

**GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**  
Child and Family Services Agency



OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

April 2, 2019

The Honorable Phil Mendelson  
Council of the District of Columbia  
John A. Wilson Building  
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue N.W., Suite 504  
Washington, D.C. 20004

Dear Chairman Mendelson:

This letter is in response to your request for the Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA) to provide answers to questions in preparation for the April 4, 2019 oversight hearing on *Improving School Attendance: Truancy, Chronic Absenteeism, and the Implementation of Reform Initiatives*.

**1. Explain in detail the new role for CFSA in working with schools to reduce truancy.**

CFSA, DC Public Schools (DCPS), public charter schools (DCPCS), and other community stakeholders continue to partner and strategize on ways to address educational neglect in the following areas:

- Developing a business process to support families when there is an official referral made to CFSA when a child has 10 unexcused absences.
- Developing a business process to support early intervention when a child has missed five consecutive days of unexcused absences. The goal is to prevent 10 unexcused absences which could trigger a child welfare response.
- Selecting school sites to test and pilot the five consecutive absences intervention process.

The early intervention strategy involves schools reporting children to CFSA and Show up Stand Out (SUSO) when children miss five consecutive unexcused absences. Both entities, along with other stakeholders, would convene a Student Support Teams Meeting (SST) to develop early intervention plans to prevent children from experiencing subsequent absences, and identify services to support that goal. This particular strategy is still under development.

The role of the family support worker in the new Educational Neglect Triage Unit is to engage the reporting source from the referring school to determine the following:

- Has contact been made with the parents?
- If an intervention plan has been developed?
- Is a child welfare response warranted?

The educational neglect social worker unit is dedicated to investigating educational neglect referrals. Social workers will utilize strategic family engagement techniques to reduce family ambivalence and anxiety due to the public perception of what formal child welfare involvement entails. The goal is to build trust with families in order to properly assess the root cause of chronic absenteeism, identify services or resources to support the goal of improving attendance, and develop a plan of action to prevent out-of-home placement and strengthen family resilience.

**2. In each of the last three school years, what was the number of referrals, due to truancy, that led to an investigation of abuse or neglect? What was the number, for each school year, that were sustained (abuse or neglect found)?**

	SY 16-17			SY 17-18			SY 18-19 (As of 3/15/19)		
Total Educational Neglect Reports	3,549			4,181			2,516		
Educational Neglect Reports for Children ages 5-13	3,175			3,873			2,337		
# Educational Neglect Reports Screened Out	1,982 (56%)			3,097 (74%)			1,922 (76%)		
# Educational Neglect Reports Accepted	1,393 (39%)			1,084 (26%)			589 (23%)		
# of Reports served by CFSA CPS- Investigations Administration	330 (24%)			119 (11%)			110 (19%)		
CPS-Investigations Substantiated Reports	161			57			43		
#of Reports served by CFSA CPS- Family Assessments Administration	1,063 (76%)			965 (89%)			479 (81%)		
	DCPS	DCPCS	Other	DCPS	DCPCS	Other	DCPS	DCPCS	Other
Referral Sources	63%	32%	5%	64%	32%	4%	60%	38%	2%

**3. At the January 31<sup>st</sup> hearing, school complained that there is no “feedback loop” between schools and CFSA; that once students are referred, school officials learn nothing more. How will CFSA improve the feedback loop?**

Information acquired by CFSA that identifies individual children reported as or found to be abused or neglected, or which identifies members of their families or other persons, is considered confidential and can only be released under specific circumstances. *See D.C. Code 4-1303.06.* Due to the District’s confidentiality and privacy laws, CFSA is limited in how it releases any information involving children and families that are subject to an abuse or neglect allegation. However, it is CFSA’s practice to interview the mandated reporter who reported the allegation of neglect. Thus, the reporting official is interviewed by a CFSA investigator and therefore would have knowledge of the agency’s efforts to respond to the report.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Robert L. Matthews, Deputy Director for Entry Services, at (202) 727-5266.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Brenda Donald". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Brenda Donald