

## TRUANCY MEDIATION PROGRAM “Helpful Hints for Schools”

Listed below are some best practices that we have learned along the way which have helped to increase the effectiveness of truancy mediation.

### Scheduling a truancy mediation:

- Contact the parent or guardian of the student by telephone or in person to schedule a date and time they are available to attend a mediation. Attendance at mediation by the parent is usually better if the parent has had a say in the scheduling process. This improves the parent's cooperation as well by showing respect for their schedule.
- Confirm the parent's attendance at truancy mediation by sending a letter/email/text message or by making a reminder phone call the day before the mediation.
- Make sure the parents and student receive the *Truancy Mediation Program Information for Youth & Parents* information sheet. This can be mailed, e-mailed, or given in person to the parent. Parents are less apprehensive or defensive and better prepared when they better understand the truancy mediation process. Some schools use this information sheet to talk to parents about truancy mediation when they first approach them with the suggestion to mediate.
- Many school administrators have support staff schedule the mediations. Administrators' schedules are very busy and often scheduling a mediation gets “put off” to deal with more pressing issues.

### At the truancy mediation:

- Holding the mediation in a private room (e.g. conference room, spare office) free from interruptions and distractions works best. The room should be large enough to accommodate 6-10 people.
- The school administration's presence is vital to the process. Please make yourself (or a proxy) available to attend the entire mediation session. School counselors should also attend the mediation since students and families often need the counselor's services or a referral to an community agency. The most comprehensive plans are created by teams, not just one person, because they each bring something from their area of expertise. These additional participants could be present for only part of the mediation, if need be.
- Be familiar with available resources within the school district and community that can help students and families. Many students/families have problems or issues that require outside agency or school services and support to effectively resolve the attendance issue or problem.

### After the truancy mediation:

- Tracking and follow-up are necessary to ensure success! The truancy mediation is a great starting point to deal with attendance issues but it is only a one-time intervention. Schools that track attendance, on at least a weekly basis, following a mediation have the best results. This allows the school to catch non-compliance with the agreement early on so additional measures can be taken. It also allows the school to reinforce positive behavior by recognizing the student if he/she is keeping the agreement.
- Some mediation agreements may need to be “tweaked” depending on the student. Maybe a solution didn’t quite work as planned but could be changed slightly to make it work!
- Some students don’t comply with the agreement. If you need to refer a student to court for truancy make sure a copy of the mediation agreement is attached to the referral. This will help the juvenile court workers and judges decide what action they should take next. Additionally, the court can see what the student and family agreed to do but didn’t follow through with.