

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
**Office of Victim Services and Justice Grants**



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

Testimony of  
Michelle M. Garcia  
Director

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

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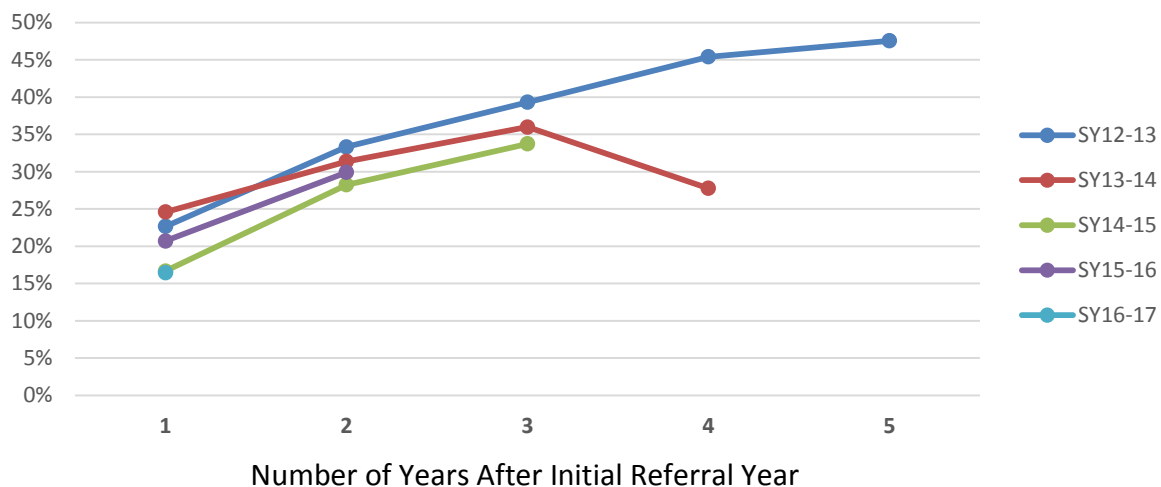
January 31, 2019  
10:00am

Good morning, Chairman Mendelson, Chairman Grosso, members, and staff of the Committee on Education. My name is Michelle M. Garcia, and I am the Director of the Office of Victim Services and Justice Grants (OVSJG). Thank you for the opportunity to testify in today's oversight hearing to discuss OVSJG's efforts to improve school attendance and for your ongoing support of students in all eight wards of the District. Mayor Muriel Bowser has made substantial investments in our public and public charter schools and is committed to ensuring that our young people are making it to every class, every single day. Consistent student attendance is a citywide challenge that touches every grade level, ward, and school, but it is a challenge we can overcome. By working together as a community and involving students in the process, we can ensure that Every Day Counts!

As you are aware, the Office of Victim Services and Justice Grants has coordinated truancy reduction programs for six years. Rather than review how the programs work, as we have done in previous oversight hearings, I would like to focus my testimony today to provide a response to specific questions that were raised during the previous oversight hearing regarding the longitudinal effect of the Show Up, Stand Out Program (SUSO).

As you know from previous reports, the majority of students who are referred to SUSO in one year are not rereferred in the subsequent year. In response to questions raised during the last hearing, we asked our evaluator to analyze rereferrals across multiple years. Their analysis found that in general, as more years passed from the initial year of referral, the rereferral rate increased.

**Re-Referral Within Given Number of Years After Initial Referral Year**



To illustrate, for elementary school students referred in the first year of SUSO (SY12-13), of those eligible to be rereferred, 22.6 percent were rereferred one year later, 33.3 percent two years later, 39.3 percent three years later, 45.4 percent four years later, and 47.6 percent five years later. This generally holds true for each year of referral:<sup>1</sup>

Initial Referral Year		Rereferred Within Given Number of Years After Initial Referral Year (Of Students in Eligible Grade)				
		1	2	3	4	5
1 SY12-13	Eligible Grade to be Rereferred	234	234	234	229	225
	Total Rereferred	53	78	92	104	107
	% Rereferred	22.6%	33.3%	39.3%	45.4%	47.6%
2 SY13-14	Eligible Grade to be Rereferred	2155	2113	2073	1797	
	Total Rereferred	530	663	746	499	
	% Rereferred	24.6%	31.4%	36.0%	27.8%	
3 SY14-15	Eligible Grade to be Rereferred	2500	2483	2475		
	Total Rereferred	417	701	835		
	% Rereferred	16.7%	28.2%	33.7%		
4 SY15-16	Eligible Grade to be Rereferred	2231	2226			
	Total Rereferred	462	666			
	% Rereferred	20.7%	29.9%			
5 SY16-17	Eligible Grade to be Rereferred	2764				
	Total Rereferred	455				
	% Rereferred	16.5%				

In looking at any difference between engaged versus nonengaged students, overall, rereferral rates for engaged students are typically lower than nonengaged students:

	Rereferred Within Given Number of Years After Initial Referral Year (Of Students in Eligible Grade)				
	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Engaged Average Rereferral Rates Across ALL Years</b>	18.5%	27.9%	32.7%	30.4%	38.5%
<b>Not Engaged Average Rereferral Rates Across ALL Years</b>	20.5%	31.0%	36.7%	37.3%	48.7%

However, we did find that students initially engaged in Years 3 (SY14-15), 4 (SY15-16) and 5 (SY16-17) have higher rereferral rates than students not engaged during this period, though only within a range of .5 – 5 percent.

<sup>1</sup> This analysis is subject to several potential limitations and caveats. First and foremost, this analysis simply tracks what percentage of students referred in a given year were rereferred in future years. While students not rereferred may very well mean that they did not have truancy issues in future years, they could also be due to the fact that 1) they moved to a non-SUSO school, or 2) they exited the public school system. The current analysis does not account for the latter two possibilities.



In September, I provided preliminary data on the results of assessments conducted with the students participating in the high-school truancy reduction pilot program. Final analysis confirmed that average scores improved between the baseline and post surveys on 13 out of 15 measures, including anticipated educational attainment. Students reported positive attitudes about school and demonstrated positive changes between baseline and post survey. Overall, statistically significant differences were found for “There is someone in my life who notices and cares when I’m not at school” and “My school helps me problem solve when I have barriers related to school.” Additionally, the percentage of students who said they expected to attain a post-secondary degree rose from 69 percent to 76 percent. Attached to my testimony please find a one-page summary of the high school program data.

Our truancy reduction programs are informed by and in collaboration with the other members of the Every Day Counts! Taskforce. In particular, we want to thank DCPS, the DC Public Charter School Board, OSSE, CFSA, and the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education for their partnership and support of our work.

We appreciate the Council’s efforts to improve attendance in the District and look forward to continuing to work with you on these initiatives. I am happy to address your questions at this time.

