

TRUANCY MEDIATION'S CONTINUING BENEFITS

As has been previously documented, the Truancy Prevention Through Mediation Program is successful at reducing the number of K-12 public school absences. It works by addressing the family problems that impact that family's efforts to get the student[s] to school on time, every day. The documentation comes from Luminesce Consulting, an independent third party retained by the Ohio Commission on Dispute Resolution and Conflict Management (the Commission).

In 2002 Luminesce Consulting was asked to study whether families and students [students rarely participate below the sixth grade] that had taken part in mediations continued to benefit from the problem solving, solution identifying model of the program. That is, did the solution work into the next year, keeping attendance from slipping into the pre-mediation absences.

Seven counties were surveyed : Clark, Delaware, Franklin, Greene, Lucas, Ross, Stark. Since Greene had a small number of students in the random sample, they were excluded from the final analysis.

Of the remaining six counties, 242 students were randomly selected using an accepted selection tool. After eliminating those who had moved, were home schooled, or for other reasons weren't available or appropriate, 186 students were tracked for the number of days absent. The attendance of those students this school year was recorded, and contrasted with the previous year [school year 2001 - 2002], the year in which the truancy mediation took place.

AVERAGE NUMBER OF ABSENCES, BY COUNTY, FOR THE STUDENTS SAMPLED

	Attendance Before Mediation	Attendance After Mediation	Attendance Following Year
COUNTIES:			
Clark	10.71	6.63	3.45
Delaware	13.17	3.42	2.88
Franklin	11.35	12.46	10.10
Lucas	9.25	2.83	3.75
Ross	15.38	1.27	2.11
Stark	12.79	2.03	4.25

The Commission, which manages this program in cooperation with the Supreme Court of Ohio, emphasizes the importance of starting this program in the elementary grades, when the problems of truancy are just beginning, allowing the underlying problems to be addressed before the student begins slipping academically, making teenage truancy and eventual delinquency more likely. As evidence of the value of this model, all the above concentrate their efforts [although not exclusively] on grades K-6, with the exception of Franklin, which is only in middle schools.

As Luminesce concludes, "Clearly, the *Truancy Prevention Through Mediation Program* is having the desired impact on student truancy and this program is able to demonstrate a sustained impact."

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