TRIBAL YOUTH AND TRUANCY PREVENTION RESOURCE SHEET

OFFICE OF JUVENILE JUSTICE AND DELINQUENCY PREVENTION TRIBAL YOUTH RESOURCE CENTER

Supporting Student Success through Truancy and Chronic Absence Prevention

Tribal Youth and Truancy Prevention Resource Sheet

SUPPORTING STUDENT SUCCESS THROUGH TRUANCY AND CHRONIC ABSENCE PREVENTION

Truancy and Chronic Absenteeism can have both immediate and long-term impacts for individual youth, communities, and broader society. Programs to support truancy prevention and chronic absenteeism amongst Tribal Youth are more important than ever.

- *Tribal Youth in the Education System:* The American Indian Alaska Native (AI/AN) population is around 2.9 million or about 0.9 of the total US population.[i] About 32% of Natives are under the age of 18, and the AI/AN population from birth to age 24 makes up about 42% of the total AI/AN population.[ii] About 90% of all AI/AN students attend non-Tribal public schools and about 8% attend schools administered by the Bureau of Indian Affairs.[iii]

- *Concerning Trends:* Data indicate that AI/AN are the lowest performing students in any category.[iv] AI/AN youth are disproportionately suspended and expelled, representing 1% of the student population, but 2% of all out-of-school suspensions and 3% of expulsions.[v] A 2018 Government Accountability Report noted that AI students have greater attendance problems than other groups and had the highest rates of chronic absenteeism in school year 2013-2014 compared to students of other races.[vi]

- **So** *why is truancy prevention important?* Of course, most individuals can agree that education is important, but addressing chronic absenteeism and truancy is critical. "Truancy and chronic absenteeism are often stepping-stones to dropping out of school before graduation, have consequences for children, the adults these children will become, and the society in which they live.[vii] Further, truancy is widely acknowledged as problematic due to its societal impact. Truancy has been clearly identified as one of the early warning signs that youth potentially are headed for delinquent activity, social isolation, or educational failure.[viii]
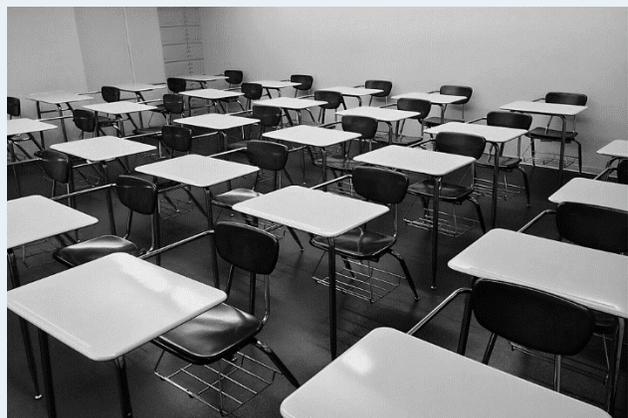
What are some of the impacts of truancy and chronic absenteeism?

- *Short-term impacts on students:* Students who are truant often have lower grades, need to repeat grades more often, have higher rates of expulsion and have lower rates of high school graduation.[ix]

- *Long-term impacts on students:* Adults who reported frequent truancy as youth are more likely than others to have poor mental and physical heath, work in low paying jobs, live in poverty, utilize the welfare system extensively, have children with problem behaviors, and/or be incarcerated.[x]

- *So where do we start?* Understanding and identifying existing issues within the community can assist with successful truancy prevention and resource program development. Connecting with programs that have successfully implemented truancy prevention programs and seeking guidance is also helpful. Continuing education and growth for existing programs can assist with long-term program evaluation and future sustainability. Integrating support for families, increasing engagement, and addressing trauma in both the school and program-services settings may also support a successful truancy prevention program.

What are key elements to an effective truancy prevention program?

- **Parent/Guardian involvement:** Parent/guardian involvement is an essential element to support an effective truancy prevention program. The National School Safety Center identified parent involvement in all truancy and prevention activities as one of the five primary elements of a community and educational anti-truancy strategy.

- **Continuum of services, including meaningful incentives, consequences, and support:** Programs should provide resources and support that engage youth and consider needs and strengths of youth who are engaged in truancy. Truancy courts and programs should offer incentives and rewards for positive increases in attendance and should address ongoing truancy with the youth and family in meaningful ways. Research indicates that zero tolerance policies are generally ineffective. For example, "suspending students from school for truancy is not effective and does not promote pro-school attitudes among students."[xi]

- **Collaboration with community resources- including law enforcement, mental health services, mentoring and social services:** While more time consuming, developing partnerships and individual service plans to support a holistic response to youth needs may bring about positive outcomes in truancy prevention.[xii] A true comprehensive approach will address "every factor that affects truancy, including transportation, mental health, family settings, and school climate.[xiii]

- **School administration support and commitment to keeping youth in the educational mainstream:** Engagement with local school administration is essential to developing

effective referral services for Tribal programs. As indicated, a vast majority of Tribal youth do not attend Tribal schools. Therefore, Tribal program staff should be prepared to develop strong partnerships with local school officials in order to streamline referral for available services within a truancy prevention program. Local leadership and stakeholders should be engaged early and on-going in order to develop memorandum of understanding, letters of support, or other necessary administrative supports to engage local partners.

- **Ongoing evaluation:** Evaluation and assessment are important steps in the development of any program. Truancy programs should engage in assessment processes to determine the helpfulness of implemented services and to track both long-term and short-term outcomes to ensure that services offered to youth promote positive results.

Check out some resources to assist with understanding truancy and prevention program development:

- "Truancy Prevention," Developmental Services Group, Inc., Literature Review, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, https://www.ojjdp.gov/mpg/litreviews/truancy_prevention.pdf, (2010)

- "Truancy Prevention Efforts in School-Community Partnerships, National Center for Mental Health Promotion and Youth Violence Prevention," http://crisisresponse.promoteprevent.org/publications/prevention-briefs/truancy-prevention-efforts-school-community-partnerships, (2012)

- "Comprehensive Tribal Truancy Prevention Project," Case Study, La Courte Oreilles Band's Comprehensive Tribal Truancy Prevention Project, Tribal Access to Justice Innovation http://www.tribaljustice.org/places/juvenile-justice/comprehensive-truancy-prevention-project-2/ See also the Pascua Yaqui, "Attendance Achievement Program," http://www.tribaljustice.org/places/juvenile-justice/attendance-achievement-program/

> *What creative approaches will your team utilize to support youth truancy prevention?*

- "Addressing Chronic Absence," Strategies for School Sites, Attendance Works, https://www.attendanceworks.org/chronic-absence/addressing-chronic-absence/

- **Get Technical Assistance and Training:** The Tribal Youth Resource Center can assist you with a wealth of resources, support, materials, training, and guidance related to truancy prevention. By accessing useful examples/resources, your team can get a head start on the development of a truancy prevention program.

For more information, resources or support please contact the Tribal Youth Resource Center.
Email us at TribalYouth@TLPI.org or visit www.TribalYouth.org

[i] "Indian Country Demographics," National Congress of American Indians, http://www.ncai.org/about-tribes/demographics Accessed September 2019.

[ii] *Id.*

[iii] "National Indian Education Statistics," citing Status and trends in the education of American Indians and Alaska Natives: 2008 (NCES 2008-084). Washington, DC: Government Printing Office http://www.niea.org/our-story/history/information-on-native-students/

[iv] Bowers, Amy, Tribal Education Departments Report, Tribal Education Departments National Assembly, Native American Rights Fund, Tribal Education Departments National Assembly. 2010 https://www.narf.org/nill/resources/education/reports/tednareport2011.pdf

[v] White House Native Youth Report, Executive Office of the President, 2014. https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/default/files/docs/20141129nativeyouthreport_final.pdf

[vi] GAO Report to Congressional Requesters, March 2018, K-12 Education Discipline Disparities for Black Students, Boys, and Students with Disabilities. https://www.gao.gov/assets/700/690828.pdf

[vii] Truancy Prevention Efforts in School-Community Partnerships, National Center for Mental Health Promotion and Youth Violence Prevention, 2012, http://crisisresponse.promoteprevent.org/publications/prevention-briefs/truancy-prevention-efforts-school-community-partnerships

[viii] Development Services Group, Inc., 2019? "Truancy Prevention." Literature review. Washington, D.C., Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. https://www.ojjdp.gov/mpg/litreviews/truancy_prevention.pdf

[ix] http://crisisresponse.promoteprevent.org/publications/prevention-briefs/truancy-prevention-efforts-school-community-partnerships

[x] *Development Service Group, Inc. 2010. "Truancy Prevention." Literature review. Washington, D.C.: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. https://www.ojjdp.gov/mpg/litreviews/Truancy_Prevention.pdf citing Baker, Sigmon and Nugent (2001)*

[xi] "Truancy Prevention Efforts in School-Community Partnerships, National Center for Mental Health Promotion and Youth Violence Prevention," http://www.promoteprevent.org/sites/www.promoteprevent.org/files/resources/Truancy%20Prevention%20Efforts%20in%20School_0.pdf

[xii] James, Jennifer, "A Case Study of the Effects of a School-Based Wraparound Approach on Students with Behavioral Difficulties," Loyola University, Chicago, 2011, Dissertation.

[xiii] "Truancy Prevention Efforts in School-Community Partnerships, National Center for Mental Health Promotion and Youth Violence Prevention," http://www.promoteprevent.org/sites/www.promoteprevent.org/files/resources/Truancy%20Prevention%20Efforts%20in%20School_0.pdf