

Carlsbad Municipal Schools Drop Out and Truancy Prevention Plan

Eddy County's most recent Youth Risk & Resiliency Survey (YRRS) results for NM show children (middle and high school level participated in the survey) in Eddy County are at a greater risk than most other areas in our state related to at-risk behaviors, and are in need of supports to improve quality of life, educational opportunities, and health and safety. It will take our entire community to support and improve the current issues impacting positive opportunities for children in our region, and I am confident Governor Martinez' visit to Carlsbad will bring attention to the much needed community involvement and support and be the desired catalyst for improvement.

In direct response to the YRRS and local data, the Carlsbad Municipal Schools developed the Community Truancy Action Committee (CTAC). Members of the CTAC actively participate in our efforts to reduce/prevent truancy and drop-out rates.

CTAC is made up of volunteer members and organizations in the community of Carlsbad such as: CYFD, JPPO, Teen Court, judicial system representation (District Attorney's office, magistrate, municipal, etc.), local police and sheriff department, Eddy County DWI Task Force, Anti-Drug & Gang Coalition, local mental health agencies, United Way of Carlsbad & South Eddy County, local agencies who provide basic human needs (food, shelter, medical, clothing, etc.), all school district social workers/counselors, teachers, administrators, and other community volunteers with a vested interest in educational and basic wellness of students and parents within the community of Carlsbad.

The Carlsbad Municipal School District has developed an in-depth prevention and intervention program utilizing local agencies as resources, to actually identify and address the underlying causes of student truancy, academic failure, and drop-out rates. Truancy Intervention Court was developed to identify and address "students and families in need of services/supports". The process is as follows:

After three "unexcused" absences, the student/guardian meet with the principal and school social worker/counselor to explain the NM Compulsory Attendance Law, discuss the importance of attendance, allow parents/students to explain reasons for absences and in a safe atmosphere, request supports or interventions to prevent additional unexcused absences. An attendance contract is signed, interventions are implemented, as appropriate, and most behaviors or lack of basic needs, causing truancy issues, are identified and addressed at this level, and the student is no longer in need of additional truancy prevention action.

Upon a fifth (to ninth) "unexcused" absence, students and guardians are required to attend Truancy Intervention Court. School officials present evidence of absences and what interventions have already been provided/offered to the student or family. Students and parents appear before the CTAC in confidence, and opportunity is given for the student/family to explain the possible causes of continued truancy, needs are identified, resources are provided as a solution to support improved attendance. Many students may be required to appear before the CTAC at Truancy Intervention Court more than once if The district and the CTAC have discovered that most truancy/attendance problems are symptoms of an underlying lack of basic needs (clothing, food, shelter, healthcare, etc.), homelessness, students living without a responsible guardian, poverty, lack of access to or knowledge of basic health care, lack of transportation, family unemployment, drug or alcohol usage, bullying, lack of school supplies, and other basic impediments to student success. After hearing the needs of the student/guardian, the district in collaboration with the CTAC, will recommend, refer, and even provide resources IMMEDIATELY to the student and family. Examples of immediate supports may include: Back Packs for Hunger, school supplies, free/reduced lunch applications, Medicaid referral forms/processes,

school transportation request forms, city transit tickets, new clothing, shoes, and other basic need items kept on-hand from supporting agencies, United Way 211 resources, or other community-based resource. Other supports or consequences could be accountability-based for the student and/or parent, requiring parents to sign-in their child every morning at least 15 minutes prior to the start of school, Before/after school tutoring, referral to attend the alternative school- which provides students and families additional counseling/wrap-around services during the school-day, credit recovery, life skills education, intensive and individualized behavioral and academic interventions, night school, credit recovery virtual component, and after-school programming participation.

Carlsbad Municipal Schools' Saturday School requirement may be assigned by the CTAC (or a magistrate judge if the case has been officially filed for non-compliance of the NM Compulsory Attendance Law) for students and parents to attend together, if appropriate, upon their first or second appearance to Truancy Intervention Court. Saturday School provides students with certified teaching staff to assist with absent or make-up assignments, instructional interventions and supports, and one-on-one tutoring. Parents are required to attend with the child to receive support from school or community officials. Parents are given assistance in completing necessary forms required for receiving supports within the school or community, they also attend educational sessions with their child related to attendance law, graduation requirements, services offered within the school or community, how to monitor grades, seek academic support, and participate in life skills sessions that include drug and alcohol use prevention, financial literacy, healthy living and eating, and overall success skills necessary to help their child be successful in school and community. Community members attend and provide support during Saturday Schools and other opportunities to assist parents with improved parenting skills.

CTAC was first implemented during the 2015-2016 school year with 100% participation of identified students/parents. Data has provided overwhelming positive results demonstrating a confirmed need for community involvement and participation in the educational process beyond just the classroom, addressing the needs of the "whole child" and family as a benefit to the community of Carlsbad

The local United Way provided an emerging need grant to support the CTAC program as well as the establishment of a full-time District "Preventionist"/Interventionist, whose role is specifically, to provide interventions and develop preventions for at-risk students/families in our community through participation in community support agencies. The district preventionist uses district and community data to identify at-risk students in need of emotional, mental, academic or physical supports, providing referrals for appropriate interventions for students and families, and supports the district by serving as a liaison, bridging schools and the community in an effort to collaboratively address the issues impacting children and families in Carlsbad.

During the 2015 legislative session, the Carlsbad Municipal School District representatives collaborated with NMPED (Matt Pahl) to develop a bill on truancy prevention, carried by Legislators Townsend and Hall that passed the House of Representatives. The CTAC, Truancy Intervention Court, and other community-involvement initiatives were included within the bill, and we are hopeful that with continued collaboration, this initiative can serve as an example of the importance and benefit of community involvement in supporting students and families in need, thus providing school districts and communities with improved strategies creating greater success in decreasing truancy, improving the lives of children, and therefore, improving overall community success.