

PS/ED COMMITTEE #1  
April 27, 2015

**MEMORANDUM**

April 22, 2015

TO: Public Safety Committee  
Education Committee

FROM: Susan J. Farag, Legislative Analyst *SJF*

SUBJECT: **Update: Truancy Prevention Program**

Today the Joint Committee will receive an update on the Truancy Prevention Program by the State's Attorney's Office. Those expected to brief the Committee:

John McCarthy, State's Attorney  
Phil Andrews, Director of Crime Prevention Initiatives  
Steve Chaikin, Assistant State's Attorney, Community Outreach  
Lisa Russo, State's Attorney's Office

**Background**

Created in 2010 as a partnership among the State's Attorney's Office, the Montgomery County Public Schools, and the University of Baltimore School of Law's Center for Families, Children, and the Courts (CCFC), the Truancy Prevention Program is designed to increase student attendance by assisting students and their families with issues that impact attendance. The program model includes a "judge," mentor, program coordinator, and MCPS Pupil Personnel Worker at each school, who work together with the student and the student's family to identify barriers to attendance and help mitigate them.

The Truancy Prevention Program is held in 10-week sessions each school semester, and meets at the designated schools once a week. The student's mentor generally meets with the child prior to the Court session. The child also meets individually with the Truancy Prevention Program team. The team reviews the child's attendance, grades, school performance, and offers advice and support to help the child become more consistent at attending school daily and punctually. Initially, the program was operated in two middle schools - Neelsville and Francis Scott Key. The program was successful in reducing truancy for a majority of the participating students in these two schools, and the program then expanded to Loiederman. Since its inception, the program has been expanded to 10 middle schools in the County. A list of participating schools is included on © 9. In order to determine which middle schools may benefit from the program, the SAO meets once a month with other agencies that form the

Truancy Review Board. The SAO meets with the Chair of the Truancy Review Board to determine appropriate schools. They examine schools with high truancy rates and those with students who have more than 15% unexcused absences.

The SAO's Truancy Prevention Program is just one of several County initiatives attempt to reduce truancy. MCPS has internal programs that address early truancy problems (those who miss approximately 10-15% of school days in the first semester). The County also has an interagency workgroup, the Truancy Review Board, which addresses truancy and dropout prevention. Students who are absent approximately 20% of the school year are referred to the Truancy Review Board. This workgroup includes members from MCPS, SAO, Department of Health and Human Services, Police Department (Family Services Division), the Housing Opportunities Commission, and the Maryland Department of Juvenile Services. If a child's habitual truancy cannot be reduced, a case may be referred to court for prosecution of the child's parents.

### **Funding and Scope**

The Truancy Prevention Program was initially funded through a \$26,000 federal grant in 2010. The Council appropriated \$52,000 in FY13 and \$78,000 annually in both FY14 and FY15 for the initiative. The recommended FY16 operating budget includes an additional \$57,000 to expand the program to five more schools (for a total of \$135,000 for FY16). *The Public Safety Committee reviewed the State's Attorney's budget on April 17, and recommended adding \$20,000 to convert the Truancy Prevention Program's lead Program Coordinator from a contractual to a permanent merit position.*

In the fall 2014 semester, the program served 116 students. The program is expected to serve approximately 200 students for the 2014-2015 school year.

### **The University of Baltimore School of Law Study of the Truancy Prevention Program**

The University of Baltimore School of Law recently conducted a longitudinal study that tracked student attendance after graduating from the Truancy Prevention Program. The study looked at 107 program graduates at Loiederman, Key, Neelsville, Roberto Clemente, and Argyle Middle Schools during the 2013-2014 school year. The study compared pre-program school attendance records with post-program school attendance records.

The study provides several key findings of program effectiveness:

- Three of the five schools (Key, Loiederman, and Neelsville) showed that the Truancy Prevention Program had a significant impact on participants' attendance. Two of these schools exhibited a "large program effect."
- The program is equally effective for boys and girls, although a higher percentage of girls (68%) than boys (44%) reduced their absences.
- The program is most effective among 7<sup>th</sup> graders.
- Even in those schools that did not show a positive program effect, the majority of students who participated substantially improved their attendance.

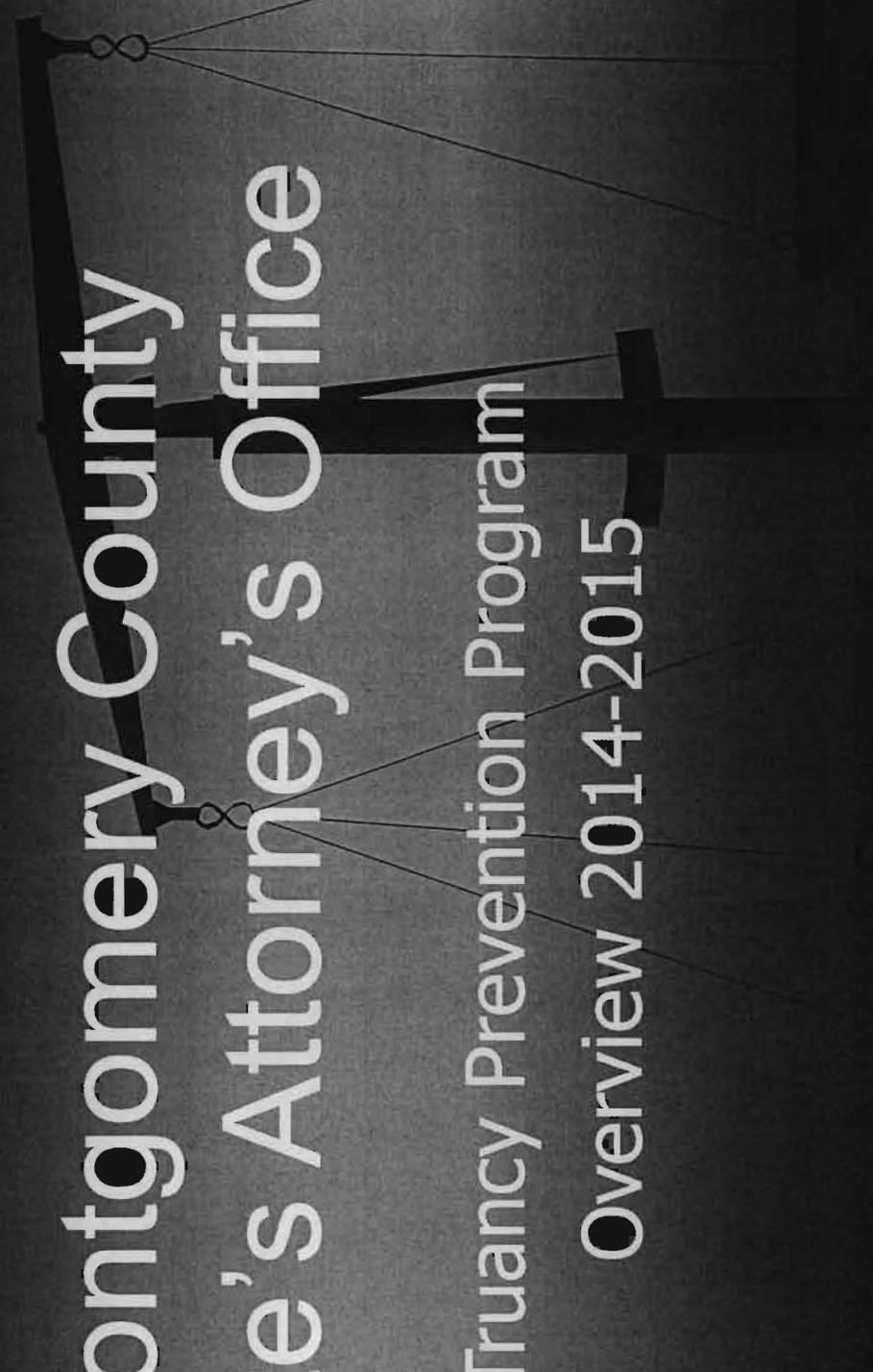
Preliminary results of the study indicate that 67% of the students who participated in the program improved their attendance in the semester or year after their participation.

### Discussion Issues

1. The UB study shows initial positive impacts of the program for the semester or year following graduation from the Truancy Prevention Program. Are there plans to track graduates on a more long-term basis (i.e. into and through high school)?
2. While most schools showed that a majority of graduates reduced their absentee rates, some students were not as successful at increasing attendance. Does the SAO have information on why some cases are more difficult to improve? Are there particular circumstances that are more difficult to alleviate (e.g., homelessness, domestic violence, mental health issues)?
3. The SAO plans to expand the program to five more schools in the 2015-2016 school year. What is the timeframe for the expansion? (i.e. all schools in the fall, a split among fall and spring start-ups, etc.)

This packet contains the following:

Truancy Prevention program Overview 2014-2015 PowerPoint	© 1-12
<i>Montgomery County Truancy Court Program: Comparison of Pre-Program and Post-Program School Absence Experiences of School Year 2013-2014 Program Participants</i> , University School of Law (March 2015)	13-27



# Montgomery County State's Attorney's Office

Truancy Prevention Program  
Overview 2014-2015

# Truancy Program Overview

- Currently serving 10 middle schools
  - 116 students/families being served
- We select and train the judge, coordinator, and mentor and Pupil Personnel Worker (PPW) at each school
  - Collaboration with school regarding student selection and process
- We meet one time per week at each school for 3 hours for 10 weeks
- Schools chosen through Truancy Review Board
- Holistic approach to student/family needs
- Coordination of resources

# Office of the State's Attorney

## Prosecution Units

### Community Outreach

- District Court
- Family Violence
- Felony
- Elder Fraud
- Juvenile
- Major Crimes
- Special Prosecution

# Community Prosecution Unit

- **Community Prosecution** takes a proactive, integrated, solutions-based approach to solve public safety problems, prevent crime and improve public confidence in the justice system.

# Community Prosecution Unit: Community Work

- The State's Attorney's Office has been contacted by schools throughout the County to provide additional resources, including but not limited to:
  - TCP/Truancy Prevention Program
  - Presentations on internet safety, cyber bullying, safe teen dating, alcohol safety, and career advancement

# Compulsory Attendance Law

- Parents/guardians can be charged with a criminal offense if a child misses 20% or more unexcused absences
- Convictions involve incarcerations and/or fines
- We do not want to prosecute parents; we want their children to go to school
- The SAO is taking a proactive/diversionary approach by identifying students for the program

# SAO and Truancy

Montgomery County SAO Attorneys participate in a full spectrum of truancy interventions, including:

- The TCP/Truancy Prevention Program
- The Truancy Review Board
  - Follow-up required for cases
- Train Education Facility Officers (EFOs)
- Special attention for juvenile cases related to schools
- Attendance Matters meetings
- Prosecution of Parents for Compulsory Attendance/Truancy violations

# Truancy Prevention Program Growth

- Spring 2010-Spring 2012
  - Served 2 schools: Neelsville and Francis Scott
- 2012-2013
  - Served 2 schools in the Fall, 3 in the Spring
- 2013-2014
  - Served 5 schools in the Fall, 6 in the Spring
- 2014-2015
  - Serving 10 middle schools

# Truancy Prevention Program Expansion: Schools

The Truancy Prevention Program will operate in the following schools in 2014-2015:

- Argyle Middle School
- A. Mario Loiederman Middle School
- Briggs Chaney Middle School
- Francis Scott Key Middle School
- Julius West Middle School
- Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Middle School
- Neelsville Middle School
- Roberto Clemente Middle School
- Shady Grove Middle School
- Silver Spring International Middle School

**All schools are selected in consultation with the Montgomery County Public Schools**

The program will serve over 200 students and their families in 2014-2015

# Truancy Prevention Program Model

## Data-Driven, Targeted Student Selection

- Students with 10-25% unex. absences in 2 marking periods are eligible
- School counselors, PPW, attendance monitor, administrators review list of eligible students to select who would benefit the most
- School staff reaches out to families to secure permission and buy-in
- Teachers, students, parents fill out intake forms

## 10 Weekly Meetings for Participating Students

- Students meet with SAO/Police mentor to informally discuss issues
- Students/Parents meet formally with SAO judge and coordinator, PPW, administrator and counselor to identify problems and solutions
- Student files are updated weekly with attendance, teacher forms, and grades
- Students are held accountable and are rewarded for achievement

## Resources Provided

- Program team collaborates to identify and access resources for problems identified
- SAO mentors/coordinators call home to follow-up on resources, problems, etc
- Incentives provided at each meeting to reward positive behavior
- In-school Pizza Parties and Graduations reward improvement, foster self-esteem and engagement
- Reception at Governor's Mansion/Cty. Courthouse

# University of Baltimore School of Law Truancy Program Longitudinal Study

- The University of Baltimore School of Law conducted a longitudinal study examining the estimated Truancy Court program effects experienced by students at A. Mario Loiederman, Francis Scott Key, Neelsville, Roberto Clemente, and Argyle Middle Schools who participated in the Program. The Truancy Court Program ("TCP") was sponsored by the Montgomery County State's Attorney's Office.
- To estimate the program's effects, a comparison was made between the pre-program (baseline) school attendance records of the participants and their post-program school attendance experience.
- Based on this study, 67% (72 of the 107) students who participated in the Truancy Program at the five middle schools evaluated had improved attendance in the semester or year after their participation compared to before they entered the program.

# University of Baltimore School of Law Truancy Program Longitudinal Study Results

- A. Mario Loiederman Middle School: During the Fall 2013, and the 2013-14 school year, 32 students participated in the program. 75% of the participants continued to reduce their absences after the program.
- Francis Scott Key Middle School: During the 2013-14 school year, 19 students participated in the program. 73.68% of the participants continued to reduce their absences after the program.
- Neelsville Middle School: During the 2013-14 school year, 24 students participated in the program. 54.17% of the participants continued to reduce their absences.
- Roberto Clemente Middle School: During the 2013-14 school year, 13 students participated in the program. 40.00% of the participants had a reduction in absences after completion of the Program.
- Argyle Middle School: During the 2013-14 school year, 19 students participated in the program. 78.94% of the sample experienced a reduction in the absence rate.

**Montgomery County Truancy Court Program:  
Comparison of Pre-Program and Post-Program  
School Absence Experiences of  
School Year 2013-2014 Program Participants**

**March 2015**

**University of Baltimore School of Law**

**Sayra and Neil Meyerhoff Center for Families, Children and the Courts**

**Professor Barbara A. Babb, Director**

**Gloria Danziger, Senior Fellow**

**Dr. C. David Crumpton, Consultant**

## **Overview**

This study examines the pre- and post-program school absences experienced by students at Argyle, Clemente, Key, Loiederman, and Neelsville Middle Schools who participated in the Truancy Court Program (TCP) sponsored by the Montgomery County State's Attorney's Office (MCSAO). To do this a comparison was made between the pre-program (baseline) school attendance records of TCP participants and their post-program school attendance records. The school attendance data that supports this analysis came from the records of Montgomery County Public Schools and was provided to the researchers by MCSAO.

This report includes analysis of the experiences of TCP participants on the following dimensions:

- By school of attendance
- By gender
- By grade during TCP participation
- By ethnicity

## **Methods**

### **Baseline description and measurement**

The baseline (pre-program measurement period) used for the analysis is the rate of school absences for the sample during the school year prior to the school year during which the sample participated in TCP. The school year of program participation is 2013-2014. So, the baseline period is the 2012-2013 school year.

By "rate of school absences" we mean the number of absences divided by the total number school days in the term in question. This is expressed as a percentage – the percentage, or rate, of absences. The aggregated experience of each sample analyzed in this report is expressed as the mean (arithmetic average – the total score divided by the number of scores) rate of the members of each group considered. For students who participate in the program during the TCP Spring 2014 session, the data does not include attendance immediately proximate to program entry. In

that data was only available for the full school year prior to program participation, this was the practicable approach available to the researchers.

To better understand the experience of each group considered, the median, minimum and maximum absence rates among TCP participants are also included. The median score (the middle score of the sample scores) is often more useful than the mean score (the average rate). This is because it is not influenced by the computational impact of extreme high and low measurements. Used in conjunction with the indicated mean, or average rate of the group, the median gives a more complete indication of the central tendency (or the typical rates) of the measurements of each group analyzed. The minimum (the lowest rate) and maximum (the highest rate) measurements for both the mean, or average rate, and the median, or middle score of the sample, offer an idea of the experience extremes of the members of each group considered in the analysis.

#### **Post-program description, measurement, and analysis**

The post-program period used in the comparison is the first term of the 2014-2015 school year. For students who participated in the program during the TCP Fall 2013 session, the data does not include attendance immediately proximate to program entry.

The straightforward pre-post measurement approach utilized in the study, as compared to random assignment experimental design or strong non-experimental designs involving statistically tested comparison groups, does not control threats to internal validity, such as the maturation of the sample and the impact of external events. This approach also offers somewhat limited inferential value regarding our ability to generalize the findings of this study to other settings.

It should be noted that TCP participants for whom complete data was not available and/or who withdrew from Montgomery County Public Schools during the post-program measurement period were excluded from the study.

#### **Indicator of TCP Performance**

A common measure of the effect of social programs is the Cohen's *d* score. The Cohen's *d* score compares the standardized mean scores of the pre- and post-program measurements.

“Standardized” means that the pooled standard deviation of the two groups being compared has been calculated and used in the equation that considers the difference between the means or averages of these groups. In this study, based upon a comparison of pre-program and post-program rates of absences for each group considered, the Cohen’s d score is presented. As suggested by Becker (2000), the Cohen’s d score will be expressed in terms of small, medium, or large program effects. If positive post-program results are not experienced by groups included in the study, this is indicated.

## **Analysis By School**

### **Argyle Middle School**

#### Description of the sample

The sample includes 19 students at Argyle Middle School who participated in the TCP. 11 students included in the sample participated in the program during the Fall 2013 session, and 8 participated in the Spring 2014 session. At the time of their TCP participation, 3 students were in the sixth grade, 7 were in the seventh grade, and 9 were in the eighth grade. 5 of the program participants are boys and 14 are girls.

#### Baseline Measurements

During the baseline period the sample experienced an average rate of absences of 9.22%. The school absence rate ranged from 4.55% to 15.34% among sample members. The median absence rate was 10.80%.

#### Post-program measurement and analysis

During the post-program measurement period (the first term of the 2014-2015 school year), the sample experienced an average absence rate of 9.43%. As compared to the baseline measurement (the 2012-2013 school year), this represents a 2.32% increase in the composite absence rate among the sample members. Among the sample members the post-program school absence rate ranged from 0.00% to 16.98%. Although the composite experience of the sample showed an increase in absence rate for the post-program measurement period, 15 members or 78.94% of the sample experienced a reduction in the absence rate experienced during the post-program measurement period as compared to the baseline rate. It is also notable that the median rate of

absences among Argyle TCP participants during the post-program period was 3.77%. This is a 54.20% reduction in the median rate of absences as compared to the baseline period.

Since the mean post-program rate of absences was higher than the baseline rate, a positive program effect was not in evidence.

### **Clemente Middle School**

#### Description of the sample

The sample includes 13 students at Clemente Middle School who participated in the TCP. 6 students participated in the program during the Fall 2013 session, while 7 participated in the Spring 2014 session. At the time of their TCP participation, 2 students were in the sixth grade, 3 were in the seventh grade, and 8 were in the eighth grade. 6 of the program participants are boys and 7 are girls.

#### Baseline measurement

During the baseline period the sample experienced an average rate of absences of 11.91%. The school absence rate ranged from 7.10% to 28.13% among sample members. The median absence rate was 11.93%.

#### Post-program description, measurement and analysis

During the post-program measurement period the sample experienced an average absence rate of 15.47%. As compared to the baseline measurement this represents a 24.38% increase in the average absence rate among the sample members. Among the sample members the post-program school absence rate ranged from 0.00% to 60.38%. The median absence rate was 21.99%. Six members or 40.00% of the sample experienced a reduction in the absence rate.

Since the Clemente Middle School study group experienced an increase in the rate of post-program school attendance, a positive program effect was not in evidence.

## **Key Middle School**

### Description of the sample

The sample includes 19 students at Key Middle School who participated in the TCP. 13 students participated in the program during the Fall 2013 session, while 6 participated in the Spring 2014 session. At the time of their TCP participation, 2 students were in the sixth grade, 7 were in the seventh grade, and 10 were in the eighth grade. 7 of the program participants are boys and 12 are girls.

### Baseline measurement

During the baseline period the sample experienced an average rate of absences of 10.27%. The school absence rate ranged from 1.42% to 13.35% among sample members. The median absence rate was 8.24%

### Post-program description, measurement and analysis

During the post-program measurement period the sample experienced an average absence rate of 5.76%. As compared to the baseline measurement this represents a 43.89% reduction in the composite absence rate among the sample members. Among the sample members the post-program school absence rate ranged from 0.00% to 16.98%. The median absence rate was 3.77%. Fourteen members or 73.68% of the sample experienced a reduction in the absence rate.

To measure the program effect size, the Cohen's d score was calculated to compare baseline and post-program absence rates. According to Becker (2000), the Cohen's d score of -.9191 indicates a large program effect size.

## **Loiederman Middle School**

### Description of the sample

The sample includes 25 students at Loiederman Middle School who participated in the TCP. 9 students participated in the program during the Fall 2013 session, while 16 participated in the Spring 2014 session. At the time of their TCP participation, 5 students were in the sixth grade, 6 were in the seventh grade, and 14 were in the eighth grade. 8 of the program participants are boys and 17 are girls.

### Baseline measurement

During the baseline period the sample experienced an average rate of absences of 14.30%.

Among the sample members the school absence rate ranged from 1.42% to 26.99%. The median absence rate was 14.20%

### Post-program description, measurement and analysis

During the post-program measurement period the sample experienced a absence rate of 11.70%.

As compared to the baseline measurement this represents an 18.17% reduction in the composite absence rate among the sample members. Among the sample members the post-program school absence rate ranged from 1.89% to 43.40%. The median absence rate was 7.55%. Eighteen students, or 72% of the Loiederman Middle School TCP participants, experienced an improvement in post-program rate of school attendance.

The Cohen's d score was calculated to determine the program effect size. According to Becker (2000), the Cohen's d calculation of  $-.2868$  can be interpreted as between a small and medium effect size.

## **Neelsville Middle School**

### Description of the sample

The sample includes 24 students at Neelsville Middle School who participated in the TCP. 12 students participated in the program during the Fall 2013 session, and 12 participated in the Spring 2014 session. At the time of their TCP participation, 7 students were in the sixth grade, 8 were in the seventh grade, and 9 were in the eighth grade. 16 of the program participants are boys and 8 are girls.

### Baseline measurement

During the baseline period the sample experienced a rate of absences of 29.64%. The school absence rate ranged from 8.24% to 58.81% among sample members. The median absence rate was 17.05%.

### Post-program description, measurement and analysis

During the post-program measurement period the sample experienced an absence rate of 13.44%. As compared to the baseline measurement this represents a 54.64% reduction in the composite absence rate among the sample members. Among the sample members the post-program school absence rate ranged from 0.00% to 54.72%. The median absence rate was 9.43%. Thirteen members or 54.17% of the sample experienced a reduction in the absence rate.

To measure the program effect size, the Cohen's d score was calculated to compare baseline and post-program absence rates. The Cohen's d score of -1.3707 indicates a large program effect size.

### **Summary of Results By School**

The pre- and post-program school absence rate experience of the TCP participants in the subject schools is summarized in the following table.

School	Pre-Program Absence Rate	Post-Program Comparisons			
		Absence Rate	Change	Cohen's d	Effect Size
Argyle MS	9.22%	9.43%	+2.32%	n/a	n/a
Clemente MS	11.91%	15.47%	+24.38%	n/a	n/a
Key MS	10.27%	5.76%	-43.89%	-.9191	Large
Loiederman MS	14.30%	11.70%	-18.17%	-.2868	Between small and medium
Neelsville MS	29.64%	13.44%	-54.64%	-1.3707	Large
All Schools	13.14%	10.63%	-19.10%	-.2590	Between small and medium

### **Analysis By Gender**

#### Description of the sample

This analysis includes 104 boys and girls who participated in the TCP at Argyle, Clemente, Key, Loiederman, and Neelsville Middle Schools during the study period. 61 girls and 43 boys are included in the analysis.

### Baseline measurement

During the baseline period girls experienced an average rate of absences of 12.80%. The median absence rate was 11.65%. The absence rate ranged from 1.42% to 28.13% among girls. During the baseline period boys experienced an average rate of absences of 13.62%. The median absence rate was 11.93%. The school absence rate ranged from 4.26% to 58.81% among boys. Although the mean, maximum, and minimum baseline experiences of girls and boys differ somewhat, the median measurements indicate that the baseline experiences of the groups were similar.

### Post-program description, measurement and analysis

During the post-program measurement period girls experienced an absence rate of 10.24%. As compared to the baseline measurement this represents a 20.04% reduction in the composite absence rate. Among girls the post-program school absence rate ranged from 0.00% to 60.38%. The median absence rate was 7.55%. Over sixty-eight percent of girls experienced a reduction in the absence rate. To measure the program effect size, the Cohen's d score was calculated to compare baseline and post-program absence rates among girls who participated in the TCP. According to Becker (2000), the Cohen's d score of -.2784 indicates a small to medium program effect size.

During the post-program measurement period boys experienced an absence rate of 10.19%. As compared to the baseline measurement this represents a 25.21% reduction in the composite absence rate. Among boys the post-program school absence rate ranged from 0.00% to 54.72%. The median absence rate was 5.66%. Over forty-four percent of boys experienced a reduction in the absence rate. To measure the program effect size, the Cohen's d score was calculated to compare baseline and post-program absence rates among boys who participated in the TCP. According to Becker (2000) the Cohen's d score of -.3558 indicates a small to medium program effect size.

## **Analysis By Grade at Time of Program Participation**

### Description of the sample

This analysis includes 104 students in 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> grades who participated in the TCP at the subject schools. Twenty 6<sup>th</sup> graders, thirty-one 7<sup>th</sup> graders, and fifty-one 8<sup>th</sup> graders are included in the analysis.

### Baseline measurement

During the baseline period 6<sup>th</sup> graders experienced an average rate of absences of 13.15%. The median absence rate was 11.65%. The school absence rate ranged from 1.42% to 28.13% among 6<sup>th</sup> graders.

During the baseline period 7<sup>th</sup> graders experienced an average rate of absences of 12.42%. The median absence rate was 10.80%. The school absence rate ranged from 4.26% to 26.14% among 7<sup>th</sup> graders.

During the baseline period 8<sup>th</sup> graders experienced an average rate of absences of 13.81%. The median absence rate was 12.22%. The school absence rate ranged from 1.42% to 58.81% among 8<sup>th</sup> graders.

### Post-program description, measurement and analysis

During the post-program measurement period 6<sup>th</sup> graders experienced an absence rate of 9.65%. As compared to the baseline measurement this represents a 26.61% reduction in the composite absence rate. Among this group of participants the post-program school absence rate ranged from 0.00% to 60.38%. The median absence rate was 5.66%. Sixteen or 80% of 6<sup>th</sup> graders experienced a reduction in the absence rate. To measure the program effect size, the Cohen's d score was calculated to compare baseline and post-program absence rates. The Cohen's d score of -.3546 is what Becker (2000) describes as between small and medium program effect size.

The post-program measurement period experience of 7<sup>th</sup> graders shows an absence rate of 8.67%. As compared to the baseline measurement this represents a 56.67% reduction in the composite absence rate. Among this group of participants the post-program school absence rate ranged from 0.00% to 20.75%. The median absence rate was 5.66%. Twenty or 64.52% of 7<sup>th</sup> graders experienced a reduction in the absence rate experienced. The Cohen's d score was calculated to

compare baseline and post-program absence rates among 7<sup>th</sup> graders who participated in the TCP. The Cohen's d score of -1.3108 is what Becker (2000) describes as a large program effect size.

During the post-program measurement period 8<sup>th</sup> graders experienced an absence rate of 11.70%. As compared to the baseline measurement this represents a 15.32% reduction in the composite absence rate. Among this group of participants the post-program school absence rate ranged from 0.00% to 54.72%. The median absence rate was 7.55%. Thirty-six or 70.59% of 8<sup>th</sup> graders experienced a reduction in the absence rate. For this group the Cohen's d score was also calculated to compare baseline and post-program absence rates among 8<sup>th</sup> graders who participated in the TCP. The Cohen's d score of -.1998 is described by Becker (2000) as a small program effect size.

#### Comparison of Experiences Among TCP Participants Based on Grade Level

Based upon the percentage of participants experiencing a reduction in the rate of absences from the baseline period to the post-program period, and the Cohen's d program effect size score, 7<sup>th</sup> graders experienced more positive outcomes than did the 6<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade TCP participants. Based upon the amount of change between baseline and post-program aggregate rate of absences, at a 56.67% reduction in the rate of absences, 7<sup>th</sup> graders experienced the greatest positive change. Based upon post-program median rate of absence measurements, the experiences of 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> graders was very similar. All groups experienced positive outcomes assessed on the basis of changes in the mean and median school absence rates and on the Cohen's d scores.

### **Analysis By Ethnicity**

#### **African American Students**

##### Description of the sample

This analysis includes 32 Montgomery County Public School Students identified as "African American." These students represent 30.77% of the total 104 TCP participants included in this study.

### Baseline measurement

During the baseline period the group identified as African American experienced an average rate of absences of 13.96%. The median absence rate was 11.79%. The school absence rate ranged from 5.68% to 58.81% among students in this group.

### Post-program description, measurement and analysis

During the post-program measurement period students identified as African American experienced an absence rate of 9.85%. As compared to the baseline measurement, this represents a 29.44% reduction in the composite absence rate among students in this group. Among these participants the post-program school absence rate ranged from 0.00% to 41.51%. The median absence rate was 6.60%. Twenty-four or 75% of students identified as African American experienced a reduction in the absence rate. The Cohen's d score was calculated to compare baseline and post-program absence rates among students identified as African American who participated in the TCP. The Cohen's d score of -.4350 program is what Becker (2000) describes as a medium program effect size.

## **Hispanic Students**

### Description of the sample

This analysis includes 64 Montgomery County Public School Students identified as "Hispanic." These students represent 61.54% of the total 104 TCP participants included in this study.

### Baseline measurement

During the baseline period the group identified as Hispanic experienced an average rate of absences of 12.59%. The median absence rate was 12.07%. The school absence rate ranged from 1.42% to 26.99% students in this group.

### Post-program description, measurement and analysis

During the post-program measurement period students identified as Hispanic experienced an absence rate of 9.88%. As compared to the baseline measurement, this represents a 21.55% reduction in the composite absence rate. Among this group of participants the post-program school absence rate ranged from 0.00% to 54.72%. The median absence rate was 5.66%. Forty-five or 70.31% of students identified as Hispanic experienced a reduction in the absence rate.

The Cohen's d score was calculated to compare baseline and post-program absence rates among students identified as Hispanic who participated in the TCP. The Cohen's d score of  $-.3188$  program effect size is what Becker (2000) describes as between a small and medium program effect size.

## **Other Ethnic Groups**

### Description of the sample

This analysis includes 8 Montgomery County Public School Students identified as "Caucasian/White," "Asian," and "Multiple Race." Three were identified as Caucasian/White, two as Asian, and three as Multiple Race. These students represent 7.69% of the total 104 TCP participants included in this study.

### Baseline measurement

During the baseline period the group identified as other ethnicities experienced an average rate of absences of 14.31%. The median absence rate was 10.23%. The school absence rate ranged from 4.26% to 28.13% students in this group.

### Post-program description, measurement and analysis

During the post-program measurement period students identified as other ethnicities experienced an absence rate of 19.81%. As compared to the baseline measurement this represents a 38.43% increase in the composite absence rate. Among this group of participants the post-program school absence rate ranged from 3.77% to 60.38%. The median absence rate was 10.38%. Four or 50% of students identified as other ethnicities experienced a reduction in the absence rate. Since there was not a positive program effect the Cohen's d score was not calculated on this group of TCP participants.

## **Composite Results by Gender, Grade and Ethnicity**

The following table summarizes the pre- and post-program school absence rate experience of TCP participants at the subject schools.

Variable	Pre-Program Absence Rate	Post-Program Comparisons			
		Absence Rate	Change	Cohen's d	Effect Size
By Gender					
Girls	12.80%	10.24%	-20.04%	-.2784	Between small and medium
Boys	13.62%	10.19%	25.21%	-.3558	Between small and medium
By Grade					
6 <sup>th</sup> Grade	13.15%	9.65%	-26.61%	-.3546	Between small and medium
7 <sup>th</sup> Grade	12.42 %	8.67%	-56.67%	-1.3108	Large
8 <sup>th</sup> Grade	13.81%	11.70%	-15.32%	-.1998	Between small and medium
By Ethnicity					
African American	13.96%	9.85%	-29.44%	-.4350	Medium
Hispanic	12.59%	9.88%	-21.55%	-.3188	Between small and medium
Other Ethnicity	14.31%	19.81%	+38.43%	n/a	n/a

### Discussion/Summary

This study provides a number of indicators that point to the strength and effectiveness of the TCP. For example:

- Three of the five schools (Key, Loiederman, and Neelsville Middle Schools) showed that the TCP had a significant impact on participants' attendance, with two of the schools exhibiting a "large program effect."
- The TCP is equally effective for boys and girls, although a higher percentage of girls (68%) than boys (44%) reduced their absences.
- The TCP is most effective among the seventh graders in this sample. This is significant, given the importance of the seventh grade as a pivotal time in a child's progression from elementary school to high school.
- It should be noted that, even in those schools where the analysis does not show a positive program effect, the majority of students who participated in the TCP substantially improved their attendance. See, for example, Argyle Middle School, where there was a 54% reduction in the median rate of absences, signifying the more than half of the TCP participants reduced their number of absences by more than 50%. This reflects a

problem in many TCP data analyses: quantitative information can easily be skewed by one or two students who continue to miss many days of school, while many others dramatically decrease their number of absences.

In summary, the existing data indicate that the TCP has a demonstrable positive impact on school attendance. It is likely that, with more data, an analysis of Montgomery County's current Truancy Prevention Project (TPP) would yield interesting and useful information about the program's approach and effectiveness. For instance, additional data would enable us to analyze:

- The process implemented in each TCP school, taking into account differences in numbers of students involved, composition of the program team, and mentors, among others.
- The method and implementation of data-gathering, including documentation of the TPP session, notes taken and distributed following the session, recruitment practices, and decision to enroll students in more than one session, among others.
- The impact of program graduation on grades and behavior, in addition to attendance.
- The program's immediate impact on attendance in the same school year as program participation.

We believe that the results discussed in this report provide valuable and important information about the TCP. We hope that the Montgomery County State's Attorney and the Truancy Prevention Project give serious consideration to continuing the critical statistical analysis of program effectiveness.