

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
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Deputy Director of Entry Services

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

April 4, 2019
1pm
Room 120

Introduction

Good morning, Chairman Mendelson, Chairperson Grosso, Councilmembers, and staff. I am Robert L. Matthews, Deputy Director of Entry Services, 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 the District of Columbia schools in improving school attendance.

CFSA Updates

CFSA, District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS), DC public charter schools (DCPCS), and other community stakeholders continue to partner and strategize on ways to address educational neglect. CFSA has identified social workers designated for the educational neglect social work unit, as well as family service triage workers who will enhance the initial family engagement process. With a new redesigned business process, workers will be assigned to targeted schools where chronic absenteeism has been prevalent. These units will be fully operational beginning April 1, 2019.

During the month of May, CFSA, DCPS and DCPCS will plan to test the new business process with targeted schools in Wards 7 and 8. The data and information yielded from this testing phase will allow CFSA, DCPS, and DCPCS to adjust any procedures needed to be ready for full implementation for the new 2020 school year. Through this entire development process, all parties involved have been diligent in making efforts to collaborate on how best to serve the children and families of the District of Columbia. As a result of this shift in practice, we anticipate improved outcomes and incremental reductions in students being absent from school.

CFSA Educational Neglect Referral Data Update

School Year 2018-2019

- As of March 15, 2019, CFSA received 2,516 reports of educational neglect. Of these, 2,337 represented children ages 5 to 13.
- Of the 2,337 reports, we accepted 567 referrals for a child welfare response. We responded to 463 via family assessment and 104 via an investigation.
- Of the educational neglect reports CFSA received, 60 percent came from DCPS, 38 percent from the public charter schools, and the remaining two percent from other sources.

Conclusion

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 before you, today. 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 three 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 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%