

Georgia “Best Practices” Models:

http://www.doe.k12.ga.us/documents/doe/external/policy_research_truancy.pdf

Fulton County

The Truancy Intervention Project (TIP) is a dropout prevention program initiated by the Atlanta Bar Association in late 1991. Founded by then Chief Judge of the Fulton County Juvenile Court, Glenda Hatchett, and the Atlanta Bar Leadership, TIP serves children in Atlanta Public and Fulton County Schools (approximately 150,000 students) who are chronically absent from school and as a result, either have been adjudicated by the Fulton County Juvenile Court or have been referred for early intervention at the school level.

By pairing trained legal professionals who are willing to donate time and services, with children and their families, TIP strives to decrease absenteeism rates and provide families with the resources and services necessary to ensure good attendance and success in school. TIP volunteers not only contribute time to serve as legal counsel in juvenile court proceedings, but also serve as caring advocates and mentors for the child and family. Serving needy school age children at risk of school failure, TIP is a thriving partnership among the Atlanta Bar, the Fulton County Juvenile Court, and Kids in Need of Dreams, Inc (KIND, Inc.). For more information visit their website at <http://www.truancyproject.org/FultonTIP.html>.

Fannin County/Gilmer County

Fannin and Gilmer Counties have established successful truancy programs that demonstrate effective partnerships between the school system with the district juvenile court. The programs have been successful in encouraging the community to take truancy seriously. Five years ago, 38 percent of the children in Gilmer County missed 10 or more days of school a year; based on the latest data available, 22 percent of children missed 10 or more days.

In Fannin County, the school district annually rotates the responsibility for managing the truancy project among its principals in order to assure that the entire school leadership is committed to the success of the program. The basics of the program are listed below:

- After three unexcused absences in Fannin, or five excused absences, a process of phone calls and visits are made to parents.
- During a home visit, a school attendance contract is signed between the parents, child, and the school.
- Eventually, the parents and student, with legal representation, go before the juvenile judge, who gives the student eight hours of community service for an unexcused absence, four hours for being tardy, and four hours for a disciplinary violation.
- The judge sees the student and parents every 30 days and they are not dismissed from supervision until the students have gone 45 days without truancy, tardiness,

or disciplinary action. At any given time, 40 students in Gilmer and 30 in Fannin are under court supervision. The judge does not permit students to drop out or home school while under supervision.

Clarke County

In 1998, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), the Executive Office for Weed and Seed, and the U.S. Department of Education's Safe and Drug-Free Schools Program solicited applications from communities to support integrated, communitywide strategies to reduce truancy.

Applicants were required to outline a comprehensive program that included four major components:

- A continuum of services to support truant youth and their families.
- System reform and accountability.
- Data collection (from schools, agencies, courts) and evaluation.
- A community education and awareness program that addresses the need to prevent truancy and intervene with truant youth.

In 1999, OJJDP awarded funds to eight sites, a mixture of Weed and Seed and non-Weed and Seed sites. The sites were diverse in geography, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and community-based leadership. Common to the truant population at all sites was the high representation of minority students and families and of students and families living in poverty.

Clarke County's program, Reducing Truancy in Middle Grades, employed a case manager who worked directly with students at two middle schools to identify youth with five or more unexcused absences. The case manager made home visits, called parents, and facilitated parent-teacher conferences to assess the causes of truancy. The case manager provided referrals to community-based resources and some direct services to families. In addition, students and families who did not respond to the program's case management approach were summoned to appear before an attendance panel.

Communities In School

Communities In Schools (CIS) is a national, nonprofit organization that encourages the coordination of youth oriented services in local communities and schools. CIS programs work to identify the issues in each school that lead to students dropping out and seek out the best community resources to address those issues. Using existing community resources and services integrated at school sites, CIS programs attempt to reduce dropout rates as well as mitigate other related problems such as teen pregnancy, gang involvement, violence, and other risky behaviors. For more information, visit their website <http://www.cisga.org>.