

Travis County Juvenile Justice Alternative Education Program (JJAEP)

Our goal is to provide a safe educational environment, competency development, behavioral accountability, self-discipline, and specialized education for students expelled from Travis County public schools in accordance with Chapter 37 of the Texas Education Code.

INTRODUCTION

The Juvenile Justice Alternative Education Program (JJAEP) provides for the education of students who have been expelled from a public school in accordance with Chapter 37 of the Texas Education Code. The Travis County JJAEP was organized in response to the State legislative mandate issued with the passage of Senate Bill 1 in 1995 and Chapter 37 of the Texas Education Code. The intent of the legislation is to remove from public schools students who commit specific offenses on school campuses or who are expelled for serious misbehavior as defined by Chapter 37 of the Texas Education Code. These offenses are listed at the end of this section. The mission of the JJAEP is to enable students who have been expelled to achieve academic progress by at least one grade level while addressing their behavioral and emotional needs in a safe and supportive environment. There are 31 JJAEPs (26 mandatory and 5 discretionary) currently operating across the state. The Texas Juvenile Justice Department (TJJD) provides oversight to all JJAEPs in accordance with Title 37, Chapter 348 of the Texas Administrative Code.

The Travis County Juvenile Probation Department is responsible for the operation of the Travis County JJAEP. The Program Administrator serves as program and contract monitor, as well as provides supervision for the Juvenile Probation Officers on site. The Juvenile Probation Officers provide daily supervision, security, and assist in the development of transition plans for students to insure a successful transition to and from the home school district. The Juvenile Probation Officers also serve as liaisons between the Juvenile Probation Department, JJAEP, and the nine Travis County independent school districts that are served by the JJAEP (Austin, Del Valle, Eanes, Leander, Manor, Lago Vista, Lake Travis, Pflugerville, and Round Rock). In addition, a licensed therapist serves as the program's mental health counselor and is responsible for coordinating and facilitating the daily group-counseling curriculum (Dialectical Behavior Therapy) which addresses a wide range of important topics including mindfulness, distress tolerance, interpersonal effectiveness and emotion regulation skills.

The Travis County Juvenile Probation Department contracts with the Austin Independent School District (AISD) to provide the educational and academic counseling component of the program, which includes core academics, credit recovery, special education services, pre-vocational training and career exploration. All academic classes are taught by teachers who are certified by the State of Texas and academic counseling is provided to individual students by a licensed school counselor.

The JJAEP Executive Committee is made up of Superintendents and representatives from each participating school district, as well as representatives from the Travis County Juvenile Probation Department, and AISD. This committee, with guidance from the Texas Juvenile Justice Department and the Travis County Juvenile Board, serves in a planning and advisory capacity to the JJAEP.

EDUCATIONAL COMPONENT

The Travis County JJAEP adheres to the standards set forth in Chapter 348 of Title 37 of the Texas Administrative Code. As such, JJAEP strives to provide appropriate and individualized educational services to students in the program. JJAEPs are required to have at least one certified teacher per program and an overall instructional staff-to-student ratio of no more than 1-24. The Program Administrator shall assure that course instruction is consistent with the essential knowledge and skills of each subject of the foundation curriculum as defined by the State Board of Education under Chapter 28 of the Texas Education Code. Students with disabilities who are

placed in the JJAEP shall be afforded education services determined by a duly constituted admissions, review, and dismissal (ARD) committee to be appropriate for the student to receive a free and appropriate public education as defined by federal and state laws. All students shall take the statewide assessments (i.e., STAAR, EOC, TELPAS) as required under 39.023 of the Texas Education Code. In addition to required statewide testing, all students will be assessed in the areas of reading and math within 15 days of enrollment and will be post-tested if enrolled for a period of at least 75 days to measure students' academic progress. Based on pre-testing during admission, students will participate in an individualized curriculum designed to help students become more invested in the classroom in an effort to reduce misbehavior and increase class participation. One-on-one and small group tutoring is available for those students performing below grade level. Students will also have the opportunity to participate in credit recovery and credit acceleration as deemed appropriate. JJAEP Teachers are also specifically trained to assist students in identifying and modifying behaviors that have been identified as inappropriate in the classroom at their home school. The teaching staff are the first line of intervention in redirecting students' inappropriate classroom behavior and helping them to develop more positive and pro-social skills.

THERAPEUTIC COMPONENT

The Travis County JJAEP Counselors coordinates with every client and family upon admission to determine the primary academic and behavior goals to be addressed in the student's Individual Student Service Plan (ISSP). The Counselors then provide weekly individual counseling to students and make recommendations and referrals to appropriate community resources as needed. The Counselors also lead daily Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) groups, which address a wide range of important topics including mindfulness, distress tolerance, interpersonal effectiveness and emotion regulation skills. In addition to the DBT curriculum, the Counselors provide life-skills groups which focus on various issues including, but not limited to, thinking errors, anger management, substance abuse education, communication, problem solving and healthy relationships in order to help students develop and practice positive and pro-social skills that will aid in their transition back to their home school. The therapeutic component is supported and implemented daily by all staff members of the JJAEP.

LEADERSHIP LEVEL SYSTEM & PBIS

The Travis County JJAEP operates on a leadership level system that promotes student accountability, positive behavior, and positive leadership. Every student has the opportunity to advance in level from Orientation, to Bronze, to Silver, and finally Gold level by demonstrating the following level principles:

- Showing respect towards peers and staff.
- Maintaining a positive attitude.
- Following staff's first directives.
- Participating in all program activities.
- Helping others when needed.
- Holding peers accountable.
- Giving and receiving appropriate feedback.

Every student enters JJAEP at Orientation level and after a period of two consecutive weeks with appropriate behavior, students may petition to their peers and staff to advance to the next leadership level. Peers offer feedback to the petitioning student and JJAEP staff members vote on each petitioning student. If the team determines that the petitioning student has adhered to the level principles, then the student will advance. If, however, the team is not in agreement on advancement, the student may re-petition the following week. Each level comes with new responsibilities and new privileges.

The JJAEP also utilizes Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS) to address and modify students' behavior. PBIS is an evidence-based, school-wide practice designed to reduce or eliminate negative behavior through the identification and encouragement of positive behaviors. PBIS is a multi-tiered approach that is designed to improve the social, emotional, and academic outcomes for all students.

COMMUNITY SERVICE

Travis County JJAEP students have various opportunities to participate in community service on-campus. In order to be eligible to earn community service hours at JJAEP, students must demonstrate consistent positive behavior, be passing all classes, and have good attendance. The Juvenile Probation Officers are responsible for logging all earned CSR hours and will provide documentation of earned hours to supervising JPOs.

TRANSITION PLANNING & DISCHARGE

The Travis County JJAEP Juvenile Probation Officers and Counselors, with input from the student and parents/guardians and teaching staff, are responsible for developing a transition plan for all students exiting the program. The transition plan will include recommendations for any community programs and services that may benefit the student and family, along with recommendations for the home school. The transition plan will also include a summary of the student's academic and behavioral progress while attending the JJAEP.

Approximately two weeks prior to completion of the term of expulsion, the Juvenile Probation Officers will schedule a transition meeting with a representative from the home school, the parents/guardians, Counselors, supervising Probation Officer, and Program Director and Administrator to discuss the student's performance at JJAEP and to finalize the student's transition plan. Upon successful completion of the program, copies of the transition plan, along with academic records including grades and attendance reports, will be provided to the home school and supervising Probation Officer.

CONTACT US

If you would like to learn more about the Travis County JJAEP, please contact:

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