

# Making Attendance a Priority

## Secondary Prevention Group Progress and Recommendation Report September 28, 2007

***Purpose:*** *To support students/families experiencing school attendance issues.*

### Initial Committee Goals:

1. Share current school/agency strategies in place to support regular school attendance.
2. Identify current school-based programs in place to address school attendance issues.
3. Explore root causes and common themes of attendance issues.
4. Explore and bring forward a process to address issues impacting school attendance.
5. Bring forward dollar requests for strategies that address attendance issues..

Three Objectives have evolved during our committee meetings. These objectives incorporate the initial goals. Areas of focus, Committee role, and Next steps and Connection with Bright Futures are summarized below.

### **Objective: Revise and Update the 2001 MCAC Best Practices Manual for Schools**

#### **Areas of Focus:**

- Update Historical Review to include MCAC/JJPF subcommittee work
- Revise Causes/Contributors of Excessive Absences and “What Schools Can Do?”
  - Include Kearney, et al research
- Update statutes and legal requirements section
  - Age 5-18 amendment
  - Evaluation of Educational Neglect appendix
  - Referral for Violation of Mandatory Attendance Policy
  - Sample County Attorney Referral
- Revise National Recommendations section to focus on school intervention
  - National Center for School Engagement (NASE)
  - Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP)
  - National Association of Social Work (NASW)
- Replace Local Recommendation with model recommendations from MCAC/JJPF
  - Early identification methods and use of Student Move Notification Form
  - Use of warning letters with CC to County Attorney
  - Administration of School Refusal Assessment Scale (SRAS)
  - Case management and attendance planning driven by SRAS scores
  - Pyramid of Interventions
- Replace Task Force Submission form with references to additional resources
  - Pre-Court resource guide for school district and community services

**Committee Roles:**

- Partner with Primary Prevention/School Engagement subcommittee
  - Electronic communication and dissemination of Best Practices
  - School EXPO participation
- Partner with Pre-Court subcommittee in disseminating community resource guide
- Partner with Justice subcommittee on the use of Student Move Notification form and evaluation of educational neglect.
- Research, writing and dissemination of revised Best Practices Manual for Schools

**Next Steps and *Connections to Bright Futures***

- Consultation as to content in the development of Best Practices Manual.
- Coordination to incorporate new initiatives developed by Building Bright Futures
- *Technical assistance and support in publication and dissemination of Best Practices Manual to all public and parochial schools in Douglas and Sarpy County*

Comments / Suggestions:

**Objective: Implement Training Opportunities on the use of Best Practices Manual****Areas of Focus:**

- Facilitate training seminars for School Social Workers, SPAs, key School Administration and Principals.
- Enhance communication between schools and school districts when a child transfers out of the district
- Instructions on how to write an effective, uniform CA referral with all pertinent information
- How to administer, score and utilize the School Refusal Assessment Scale.
- How to utilize a menu of services (developed by Pre-Court subcommittee) available to parents as a referral basis at the point of first contact.
- How to implement an effective method for early identification and intervention.

**Committee Role:**

- Technical assistance in communication avenues (electronic, guest speakers) to assure ease of access to Best Practices identified.
- Determine appropriate regional and/or national speakers to support training seminars.

**Next Steps and *Connections to Bright Futures***

- Liaison / access to district leadership
- *Technical assistance to identify funding sources for regional/national speakers.*

Comments / Suggestions:

**Objective: Identify barriers and challenges to implementing Best Practices and propose changes to ensure uniformity in addressing excessive absenteeism**

**Areas of Focus:**

- School policy changes consistent with Best Practices and Nebraska Statutes.
- Communication and collaboration with medical clinics and physicians, i.e. doctor's notes, multiple notes from different medical practitioners.
- Investigatory responsibilities of HHS and Schools related to educational neglect.
- Determine benchmarks and data points to use at outcome measures of success in decreasing excessive absenteeism.

**Committee Role:**

- Identify barriers and challenges and direct them to Steering Committee and relevant Subcommittees.
- Communicate to schools up-to-date recommendations and, if needed, revisions to Best Practices guidelines.

**Next Steps and *Connections to Bright Futures***

- *Liaison/access to school district and Nebraska Department of Ed. leadership*
- *Liaison/access to medical community organizations and leadership*
- *Participation in discussions related to educational neglect.*

Comments / Suggestions: