre-mediation meeting to determine if mediation would be helpful to address the student's truancy problem. If the family chooses to return for mediation services, then the school representatives and other relevant stakeholders are included in the session. The mediator typically helps the families reach an agreement, which is then closely monitored by the court mediators and schools alike. In Erie County, two full-time mediators conduct all the mediations at the schools. The county also has two truancy officers who assist with outreach and support for the students.

Given the often underlying economic reasons for truancy in Erie County, the county has a \$30,000 grant to provide essentials to families in need and provide gifts for students who stay on track with their attendance goals. In some instances, the court staff is able to meet with the families and purchase a meal for them or provide laundromat vouchers (shampoo and other hygiene products).

B. Funding

The two court mediators receive salary through the court and a specific grant. Furthermore, the \$30,000 competitive reclaim grant is for two years and provides incentives for students and families. This grant will run until 2017, and was used in the last academic school year. Michelle Deichler and Shelisa Johnson received basic mediation training, custody training, and Bridges Out of Poverty training. Michelle and Shelisa shared that the Bridges Out of Poverty Training has

been especially helpful for this program, as the truancy program aims to combat some of the poverty-related problems faced by families.

C. Monitoring and Evaluation

The Erie County truancy program is monitored closely by court mediation staff, truancy officers, and relevant schools. Students may receive direct attention from both school and truancy intervention personnel. Following the mediation, the student remains an active monitoring student for a substantial period of time to allow close monitoring of school attendance. In 2015, 27 students were considered to be active and 13 others were closed for demonstrating better attendance records. The Erie County program also has a success rate of more than 90 percent.

6. Franklin County

Interview: Bill Froehlich, ADR Fellow Moritz (froehlich.28@osu.edu) Steve Stevenson Director of Student Mentoring (sstevenson@columbus.k12@oh.us)

Website: https://drj.fccourts.org/DRJ.aspx?PN=School_Truancy.htm

Stakeholders: Educational Service Center of Central Ohio, Franklin County Domestic Relations Court and Juvenile Division, Gahanna City Schools, Canal Winchester City Schools, New Albany-Plain City Schools, Groveport-Madison City Schools (4 school districts out of 16)

2015-2016 stats: N/A

Program Type: Mediation, Community Team, Mentoring Program

A. Program Features

In the Juvenile Division of Franklin County's Court of Common Pleas, the court has two truancy officers who meet students at risk for truancy to provide them information about Ohio's truancy laws and provide individualized attention for participants. Additionally, the Franklin County juvenile court employs three school liaisons who provide specialized attention to the four specific school districts listed above. In addition to these programs, Columbus City Schools has created a mentoring program designed to assist students at risk for truancy and dropping out. This newly established mentoring program relies largely on volunteer mentors for students. Finally, Ohio State University's Moritz College of Law operates a truancy mediation program for a select number of schools in Columbus. The Moritz Program on Dispute Resolution provides free mediation training and specialized training for law students, and provides mediation free of charge for the school districts. This mediation program, formally titled the Truancy Mediation Project, is maintained by student officers and ADR program staff and has run for a number of years.

B. Funding

The Franklin County program has two grant-funded truancy officers who work directly with the school on attendance. In addition, the school districts and court jointly fund four school liaisons (one in each school district) to enhance communication between parents and the schools. The Columbus City Schools' mentoring program is run through a federal grant and relies exclusively on volunteer mentors. The mentoring program requires background checks for the program's volunteers, which is the largest expense incurred by this program. Finally, the

Truancy Mediation Project requires JD students to volunteer more than 112 hours. The truancy mediation program is one way for students to incur such hours. The Alternative Dispute Resolution Program at Moritz provides free mediation training and specialized training for students to participate in the truancy mediation program in the select schools.

C. Monitoring and Evaluation

The mentoring program and truancy community team programs run on external grants that require evaluation and monitoring mechanisms. However, individual inquiries of these practices were unable to yield information about the exact practices. The Truancy Mediation Project provides agreements directly to the schools and does not provide monitoring or evaluation following their interventions.

7. Hamilton County

Interview: Marla Givens, Juvenile Court Liaison, Cincinnati Public Schools

Website: www.cps-k12.org

Program Type: Truancy Prevention, Intervention, Court

2015-16 Stats: Unavailable

Stakeholders: Cincinnati Public Schools and Hamilton County Juvenile Court

A. Program Features

Cincinnati Public Schools (CPS) has been providing School Social Work (SSW), formally known as Visiting Teacher (VT), truancy services for more than 30 years. The services have changed throughout the years, but have included prevention, intervention, school-based mediation and court services. The SSW holds a Master's degree in social work and Ohio Department of Education certification.

SSW-truancy referrals are made by school personnel (teachers, principal etc.) and SSW attendance review. The SSW makes direct contact with students, provides home visits, phone calls, letters, school-based conference meetings, school attendance information presentations, and truancy-prevention activities. In addition to providing advocacy, truancy-intervention counseling and referrals to in-district and out-of-district community resources, including mental health services when needed. If a student continues to be truant after working with the SSW and meets the criteria for Chronic, Habitual, Failure to Send, VCO or other truancy charges, a court referral is made to the CPS Juvenile Court liaison. A referral for juvenile court (JC) is considered "a last resort" in working with a truant student. The CPS Juvenile Court liaison reviews the referral and prepared the paperwork needed for filing official charges with the court. JC diverts cases of first-time truant students and other students at the request of the CPS Juvenile Court liaison and/or SSW, to their Truancy Diversion program. Cases that are involved in this program do not become part of a child's juvenile record.

B. Funding

No external funding sources used.

C. Program Evaluation Monitoring

No formal monitoring. Some records are maintained.

8. Lucas County

Interview: Kevin Tackett, Chief Deputy Clerk, Lucas County Juvenile Court

Website: <http://co.lucas.oh.us/index.aspx?NID=231>

Program Type: Mediation, Truancy Prevention through Mediation Program (TPMP)

2015-2016 Stats: 1,200 Elementary School Mediations

Stakeholders: Toledo Public Schools, Lucas County Juvenile Court, Job & Family Services

A. Program Features

When the Lucas County program was started, students missing five days or more in a quarter if unexcused were referred to the Toledo Public Schools Truancy Prevention through Mediation Program. As the program evolved, students missing five or more days in a quarter (regardless of whether excused or unexcused), showing excessive tardiness, or substantial behavioral issues also were referred to this program. The Lucas County Juvenile Court assigns an independently contracted mediator to a student case to proceed with a mediation. Presently, Lucas County has about 30 independently contracted mediators with basic mediation, domestic abuse issues, and truancy mediation training. These individuals conduct all mediations each year at the schools. Due to the ages of the students, the mediator usually meets with the teacher and only the parent/legal custodian of the child. If the parent and teacher are able to reach an agreement, then the independent mediator hands in the written agreement to the school to monitor and support the students in the future.

B. Funding

Court mediation services staff are employees of the juvenile court. These individuals coordinate and organize the Lucas County TPMP for elementary students. Separate independently contracted mediators mediate for the TPMP and are paid through funds secured from the Department of Job & Family Services. These mediators are paid at a set rate for each mediation. The nearly 30 contracted mediators also work on unruly/delinquency matters.

In 1995, Lucas County was part of the pilot program for the TPMP. However, the program was inactive for a number of years due to funding restrictions faced by the county. Today, Lucas County sends mediators to 40 Toledo Public Schools locations to conduct mediations. Lucas County Mediation is running the largest single program addressing truancy in Ohio.

C. Monitoring and Evaluation

The Lucas County Truancy Prevention through mediation program survey results indicate that the program increases participant understanding and improves relationships. A total of 1,144 cases were mediated in the 2015-2016 school year. Sixty-three percent (63%) of parents notified about mediations attended mediation. Ninety-nine percent (99%) of the mediated cases resulted in agreement.

Following mediation, Toledo Public School staff track the impact of the mediation and report that the process reduces attendance issues. Beginning with the 2016-2017 year, Lucas County Mediation Staff will have access to the TPS software system identifying a child's attendance history and thus, will be able to track a child's attendance after mediation.

9. Mahoning

Interview: Linda McNally, Project Manager, lmcnally@mahoningcountyoh.gov

Website: <http://www.mahoningcountyoh.gov/256/Juvenile-Justice-Court>

Program Type: Community Review Board

2015-2016 stats: 700

Stakeholders: Juvenile Court, Schools, Mahoning County Educational Service Center

A. Program Features

Mahoning County Juvenile Court has a standard referral form that each school district must submit to the court after they have attempted interventions at the school.

Each school identifies the responsible party for making the referrals and the court responds to the referring party regarding the next step of the process. A great deal of effort to make the student successful is made prior to a referral ever reaching the court.

In most public school districts of Mahoning County an Early Warning System (EWS) has been established. Students are monitored by schools on attendance, grades, and behaviors, and those who are identified as AT RISK or SLIDING are reviewed by a team at the school to provide early interventions on the troublesome area(s). Every team looks different from school to school, but is comprised of school personnel, mental health partners, court staff, social service staff, etc. This collaborative effort has connected families to resources quickly while supporting the student, family, and school. The support from the Mahoning County Mental Health and Recovery Board and Altacare Group has allowed for the hiring of a mental health screener who visits schools to provide valuable information regarding treatment and linking of services. Additionally, a social worker was hired by the court who conducts home visits, attends meetings, evaluates family needs, and refers to services and programming. Many court programs now are held in schools and school personnel are being trained to run programs themselves. All of this affords students and families to receive assistance within their community, and, more importantly, to do so within their school and away from the stigma of court.

B. Funding

The Mahoning County Juvenile Court received a \$600,000 grant from the U.D. Department of Justice. This grant was received in 2015 for truancy reduction program. The grant has paid for

county-wide school resource officer (SRO) training, the hiring of a social worker, and implementation of a school-district-wide-database-monitoring system.

C. Monitoring and Evaluation

When the court receives a truancy referral, it is kept on a spreadsheet and the schools keep data as well. The DOJ evaluates twice a year. Truancy referrals have been reduced drastically since 2015.

10. Marion County

Interview: Rhonda Burggraf, Family Service Coordinator & Probate Court Investigator,
rburggraf@co.marion.oh.us

Website: www.co.marion.oh.us

Program Type: Mediation

2015-2016 stats: 90 - 150

Stakeholders: Juvenile Court, Marion City Schools, Coalition for Education of Children with Disabilities, Contact Care Line Crisis Intervention & Referrals, Family and Children First Council, Family Dependency Treatment Court, Children Services Board, Marion County Job and Family Services, Marion Family YMCA, Marion Victims Assistance Program,

A. Program Features

In Marion County, truancy-intervention efforts focus primarily on middle and high school students (expansion to elementary school this year). This county's efforts are managed by a truancy officer who coordinates regularly with attendance and educational support officers. After school officials conduct a mediation, the court magistrate meets with the families to discuss the legal ramifications for continued truancy. The truancy mediations take place at school and produce an agreement that is monitored by the truancy officer and school-attendance teams. Marion County also convenes regular meetings to discuss school attendance policies and the effectiveness of the program. The advisory board for the truancy program meets at the beginning of the school year and includes individuals from the list of stakeholders listed above.

B. Funding

The Marion County truancy program is funded mostly by county partners. Presently, the program receives funding to provide basic mediation training to educational support team members.

C. Monitoring and Evaluation

The attendance coordinator monitors the attendance of students who participated in the two phases of intervention provided in the county (coordinator-1 and the mediation-2).

11. Morrow County

Interview: Kathy Nicolosi, Court Mediator & Director, Morrow County Common Pleas Court Juvenile Division

Website: <http://www.morrowcommonpleas.com/TruancyMediation.aspx>

Program Type: Mediation, Truancy Prevention through Mediation Program

2015-2016 stats: About 250 - 260 (10 official truancy filings)

Stakeholders: Morrow County Common Pleas Court Juvenile Division, Schools

A. Program Features

In 2003, Morrow County commenced its Truancy Prevention through Mediation program. The Morrow County schools and common pleas juvenile division created a truancy advisory board composed of judges, school administrators, and probation officers to discuss the school policy on truancy. The schools refer students (elementary, middle, and high school) who have five excused/unexcused absences or four incidents of tardiness in a given quarter. Then, the court mediator proceeds to convene the truancy prevention mediation session with principals (and or teachers) and parents. In Morrow County, typically, the court mediator meets with the parties at school and aims to help facilitate dialogue between the parties. If the families and school are able to formulate a written agreement to help improve school absences, then the school is provided this document and given the responsibility to follow up and track the mediation agreements.

D. Funding

Presently, Kathy Nicolosi is the only court mediator working on pre-file truancy mediations. The funding for the court mediator position is paid for through the court budget (ADR fee). Thus, this program does not rely on external funds. Kathy Nicolosi performs *all* mediations in the court – not only truancy mediations.

E. Monitoring and Evaluation

The Truancy Advisory Board (review board) meets regularly to evaluate the truancy program and make any alterations that potentially could be useful for the overall effectiveness of the program. Furthermore, the school tracks students following the mediations and, while no official data exists of the percentage of students who no longer struggle with school absences, the program has led to diminished mediations each year and diminished truancy filings in the court.

Kathy also shared that truancy is a complication of the immense poverty experienced by families in Morrow County. In recent years, she has performed truancy mediations for students living in mobile homes, for example, who struggled with transportation during the colder winter months. Thus, the program also evaluated some of these recurring events and aimed to create preventative solutions for those students in Morrow County.

12. Stark County

Interview: Teresa Cusma, Director Coleman Mediation Services

Website: <http://starkcountyohio.gov/family-court/court-departments/juvenile-intake>

Program Type: Mediation, Truancy Prevention through Mediation Program

2015-2016 stats: 830 - 900

Stakeholders: Coleman Mediation Services, Stark County schools, Juvenile Court

A. Program Features

Stark County was part of the 1996 pilot program by the Ohio Commission on Dispute Resolution and Conflict Management. Teresa Cusma runs the program and works with seven independently contracted mediators who execute the truancy mediations. These independently contracted mediators come from a wide array of professions, including retired police officers, retired social workers, and retired artists/teachers. The Stark County program deals primarily with middle and high school students and those students often are involved in the mediations. In the elementary schools, the truancy mediators work with the parents (and guardians) and teachers. The mediations always take place at school. The school typically schedules six mediations in one day as the mediator works with the parents the entire day and the school hires a floating substitute for the day who covers for each of the teachers through rotations. Originally, Teresa conducted all the truancy mediations, but now the program has expanded to about 50 - 60 schools (began with 10 schools) throughout the county.

B. Funding

The independently contracted mediators are paid for through the Stark County Juvenile Court. Each individual mediator provides the court with timesheets and are paid directly through the court. Mediators are paid a base rate of \$50 an hour or \$50 per mediation. Teresa Cusma is paid for through a United Way grant for her coordination and management services.

C. Monitoring and Evaluation

The program has internal and external evaluation mechanisms in place to determine the effectiveness of the overall mediation program. The schools monitor students with attendance problems following the intervention. In the meantime, Teresa and Stark County Juvenile Court also requested assistance from Kent State and OSU to provide program evaluation services. In the

case of Stark County, the truancy mediation program has been very effective with a school absence-reduction rate of more than 90 – 95 percent.





THE SUPREME COURT *of* OHIO

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