

**UNIVERSITY OF BALTIMORE SCHOOL OF LAW
CENTER FOR FAMILIES, CHILDREN AND THE COURTS
TRUANCY COURT PROGRAM**

Background

- The University of Baltimore School of Law's Sayra and Neil Meyerhoff Center for Families, Children and the Courts (CFCC) established and began operating the Truancy Court Program (TCP) in February, 2005, with funding from the Charles Crane Family Foundation. The TCP's FY 2013 funders included the Maryland Administrative Office of the Courts, the Maryland Governor's Office of Crime Control and Prevention, the Charles Crane Family Foundation, the Zanyl and Isabelle Krieger Fund, and AT&T.
- The TCP has served 1500 students in 30 Baltimore City public schools since Spring 2005.
- The TCP has served 350 students in Montgomery, Anne Arundel, and Baltimore Counties since Fall 2009.
- 22 Baltimore City Circuit and District court judges and masters have volunteered to serve as TCP judges.
- CFCC received \$500,000 in funding from the FY 2009 Omnibus Appropriations Act to replicate its TCP. Maryland Senator Barbara A. Mikulski, chair of the Commerce, Justice, Science Appropriations Subcommittee, led the effort in the U.S. Senate to secure the funding for the TCP, backed by strong support from Senator Ben Cardin and Congressman Elijah Cummings.
- The program, which is strictly voluntary on the part of students and their families, consists of ten weekly in-school meetings per session and capitalizes on the stature and authority of the judge.
- Participants at each meeting include: a volunteer judge, a team of school representatives, a mentor, a University of Baltimore law student, a law school supervisor, the child, and his/her parent.
- The TCP is an early intervention model and targets students who are "soft" truants - students who have from five to twenty unexcused absences - in the belief that this group still has academic, social, and emotional connections to the school.
- The TCP is also a preventive program, as it aims to identify and address the root causes of truancy, often linking children and their families to needed social services and other supports, in an effort to keep children in school.
- In the 2011-2012 school year, eighty percent of TCP participants graduated from the program, as measured by at least a two-thirds decrease in unexcused absences and/or tardies and improved classroom behavior and academic performance. Participants overall averaged a sixty-three percent decrease in unexcused absences and a forty-three percent decrease in tardies during the program.

Where

- CFCC operated the grant-funded TCP in eight Baltimore City schools during the 2012-2013 school year: Historic Samuel C. Taylor Elementary, Patterson High School, National Academy Foundation High and Prep, Walter P. Carter Elementary/Middle, Violetville Elementary/Middle, New Era Academy, Margaret Brent Elementary/Middle, and Collington Square.
- CFCC operated the TCP in three Montgomery County public schools during the 2012-2013 school year: Francis Scott Key Middle, Loiederman Middle, and Neelsville Middle.

Truancy Court Program Features

- A Mentoring Program for both students and parents participating in the TCP, including character-building classes and individual mentoring.
- A Volunteer Initiative that brings volunteer mentors, tutors, and others from the University of Baltimore community to the TCP schools.
- A Mediation Program that offers mediation services to students and their families provided by supervised University of Baltimore School of Law clinical law students.
- Dedicated arts programs ("Kids and Cameras" and "Kids and the Arts") for TCP students.
- Weekly incentives or rewards for participating students.
- Graduations that reward students who demonstrate a sixty-five percent increase in attendance and improved classroom behavior and academic performance.

For More Information, contact:

Professor Barbara A. Babb, Director, Center for Families, Children and the Courts (CFCC), 410-837-5661, bbabb@ubalt.edu;
Gloria Danziger, Senior Fellow, CFCC, 410-837-5613, gdanziger@ubalt.edu; Andrea Bento, TCP Manager, CFCC, 410-837-5614, afbento@ubalt.edu