

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
Child and Family Services Agency



Public Oversight Hearing on
Improving School Attendance: Truancy, Chronic Absenteeism, and
the Implementation of Reform Activities

Testimony of
Joseph Osiecki
Supervisor, Educational Neglect Triage Unit

Before the
Committee of the Whole
The Honorable Phil Mendelson, Chairman
and
Committee on Education
The Honorable David Grosso, Chairperson

Council of the District of Columbia
John A. Wilson Building,
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20004

January 31, 2019
10:00am
Room 412

Introduction

Good morning, Chairman Mendelson, Chairperson Grosso, Councilmembers, and staff. I am Joseph Osiecki, Supervisor, Educational Neglect Triage Unit, of the Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA). I appreciate the opportunity to provide an update regarding CFSA's activities around addressing chronic absenteeism and supporting District of Columbia schools in improving school attendance.

CFSA and Compliance Monitoring of Schools

Following the last hearing, CFSA committed to connecting with District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) and public charter schools (DCPCS) in an effort to reestablish meetings regarding compliance data, which occurred in previous school years. Since then, CFSA has connected with both DCPS and DCPCS, and all parties have agreed to reinstate these meetings, which will begin in the 2019-2020 school year. CFSA hopes that these meetings will be beneficial to the local education agencies and help ensure they are in compliance with their reporting of educational neglect.

CFSA Updates

In an effort to better address the complexities of educational neglect, CFSA has redesigned its intake process under the Child Protective Services Administration. In addition to the Educational Neglect Triage Unit, CFSA will be designating a specialized unit of social workers whose sole purpose will be to partner with CFSA's Triage Unit and DC schools to investigate reports of educational neglect. The creation of this specialized unit will allow for improved communication with schools and engagement with families to better understand the underlying concerns that may result in children/youth not consistently attending school.

In addition, CFSA and DCPS are in the early stages of developing a new process aimed at expanding capacity and increasing teaming efforts through early intervention and referrals. CFSA's newly designated social workers will be assigned to a cluster of schools as the point of contact for attendance coordinators. They will also serve as members of the student support team when appropriate as an early intervention strategy, making the referral process seamless and not punitive. CFSA and DCPS will continue to collaborate to further develop and pilot this re-envisioned referral and early intervention process. CFSA is dedicated to being a strong partner of DC's team in addressing absenteeism, and hopes that once up and running this new system will help support the District's efforts to reduce absenteeism rates.

CFSA Educational Neglect Referral Data Update

School Year 2017-2018

- In SY 2017-2018, CFSA received 4,181 reports of educational neglect. Of these, 3,873 represented children ages 5 to 13.
- Of the 3,873 reports, CFSA accepted 1,084 for a child welfare response. CFSA responded to 965 reports through the family assessment pathway and 119 through the investigations pathway.

- Of the educational neglect reports CFSA received during SY 2017-2018, 64 percent came from DCPS, 32 percent from the public charter schools, and the remaining four percent from other sources.

School Year 2018-2019

- As of January 15, 2019, CFSA received 1,027 reports of educational neglect. Of these, 861 represented children ages 5 to 13.
- Of the 861 reports, we accepted 292 referrals for a child welfare response. We responded to 242 via family assessment and 50 via an investigation.
- Of the educational neglect reports CFSA received, 62 percent came from DCPS, 37 percent from the public charter schools, and the remaining one percent from other sources.

Conclusion

As always, CFSA appreciates your interest and oversight on this important issue, and we look forward to strengthening our partnerships across systems to gain better results for children and families. Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

APPENDIX

The chart below reflects the total intake for educational neglect reports to the Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA) during the past two school years. In addition, the chart identifies the two pathways (family assessment and investigations) for all of the referrals made to CFSA.

	SY 16-17			SY 18-19 (As of 1/15/19)		
Total Educational Neglect Reports	4,181			1,027		
Educational Neglect Reports for Children ages 5-13	3,873			861		
# Educational Neglect Reports Screened Out	3,097 (74%)			735 (72%)		
# Educational Neglect Reports Accepted	1,084 (26%)			292 (28%)		
# of Reports served by CFSA CPS-Investigations Administration	119 (11%)			50 (17%)		
CPS-Investigations Substantiated Reports	57			7*		
#of Reports served by CFSA CPS-Family Assessments Administration	965 (89%)			242 (83%)		
	DCPS	DCPCS	Other	DCPS	DCPCS	Other
Referral Sources	64%	32%	4%	62%	37%	1%

* 9 investigations still pending