

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

**ATTACHMENT 1  
OVSJG Truancy Reduction Program Success Stories**

**SUSO**

**Johnson Family** - Catholic Charities was able to work with the Johnson family. Ms. Johnson has one child that attends Democracy Prep. Ms. Johnson has a history with substance abuse and her son had missed 3 days consecutively in a one month time frame. The school had to often escort her off the school campus for misconduct. Once Catholic Charities engaged Ms. Johnson and worked with her intensely to assist her in enrolling in programs, as well as making sure she remembered to follow up with her social worker to complete the intake process for external referrals, there was a huge difference in how she communicated with the schools. She also started making progress to start her therapy sessions for both herself and her son. Ms. Johnson's son is now in school every day, on time and has only missed 2 days (which were excused with a doctor's note).

**Mack Family** - Georgia Avenue Family Support Collaborative (GAFSC) worked with a family to restore a basic human need that empowered those families when they needed it the most. The first family, called the Mack Family. This was a two parent household with a kindergarten boy, Sean. When GAFSC met the family, it was discovered that the family was being evicted from their apartment due to the owner selling the property without properly notifying the tenants. Moreover, the new developers were demolishing the apartment building that weekend. Income was stretched with this family as the mother was laid off from her retail job and father was overextended with his credit.

With quick thinking and collaborative effort, GAFSC supported the family with hotel lodging on two occasions while family friends contributed with this family to help extend their hotel stays. GAFSC advocated to Virginia Williams Family Resource Center and then to Capitol Hill Ministries. Once a new apartment was identified, GAFSC paid for a portion of the security deposit. In addition, transportation and food assistance was provided, as well as, linking this family to a financial management program to teach them budgeting and credit. As GAFSC brought this case to close, Sean's attendance issue was resolved and information about first time home-buying programs were given to the parents so they could have a long-time goal to work towards. By instilling the belief of stability to this family, they felt empowered to get their child to school because they knew he would be stable there even when their living situation was temporarily not.

**HSTRP**

**Rebecca's Story** - Rebecca came to the program while facing a crisis situation, being pregnant of almost three months and in jeopardy of becoming homeless. At the time Rebecca was beginning her senior year of high school and doing very well in all her classes. Once housing became an issue, she struggled to make it to school and maintain her strong academic performance. However, Rebecca is a true example of someone who was open to receive the necessary support, all with the most positive attitude. Not once did Rebecca doubt that LAYC and the Promotor Pathway was acting in her best interest. She was placed in a host family through LAYC's Host Homes program and even though her time spent with them was short, they developed a beautiful relationship that continues to this day. The host family played a very remarkable part in her life as they provided care, safety and love at her most vulnerable time. Eventually Rebecca and her son were placed in a foster home where Rebecca began her life as a parent and continued to push through adversity.

Rebecca gave birth to a healthy and charming baby while still attending school. She returned to school in no time and brought her son along with her every single day. She had to work even harder to return her academic performance back to where she left off and continue to focus college planning, all the while running to the day care for feeding times every break she had. Randi graduated from Roosevelt High School in June 2018 and is getting ready to start her new chapter in life at Virginia Commonwealth University.

All of Rebecca's hard work definitely paid off. She graduated with various scholarships and grants in hand that will most likely cover most of her four years in college. Throughout her senior, Rebecca was able to build back up her relationship with her mother. This has allowed her to feel comfortable with her and her son's father helping to care for her son while she is in school. While she knows this will not be easy, she is carefully working on all of the details for a smooth transition, while still counting on the support received by her Promotor and the rest of her support system. Rebecca has shared how grateful she will always be for the work that her Promotor has provided her connecting to services and consistently being there for her.

**Quote from Rebecca:** "LAYC treated me like family even when they didn't know who I really was. It was always constant support when it came to my ambitions and my son, no matter the choices made it was always them to stand by and cheer me on. Without the program I feel like I wouldn't have the relationship with my mom or ended on such a positive note for my senior year of high school. The Promotor Pathway is such a needed program and it was truly a blessing for me to be in."

As her Promotor, I am extremely proud of Rebecca and amazed by her strong will in never giving up even under circumstances that many others would have found too difficult. It has been a wonderful journey to work with Rebecca and witness the admirable example of a very strong and determined young lady by watching her reach her milestones without any pauses.

**Mary's Story** - Mary came to the program very timid and full of anxiety. Her therapist made the referral realizing she needed much more support than mental health services. She had little comprehension of the English language and was living with her estranged father in the living room of a cramped apartment. Mary had a hard time advocating for herself and often found herself struggling with school and life circumstances. She needed support in identifying all her

needs, prioritizing those needs, and finding and connecting with a variety of resources to meet those needs.

Once meeting her Promotor, Mary latched on if for nothing else than to have found a supportive Spanish-speaking adult. However, the work began right away, making sure all her classes were correct and that she was able to understand what she was expected to do day-to-day. Her Promotor also began to question and work to understand her housing needs. Mary is 19 years old, so as an “adult” the housing resources looked very different. Housing assistance began with making sure she had a bed and a dresser but then quickly moved to talking about whether she felt safe and comfortable in her living arrangement. For Mary, living in someone else’s living room with her estranged father was very difficult, as could be the case for anyone. However, due to her anxiety, change, new experiences, and new people are even more challenging for Mary so the idea of leaving was also not easy for her. After applying to a housing program, and with her Promotor being present to help with the transition, Mary was eventually able to move into a housing program in October where she had her own room and more positive adults to support and encourage her.

Meeting her housing needs was one of the many accomplishments and experiences that Mary has seen from being a part of the Promotor Pathway. For example, she attended our trip to Kings Dominion last summer. Though she did not leave her Promotor's side the entire day, she experienced a roller coaster for the first time, road a charter bus for the first time, and went to a water park for the first time. These things may seem small compared to getting into a housing program, but for someone living with anxiety and never leaving an 8-block radius, this was HUGE!

In addition, the Promotor Pathway has also been able to help her obtain a laptop for school work and assisted her with downloading a language translation program through one of our partners in December 2018.

Mary goes to see her Promotor daily to check in, practice her English, get a snack, and make plans for achieving her goals. Many of her challenges and frustrations are still present, but she continues to work on her mental health.