

SPOKANE COUNTY'S COMMUNITY TRUANCY BOARD SUCCESS

Overview

The West Valley School District Community Truancy Board (WVSD CTB) was established in 1996 in response to the Becca bill. The goal of a Community Truancy Board is successful school re-engagement and renewed progress toward school completion for students and increases in graduation rates. The WVSD CTB is a program that has been proven successful in all of these areas.

Design

Commissioned by the Juvenile Court and funded by the Models for Change initiative, Washington State University documented the historical development, operation and effectiveness of the West Valley School District Community Truancy Board. The report concluded:

- Students who attended WVSD had a **higher rate overall of graduating or obtaining a GED** and correspondingly lower dropout and transfer rates than truant students in comparison districts.
- The WVSD CTB is an **effective and promising intervention for truancy**.
- The WVSD CTB is a **replicable and sustainable intervention for truancy**.

In 2007, through additional grant support, Spokane County Juvenile Court placed a Truancy Specialist in the West Valley School District. The Truancy Specialist implemented the *Check and Connect* program, a best practice approach to truancy reduction. The Truancy Specialist provided follow-up with students and parents to assist with compliance of the WVSD CTB recommendations. The evaluation report on the Truancy Specialist project found:

- The incorporation of a Truancy Specialist and the *Check and Connect* model **substantially enhanced the effectiveness of the WVSD CTB**.

Outcomes

As a result of the WVSD CTB and Truancy Specialist, substantial numbers of WVSD CTB cases were kept out of the formal court process. An important benefit of this impact is that it allows judicial officers more time with cases that require additional attention (e.g. chronic truancy cases that are not responding to alternatives).

County Wide Impacts

- **Before** the implementation of the WVSD CTB - *Check and Connect* program, the court set an average of 539 Fact Finding hearings per year (school years 2004-2007). For the same period, the court set an average of 250 Contempt hearings.
- **After** the implementation of the WVSD CTB -- Check and Connect program in September 2007, the average number of **Fact Finding hearings** being set county-wide dropped to 341, or a **37% reduction** and the average number of **Contempt Orders** county-wide fell to 137, or a **45% reduction**. **These reductions occurred even though the average numbers of petitions filed were essentially the same.

WVSD Specific Impacts

- In 1996, 68% of the WVSD truancy cases ended up in court.
- In 2010, 93.5% of the WVSD cases were successfully mediated at the district level.
- Only 1 youth (**less than 1%**) was the subject of a **Contempt Order** during the last two years.

Replication efforts

A Community Truancy Board is an attractive program for replication because start up and sustainability costs can be minimal through community collaboration and with reallocation of existing resources. CTB Replication efforts are underway and include: East Valley School District, Spokane Public Schools, and Mead School District in Spokane County, and Jefferson County and Okanogan Counties in WA State.