

## TRUANCY PREVENTION THROUGH MEDIATION PROGRAM 2002-3003 Program Evaluation

*Final Evaluation Report 2002-2003 School Year  
Luminesce Consulting, July 2003*

### Executive Summary:

The link between truancy and future delinquent behaviors, such as, illegal substance use, burglary, vandalism, and dropping out has been well documented (Cooper, 2000; Gabb, 2000; Garry, 2000). In addition to resource and fiscal strains on the legal and education systems, truants' subsequent inability to secure higher paying jobs and the possibility of needing state welfare assistance make truancy an expensive loss of revenue in the future as well. The Truancy Prevention through Mediation Program, however, has consistently demonstrated positive results in an effort to combat truancy among elementary and middle school age students, thereby making it a wise investment in Ohio's future.

### *The Program*

The Truancy Prevention through Mediation Program is unique in that it requires families, schools, juvenile courts, and social service agencies to work collaboratively to address the issue of chronic absenteeism and truancy. At participating schools, students with 5 or more absences in a grading period or 10 or more absences throughout the school year are targeted for the program. Once a student has been identified, the school contacts the parent/legal guardian via letter to appear at a scheduled mediation. A parent/legal guardian, trained mediator, school representative, and in some cases, the student, participate in the mediation. During a mediation, the mediator serves as a neutral third party helping to facilitate discussion of the issues surrounding the child's unexcused absences and works to develop a mutually agreeable resolution to the problems. Should the child incur subsequent absences after the mediation, the parents are referred to juvenile court and warned the child may be charged as an unruly or delinquent child, and the parents charged with contributing to the delinquency of a minor and/or violation of the state revised code regarding compulsory education.

### *Program Results*

During the 2002-2003 school year evaluation data was collected from 105 elementary and middle schools in nine of the above Ohio counties. Over 1,900 mediations were evaluated for the school year. Independent evaluation reports for the 2002-2003 school year indicate that **in all, but one, of the counties, a significant reduction in the number of absences or tardies was demonstrated for those students/families that participated in the program.**

### Average Number of Absences and Tardies Before and After Mediation by County

County	Pre Absences	Post Absences	Significantly Different	Pre Tardies	Post Tardies	Significantly Different
Butler	15.68	3.93	Yes	5.89	2.07	Yes
Clark	13.86	5.49	Yes	8.66	4.56	Yes
Delaware	9.86	9.93	No	13.62	4.14	Yes

Franklin	14.55	8.33	Yes	11.73	8.72	Yes
Greene	12.55	9.64	No	5.67	5.38	No
Ross	11.70	2.59	Yes	11.77	3.41	Yes
Stark	11.94	10.44	No	8.93	7.08	Yes
Wood	14.75	1.00	Yes	9.67	1.89	Yes

### ***Key Recommendations***

Several consistent areas for improvement and refinement of the Truancy Prevention through Mediation Program emerged across all the participating counties. These recommendations are meant solely as suggestions.

- School personnel may need to review the protocol for students turning in notes when they are absent. The school policy may need to be reiterated to parents and students throughout the school year or the policy may need to be revised.
- Training for mediators about the social service agencies available within the community and the services they provide needs to be enhanced. Given the large number of parents whose own personal issues are reasons for a child's absence, the mediators could be effective resources and may be able to serve these families in critical ways outside the purview of truancy.
- The streamlined evaluation tools seemed to be well-received and continued to provide informative data. Their continued use is suggested.

### **References**

Cooper, B. S. (2000). Skipping school for fun and profit. Hudson Institute. Gabb, S. (2000). Truancy: Its measurement and causation. Adapted from The Report of the North London Truancy Unit. Her Majesty's Stationery Office: London, England. Garry, E. M. (2000). Truancy: First step to a lifetime of problems. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention: Washington, DC.