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
Robert L. Matthews
Principal Deputy Director

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

December 5, 2019
10am
Room 412

Introduction

Good morning, Chairman Mendelson, Chairperson Grosso, Councilmembers, and staff. I am Robert L. Matthews, Principal Deputy Director 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.

During the summer of 2019, CFSA and DCPS met regularly to further develop the process for addressing educational neglect that would include a testing model to be implemented in the schools of Moten Elementary and Excel Academy. These schools were selected based on data that indicated they were the two highest reporters of chronic absenteeism within the District. During the first week of October, CFSA met with representatives from both schools to orient staff on the referral process and level of engagement and intervention. CFSA will monitor the effectiveness of this new model as we continue to work with stakeholders to reduce the chronic absenteeism and/or linking families to resources to support that effort. CFSA plans to continue the regular meetings with DCPS and other community partners to improve our partnership, outcomes, and realize incremental reductions in students' absenteeism.

CFSA Educational Neglect Referral Data Update

School Year 2018-2019
- As of June 17, 2019, CFSA received 4,837 reports of educational neglect. Of these, 4,551 represented children ages 5 to 13.
- Of the 4,837 reports, we accepted 729 referrals for a child welfare response. We responded to 516 via family assessment and 213 via an investigation. Effective April 1, 2019, CFSA no longer uses the family assessment process. Thereafter, all accepted referrals are responded to as an investigation.
- Of the educational neglect reports CFSA received, 58 percent came from DCPS, 35 percent came from the public charter schools, and the remaining seven percent were 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 the referrals made to CFSA.

	SY 16-17	SY 17-18	SY 18-19 (As of 6/17/19)					
Total Educational Neglect Reports	3,549		4,181			4,837		
Educational Neglect Reports for Children ages 5-13	3,175		3,873			4,551		
# Educational Neglect Reports Screened Out	1,982 (56%)		3,097 (74%)			4,108 (85%)		
# Educational Neglect Reports Accepted	1,393 (39%)		1,084 (26%)			729 (15%)		
# of Reports served by CFSA CPS- Investigations Administration	330 (24%)		119 (11%)			213 (29%)		
CPS-Investigations Substantiated Reports	161		57			66		
#of Reports served by CFSA CPS- Family Assessments Administration	1,063 (76%)		965 (89%)			516 (71%)		
	DCPS	DCPCS	Other	DCPS	DCPCS	Other	DCPS	DCPCS	Other
Referral Sources	63%	32%	5%	64%	32%	4%	58%	35%	7%