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Juvenile Court Programs

Fulton County Juvenile Court Educational Advocate Kimberly Mills recently participated in a national policy initiative related to the educational needs of court-involved youth with disabilities and other academic, emotional and cognitive challenges. The effort became known as the Juvenile Justice/Special Education (JJ/SE) Shared Agenda. The effort involves collaboration between the National Association of State Directors of Special Education and the National Disability Rights Network. The resulting product was a document entitled “Tools for Promoting Educational Success and Reducing Delinquency” (aka Tools for Success).

Mills was the writer and workgroup leader for Step 7, which included strategies for court-involved youth. Programs implemented by the Fulton County Juvenile Court were featured in “Tools for Success.” Two of those programs include:

Educational Advocacy Program (a “Best Practice”)

The Fulton County Juvenile Court’s Educational Advocacy initiative (EA) is an interagency collaboration. The program is a tool to address the educational needs of at-risk youth who have disabilities and other educational concerns, and to keep them from entering the juvenile justice system or returning to the system.

Program resource needs include:

- A full-time educational advocate with knowledge of court special education law, best educational practices and issues related to court involvement of youth with disabilities;
- Multidisciplinary team that includes school special-education personnel, attorneys, parents, researchers, and social service providers;
- Juvenile Court support to address the educational needs and rights of youth with disabilities, both diagnosed and undiagnosed; and
- Local school district (LEA) support of efforts to advocate on the youth’s behalf.

The EA initiative successfully met 25 of 26 program outcomes as defined by a logic model that measures performance against predetermined outcomes in relation to children, families and system outcomes.

Truancy Intervention Program Georgia, Inc (a Promising Practice)

Truancy is one of the first and best predictors of future delinquent behavior and is considered a gateway to a life of criminal activity.

The Truancy Intervention Project Georgia (TIP) is a program serving children ages 5-15 declared truant in the City of Atlanta and Fulton County public school systems. Founded in 1991, TIP provides positive intervention services to children reported as truant. It offers at-risk children a second chance at success by pairing them with trained volunteers from the community. One strength of the program is the degree to which the volunteer works with the child and family at the school level.

Because truancy usually is a symptomatic behavior of other issues, TIP volunteers determine the root causes of a client's truancy, and then work to resolve those problems and meet a client's needs so the client can return to school and be successful. The program helps clients to obtain daily necessities (e.g. clothing, water heat, transportation) as well as long-term needs (e.g. drug and psychiatric treatment, tutoring, children of the TIP project participants).

Since 1992, over 3,400 children have been placed in the program. In 1996, TIP began "exporting" the TIP model to other communities throughout the state and country that were interested in replicating the program in their area. TIP has been recognized on the state and national level.

Excerpts were obtained from the following source:

JJ/SE Shared Agenda, *Tools for Promoting Educational Success and Reducing Delinquency*, NASDSE & NDRN, Washington, DC: January 20007.