

*CFCC receives significant new funding to expand and enhance the Truancy Court Program in 2012-2013*

CFCC has received unprecedented support from public and private sources to expand the scope and breadth of its Truancy Court Program (TCP). CFCC is operating the TCP in eight Baltimore City elementary, middle, K-8, and high schools and two Montgomery County middle schools. TCP students and schools benefit from, among other innovations, a “Kids and Theater” program, a yearly attendance “contest,” school-wide assemblies, interactive workshops for parents, and special training on truancy-related issues for faculty and staff.

Over thirty Baltimore City public schools applied to have the TCP operate in their schools. CFCC received funding for eight schools: National Academy Foundation High & Prep, Patterson High School, Violetville Elementary/Middle School, Collington Square Elementary/Middle School, New Era Academy, Margaret Brent Elementary/Middle School, Walter P. Carter Elementary/Middle School, and Historic Samuel C. Taylor Elementary School. In addition, in a move spearheaded by Montgomery County Councilmember Valerie Ervin, chair of the Council’s Education Committee, the Council included funding in the Montgomery County State’s Attorney’s budget to operate the program in two middle schools.

For the first time, CFCC will develop and implement faculty workshops during professional development days that will train teachers and staff on how to address truancy and the reasons that underlie truant behavior among their students. In addition, in another first, CFCC will introduce school-wide assemblies designed to make students aware of the importance of school attendance and to encourage them to address issues that prevent them from regular school attendance.

The recent expansion of the TCP has brought increased visibility to the program. CFCC is accountable to its funders, the schools and students it serves, and the University of Baltimore for reporting accurately and expansively on the TCP’s effectiveness. Consequently, CFCC has begun to develop a comprehensive evaluation strategy for the TCP that includes comparison control groups, a longitudinal study of a group of TCP participants, wider and more detailed attitudinal surveys, and a more detailed breakdown of participant characteristics. CFCC anticipates that its new TCP evaluation strategy can result in the ability to better target students who would benefit most from the TCP and to serve those students more effectively.

In response to the immense need on the part of many TCP students for more individualized therapy and case management, CFCC has added a social worker to its TCP team this year. The problems that so often underlie truancy – serious health issues, abuse and neglect, gang violence, bullying, substance abuse and addiction, grief, and extreme poverty, to name a few – cry out for

more direct and forceful interventions than the TCP team has been able to offer until now. A trained and licensed social worker can offer the direct intervention needed frequently by families and children coping with the problems that cause truant behavior. Since family involvement is essential to the success of the TCP, the TCP social worker also serves as a liaison between home and school and promotes effective community resource utilization.

The 2012-2013 TCP is shaping up to be the strongest and most effective program in the TCP's eight-year history. Offering a unique combination of training, services, volunteer judicial oversight, and evaluation, the TCP continues to provide powerful interventions into the lives of truant students. The program allows them to become productive members of their schools and their communities, graduate on time, and fulfill the goals they often articulate for the first time during their TCP meetings.