

**REPORT OF THE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND
THE CITY OF RICHMOND**

**Plan of Truancy Prevention and
Reduction for the Pilot Program
In the City of Richmond**

**TO THE GOVERNOR AND
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF VIRGINIA**



HOUSE DOCUMENT NO. 48

**COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
RICHMOND
2005**



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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May 31, 2005

The Honorable John H. Chichester
Chairman, Senate Finance Committee
Virginia General Assembly
P.O. Box 904
Fredericksburg, Virginia 22404-0904

The Honorable Vincent F. Callahan, Jr.
Chairman, House Appropriations Committee
Virginia General Assembly
P.O. Box 1173
McLean, Virginia 22101

Dear Senator Chichester and Delegate Callahan:

The 2005 General Assembly funded a pilot project in the City of Richmond to address truancy and school attendance. Item 146, 7.e.3c of the Appropriation Act calls for the City of Richmond and the Department of Education to develop a plan for project implementation, to include objectives, analysis of data to identify targeted schools, and the detailed actions to be taken to reduce truancy and absenteeism in these schools. On behalf of the City of Richmond and our agency, I have enclosed the pilot project plan.

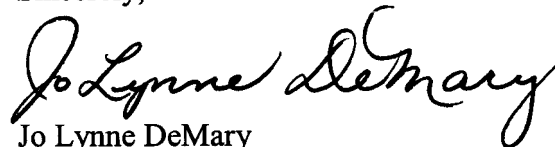
The City of Richmond Truancy Reduction and Prevention Program will create accountability for student attendance by school personnel, compliance by parents with the compulsory attendance law, and reporting of truants by the community. The pilot will promote high standards and expectations for school attendance through a public awareness campaign and aggressive monitoring of truant behavior, enforcement of the law, and responsive and timely actions and services. A key strategy of the plan is community-based support to truants and their families.

Department of Education staff have discussed and reviewed the plan with city officials.

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Mayor Wilder approved the plan on May 23, 2005. Full implementation of the pilot is scheduled to begin by August 1, 2005.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jo Lynne DeMary". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jo Lynne DeMary
Superintendent of Public Instruction

JLD/CAC/cb

Enclosure

c The Honorable L. Douglas Wilder
 The Honorable Belle S. Wheelan

CITY of RICHMOND
Tuancy Reduction and Prevention Program
(TRAPP)

Problem Statement

Tuancy is often the first sign of trouble in a youth's life. Research has shown that students who become truant stand a greater chance of eventually dropping out of school and placing themselves at significant disadvantages to becoming productive citizens. Over 70 percent of youth convicted of serious delinquent acts have a history of chronic truancy. Additionally, statistics show that high school dropouts are more than twice as likely to be welfare recipients and employed at a lower salary rate than high school graduates. Students who become truant set themselves up for a lifetime of struggle.

When young people begin skipping school they are telling their parents, guardians and other significant adults that they are in trouble and are in need of help. Truancy has been found to be a gateway to crime and has been directly linked to high daytime burglary rates, vandalism and gang affiliation as well as a predictor of teen parenting.

Combating truancy is one of the first ways that a community can quickly reach out to our young people and their families. It is essential that a comprehensive truancy program: change the culture of the schools to set high expectations and engage students in learning; assess and prioritize the risk factors in the community which supports school non-attendance; hold students, parents, schools, and the community accountable; and be implemented in a way that is responsible to the dynamics of the specific neighborhood and its schools.

Richmond's *Tuancy Reduction and Prevention Program* (TRAPP) has two primary components that respond to the city's overall truancy rate, as well as provide targeted intervention in selected neighborhoods where there are both high truancy rates with attendant correlation to crime.

Goals and Objectives

GOAL

The goal of the TRAPP is to implement a comprehensive plan which: 1) holds parents and students accountable, 2) changes the culture of schools from passive acceptance to high expectations, 3) empowers citizens to take action against truants, 4) assesses and prioritizes the community's risk factors associated with truancy and delinquent behavior, and 5) successfully develops strategies that will reduce and prevent truancy.

OBJECTIVES

- To create a visible presence throughout the city to identify and intervene effectively with truants and their family to improve school attendance
- To increase parental involvement and responsibility for ensuring school attendance
- To provide for fair and appropriate sanctions in response to breaking the law
- To increase public awareness of the laws related to and consequences of truancy
- To change the cultures of the schools to promote accountability and academic engagement

- To enhance neighborhood support to combat truancy and community risk factors
- To reduce the truancy rate among students in three (3) targeted neighborhoods
- To reduce juvenile related crime and violence within the (3) targeted neighborhoods

TRAPP is designed to:

- Hold students, parents, schools and the community accountable for school attendance
- Improve the school system’s culture to support student engagement
- Amend school policies to promote administrative accountability for school attendance
- View students in the context of their families
- Deal with families as parts of neighborhoods and communities
- Be well-managed by competent, committed individuals with identifiable skills and community credibility
- Have staff that are trained and supported to provide high quality, responsive services
- Develop strong service partnerships between police, city agencies, non-profit agencies faith groups, schools and citizens

There are two primary strategies to the TRAPP initiative: 1) a targeted intensive neighborhood approach, and 2) a citywide presence in conducting truancy sweeps, assessment, and service linkages for truants and their families. The proposed truancy initiative will include individual and family assessments, academic support, parent education, youth employment, family counseling and support, drug prevention initiatives, aggressive case management employment and other programs.

1. Program Strategy

Targeted Intensive Neighborhood Approach:

The Richmond Police Department and Department of Justice Services have identified three Richmond neighborhoods where there is a high intersection of crime and truancy rates. Truancy rates for elementary and middle schools were overlaid with neighborhood crime rates. The analysis of correlation between truancy and criminal activity yielded three target neighborhoods.

TRAPP Targets

Neighborhood	Elementary School (s)	Middle School
Hillside	Oakgrove	Boushall
Mosby	Whitcomb Court Fairfield Court	Martin Luther King, Jr.
Highland Park	Norrell Overby Sheppard	Chandler

These neighborhoods represent different areas of the city and a variety of feeder elementary and middle schools.

Elementary and Middle schools were targeted to support a more preventive approach to truancy and neighborhood crime. Successful intervention will establish a change in school policies and promotion of school attendance and positive citizenship by reaching students prior to their entering high school.

In each of the three neighborhoods, the pilot will establish a service center in which the two lead agencies will partner with schools, social workers, juvenile court, non-profits and community residents to address school, individual, family and community issues which support truancy and crime. Primary focus will be geared towards the schools in the catchment areas and those youth who have been truants and/or either victims or perpetrators of crime. This initiative will establish expectations for school performance and redirect youth back into the school system, while educating both youth and parents/guardians about the seriousness of truancy and delinquency and applying sanctions for those responsible for supporting school non-attendance.

This pilot will lower the truancy rate by over 30 percent in the first year of implementation. The basic principles of the program are: 1) assess and modify school policies to insure accountability for truancy, 2) involve parents in all truancy prevention programs, 3) engage community residents as active partners, 4) ensure that parents and students face firm sanctions for truancy and 5) create meaningful incentives for student and parental participation.

Program Structure

There will be three service sites in each neighborhood, with the same staffing pattern. Each service site will be staffed by one site coordinator, two law enforcement personnel (School Resource Officer and a designated patrol officer), three case managers, a school liaison, and selected neighborhood residents serving as community liaisons. There will be a project manager who will have overall responsibilities for the day-to-day activities of the sites as well as the citywide truancy sweeps and other city-based truancy services. The specific job responsibilities are identified below.

1. Project Manager – Responsibilities include: supervision of the service staff (law enforcement personnel will be supervised administratively through their chain of command and programmatically supervised by the project manager). The position is also responsible for serving as the TRAPP initiative's point of contact and liaison with central schools, administration courts, city agencies and the community for the purposes of program development, establishing referral processes and the development and maintenance of processes, client tracking, and project evaluation. The project manager will be the individual with the primary responsibility for problem solving issues of collaboration, negotiation of contracts with providers (including community liaisons), oversight of the city-wide truancy sweeps, and client assessment and case management services. The position is an in-kind contribution to the initiative by the Department of Justice Services.
2. Site Coordinator – Each of the three coordinators will be responsible for supervising the daily activities of their respective service center. They will have the daily operational responsibility to supervise and direct the staff functions of the center. Coordinators will serve as the primary point of contact in the neighborhood and will serve as a liaison with the schools, tenants associations,

- neighborhood teams, and civic and religious organizations active in the neighborhood. They will assign case managers their caseload, assure best practice of casework is provided, and serve as a collaborative role model for the service team and community partners. Site coordinators direct the activities of the community liaison. The coordinator will assist in linking services to the neighborhood and target population.
3. Case Managers – There will be two case managers in each site for a total of nine for the project. Case managers will carry an approximate caseload of 15 clients for three months with an average of five cases receiving services for six months. The case managers assess the needs of the student and family and work with the team to identify and develop a family service plan with clearly service articulated goals that address the issues underlying school non-attendance and delinquency. Case managers will work with the court and other human service providers to assure there is no duplication of services and interventions. They will see that supports such as counseling, educational assistance, housing assistance, and life skills education are provided in a timely and effective manner.
 4. Law Enforcement – Two officers will be assigned per site, a School Resource Officer and a uniformed officer. Police officers through the four precincts will work with the team to address the issues unique to the particular neighborhood. The SROs will provide a bridge from the service site to the school to monitor the students' attendance and behavior in the schools. They will also serve as a referral source for students and their families to participate in the program. Uniformed police officers will serve as team members to accompany the staff on home visits, as well as hosting community meetings and serving as a bridge between a neighborhood and its precinct. Their involvement will help strengthen police/community relations that will help empower citizens to become active partners in fighting law-breaking behavior.
 5. School Liaison – One staff person per site will be assigned to work directly in the target elementary and middle schools. Their role will be to assess the schools' processes and policies for handling truants. Every element of the school buildings' responses to student unexcused absences, from the time of day attendance is taken to the relaying of an absence to the school office, how parents are contacted, and procedures to comply with the compulsory school attendance law pursuant to 27.1 – 260 et. seq., will be reviewed with the schools. Issues not resolved will be communicated directly to the Mayor.
 6. Community Liaisons – Neighborhood residents who have the respect of the community will be hired contractually to serve as members of the team. They will serve as a bridge between the neighborhood and the project, helping to empower both partners to take shared responsibility for reclaiming their neighborhood. They will be responsible for identifying needs, hosting neighborhood conversations, and serving as role models for the youth.

The staff hired for the project will be hired on a temporary hourly basis. The Richmond Police Department and Department of Justice will commit additional in-kind personnel and program services to this program, i.e. project supervision, client participation in counseling and education groups, and PAL programming. Additionally, efforts will be

made to recruit community volunteers in order to institutionalize the program within the targeted communities. Businesses, as well as local churches, will play a pivotal role in serving as potential resources through providing incentives and referring youth to participate in this effort.

Total Staffing = 1 Project Manager (repositioned DOJ staff)
3 Site Coordinators
6 Case managers
3 School Liaisons
6 Law Enforcement
___ Community Liaison*
19 Total (13 new)

Selected services and programs to be provided include, but are not limited to: assessments, parent education, academic support and GED preparation, school re-entry support, substance abuse counseling, and employment assistance. The initiative will provide practical on site employment experience for those youth who have excelled throughout the year. Funds will be set aside for stipends and scholarships for youths' participation in selected services which would ordinarily be beyond the reach of the clients' families. The employment opportunities, which will also provide stipends, will be implemented during the summer months. Some of these services will be provided contractually with nonprofit agencies that have existing relationships in the community.

The **TRAPP** will be under the direction of the Police Department's Youth Services Division. The Richmond Police Department will serve as the primary agency in the implementation of the targeted compliance part of the program. As the lead coordinating agency for this project, the police department will assume primary fiduciary and project management responsibilities. Department of Justice Services staff will have program management responsibilities. It is the city's goal to continue to foster long-term relationships to ensure that programs become institutionalized within the community. It is essential we sustain these relationships in order to experience any measurable impact in affecting the level of youth and young adult related violence.

Client Referral

The primary method of student (truant) and parent contact referral and subsequent enrollment in the program will be through partnership with the schools, courts, police and community. The intervention method could range from school-based intervention to telephone contact, or on-going case management, community support or court ordered requirements.

Non-voluntary participants will be identified utilizing specific criteria developed to fulfill the objectives of the program. These criteria will include, but not limited to:

- Students with more than five unexcused absences from the targeted area schools

* Number and length of employment will vary by neighborhood and is not included in total employee count.

- Juveniles residing in the targeted area with court petitions filed for status or delinquent offenses
- Requests by parents living in the neighborhood
- Recommendation by partner agencies

A secondary means of referral will be through specifically targeted sweeps conducted by the TRAPP team. These sweeps will serve multiple purposes including:

- The identification of and contact with previously unidentified truants (This method may be especially useful in cases where parents are unable to influence school attendance.)
- Specific enforcement impact in a targeted area that enhances and supports other law enforcement efforts (e.g. “Hot Spots”)
- Heightened awareness of the program in the targeted neighborhood
- Deterrence (impact on other students/truants)

It is expected that over the course of the first year the targeted truancy initiative will positively impact over 200 youth in the three neighborhoods. By working with parents, schools, courts, community based organizations and social agencies, we will work to prevent delinquent behavior before it develops. These efforts will better ensure that youth become well-adjusted and productive members of society.

2. City Wide Strategy

The second component of the strategy will expand on city wide daily truancy sweeps and assessment/processing truant youth through the city’s Diversion and Truancy center. Providing twice daily truancy sweeps on school days will increase awareness of truancy throughout the city and re-engage students and their families into the educational process. The initiative will allow for the identification of students, who are out in the community during school hours, and the transporting of these students to the Diversion Center where their attendance status and involvement with other public service agencies will be assessed and issues underlying the truancy behavior identified. Based on these assessments, the truants’ parents will be contacted and engaged in developing a plan to affect their children’s attendance. Students will be brought back to their school on the day they are picked up. Case management and service linkages will be provided and attendance tracked for 30, 60, or 90 days dependent upon their attendance pattern. The truancy sweeps will work with approximately 1,000 students annually.

The Truancy/Diversion Center will provide the following in-kind support and services:

- 1 Court Services Unit Intake Officer – to process CHINS petition, identify truants who are on probation, offer court diversion services
- 2 TANF Workers – to assess student recipient status, meet with parents and ensure compliance with school attendance requirement
- 2 School Social Workers – to identify students’ attendance, special education needs and classroom placement. They provide information to the school’s assessment center and provide school social work services to the students and their families
- 3 Case managers who develop individualized service plans based on an assessment of the truants’ needs. Case managers link the truants and their families to needed services and track the students’ attendance for 30, 60, or 90 days dependent upon the situation. Case managers will refer truants and their families to needed services such as anger management, mediation, housing issues, and economic support.

- 1 Coordinator of services to manage the daily operations of the Diversion Center as well as carry a modified caseload

Staffing

Ten truancy officers (position transferred from Richmond Public Schools to the Department of Justice Services) will perform twice-daily sweeps in pairs through the city. A master calendar of sweeps will be developed over the summer months and will be deployed in a random selection pattern throughout the school year. On a weekly basis, one of the truancy officer pairs will be deployed in a flexible manner in response to citizen calls.

A community hotline and public relations campaign featuring the Mayor will be established to alert citizens of their responsibility to report truants. The hotline will feed into the Diversion Center and will be staffed from 8-5 Monday through Friday. Public awareness and a media campaign will be geared towards citizens and merchant groups who have expressed frustration over seeing truants in the community and having no place to call to have the youth picked up.

Implementation Timeline

<i>Task</i>	<i>Deadline</i>
Mayor Approval of Plan	May 23, 2005
Per Budget Bill, Approval of Plan by State Department of Education	May 25, 2005
Transmittal of Plan to General Assembly	June 1, 2005
Creation of New Positions	June 1, 2005
Begin Recruitment for Positions	June 8, 2005
Hiring Completed	July 22, 2005
Identify Service Site Locations	
Establish Quarterly Report Formats	July 30, 2005
Move Into Service Center Sites	August 1, 2005
Team Training Completed	August 15, 2005
Referral Protocols Completed	
Community Liaison Identified	
Meeting with Principals/Social Workers from Schools In Targeted Areas	August 30, 2005
Back to School Events	September 1 st - 5 th , 2005
Day Base Established	
Referral Begins	September 6, 2005

Evaluation

The evaluation strategy will be on the degree to which there is an increase/decrease in each of the performance measures listed below:

- Revision of School Procedures
- Reduction in truancy rate
- Reduction in crime

- Enhanced community awareness
- Improved police service delivery
- Improved quality of life
- Improved police/youth relations
- Enhanced police, community and government partnerships

The performance outcome measures will be based on the following information:

- Number of participants
- Number of participants in compliance with school attendance policy
- Reduction in crime
- Number of services provided
- Number of community members involved in program
- Number of participants in workshops
- Number of public awareness initiatives

An automated tracking system will be established which will allow the team access to existing client information to the Department of Justice's GILS database. The tracking system will allow for analysis of client and project specific data.

BUDGET SUMMARY

Targeted Approach

A. Personnel

3 Site coordinators	35,000 x 3 =	\$ 105,000
6 Case managers +3 School liaisons	30,000 x 9 =	270,000
		<u>\$ 375,000</u>
FICA (7.65%)	=	28,688
		<u>\$ 403,688</u>

B. Consultants/Contracts

Community Liaison @ 18,000 per site	=	\$ 54,000
Scholarships and Stipends @ 150 per 300 youth	=	45,000
Youth Employment	=	<u>60,000</u>
		\$159,000

C. Equipment

Cell phones 12 x \$60 per month x 12 months	=	\$ 8,640
Office Equipment (copier/fax/ etc) 1,000 x 3	=	<u>3,000</u>
		\$ 11,640

D. Supplies

100 per month per site	=	\$ 3,600
Mileage 500 per site	=	7,560
Neighborhood supports	=	<u>30,000</u>
		\$ 41,160

Total Cost \$615,488

Leaves balance of \$60,452 for contingencies in the event school/city agency's resources do not fully materialize.

Required Resources from Richmond Public Schools

- ★ Cars and equipment associated with the 10 truancy officers
- ★ Access to the daily attendance automated system
- ★ List of students with IEPs in catchment area(s) (updated weekly)
- ★ List of assigned social workers/guidance counselors their respective roles and phone numbers by school
- ★ Access to school buildings
- ★ Updates on truancy rates monthly
- ★ Truancy Sweeps schedules from 04 – 05 school year
- ★ 04- 05 school assignments of truancy/attendance officers
- ★ Schedule of faculty meeting by buildings
- ★ School violence reports by school
- ★ Assignment of truancy officers for 04 – 05 school year by school
- ★ Copies of assessments performed by RPS's assessment center on truant students
- ★ Training curriculum for truancy officers

Required Resources from Richmond City Agencies

- Use of community/recreation centers in target neighborhoods for service sites
- Use of two apartments in Hillside and Mosby Court for service sites
- Free wiring of centers for staff automation needs
- Fifteen laptops
- Vehicles for truancy officers (10) and case managers (9) and site coordinators (3) = 14 total
- Designated employment slots from WIB
- Medical services to clients from Health Clinic and Vernon J. Harris Health Center
- Scholarships to performing arts classes and recreational programming
- Marketing campaign from Public Information Office