

202-2: Truancy: Prevention and Intervention

An Overview of the Curriculum

Rationale:

Caseworkers are in a unique position to address the risk factors associated with truancy and to respond effectively when children/adolescents become chronically truant. It is imperative that caseworkers are familiar with and can adequately implement proven prevention and intervention strategies with families, youth, schools, and community organizations that address truancy.

Pa Standards:

IE, IF, IH, IIG, IIIH, IVF

Competency:

202-2: The child welfare professional can correctly assess the behavior of “unruly” adolescents within the context of their development, family, culture, and situation, and can recognize family dysfunction and crisis which can contribute to the adolescent’s behavior.

Learning Objectives:

- Define the term of truancy and be familiar with current national and state statistics on truancy rates
- Identify the factors that place a child at risk for truancy
- Implement prevention and intervention strategies in relation to working with families
- Implement prevention and intervention strategies in relation to working with children and adolescents
- Implement prevention, intervention and collaborative strategies with schools and community organizations
- Implement an action plan based on the learning from the workshop

Length of Workshop:

6 Hours

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Materials Needed:

- Color Markers
- Name Tents
- Overhead Projector/Screen
- TV/VCR
- Easel Stand/Flip Chart
- Video “Bullying”
- Curriculum With Transparencies
- Handouts for Participants

Target Audience:

Child Welfare Caseworkers and Supervisors

Summary:

This workshop defines truancy and presents current national and state statistics on its prevalence. It provides the individual, family, school, and community factors that correlate with the incidence of truancy and offers effective prevention and intervention strategies for implementation with children/adolescents and their families that are research based. It also suggests models of prevention and intervention that set the stage for recommended collaborative approaches with schools and community organizations that address the issue of truancy.

Expectations of the Trainer:

The trainer should have a strong knowledge base and experience working with children and adolescents involved in truancy, dependency and delinquency issues. Additionally, the trainer should have extensive experience collaborating effectively with family, school, and community systems that support effective prevention and intervention with children and adolescents exhibiting truant behavior or the early warning signs of truant behavior.

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Agenda for a Full-Day Curriculum on Truancy: Prevention and Intervention

Estimated Time	Content	Page
30 minutes	Section I: Introductions and Expectations	4-5
30 minutes	Section II: Definition and Statistics	6-7
30 minutes	Section III: Correlates of Truancy	8-10
15 minutes	Break	
1 hour and 15 minutes	Section IV: Prevention and Intervention Strategies: Children/Adolescents	11-13
1 hour	Lunch	
45 minutes	Section V: Prevention and Intervention Strategies: Families	14-15
15 minutes	Break	
1 hour and 15 minutes	Section VI: Prevention and Intervention Strategies: Schools and Communities	16-18
30 minutes	Section VII: Action Planning	19-20
15 minutes	Section VIII: Wrap-Up and Evaluation	21-22

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Section I: Introductions and Expectations

Estimated Length of Time:

30 minutes

Learning Objectives:

- Understand the workshop rationale, learning objectives and agenda
- Become familiar with the other participants
- Articulate their own learning objectives

Method of Presentation:

Lecturette and large group discussion

Materials Needed:

- Name tents, markers, flip chart paper
- **Overhead # 1a Agenda**
- **Overhead # 1b Learning Objectives**
- **Handout # 1 Agenda and Learning Objectives**

Resources Used:

None

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Section I: Introductions and Expectations (continued)

Outline of the Presentation:

- ❖ Trainer introduces self and workshop, including learning objectives.
- ❖ Trainer has participants recall youth from their own adolescence who were truant and compares them to current characteristics of truant adolescents.

Step 1:

The Trainer introduces himself/herself and asks participants to introduce themselves.

Step 2:

Distribute **Handout #1 Agenda and Learning Objectives**. Using **Overhead #1a Agenda**, and **1b Learning Objectives**, the Trainer reviews the agenda, rationale, and learning objectives and asks participants to add their learning objectives for the day.

Step 3:

The Trainer asks participants to recall students during their own adolescence who were truant. The Trainer asks participants to recall some of the characteristics that they would use to describe these fellow students. The Trainer records these characteristics on a flip chart and then compares these recollections to current day characteristics presented in Section III (Correlates of Truancy) of the workshop.

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Section II: Definition and Statistics

Estimated Length of Time:

30 minutes

Learning Objectives:

- Define the term of truancy
- Describe the parental notification procedures and possible outcomes of truancy proceedings
- Become familiar with current national and state statistics on truancy rates
- Compare national and statewide truancy statistics with local occurrence rates

Method of Presentation:

Lecturette and large group discussion

Materials Needed:

- **Overhead #2 Definition of Truancy**
- **Handout # 2 Definition of Truancy**

Resources Used:

National Center for Educational Statistics (2003, January). *Truancy and drop-out statistics*. Retrieved May 1, 2003 from <http://nces.ed.gov>

Erie County Bar Association (2003, January). *FAQs about children's rights: Truancy in Pennsylvania*. Retrieved April 27, 2003 from <http://www.jlc.org/home/info/FAQ/FAQTRU.html>

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Section II: Definition and Statistics (continued)

Outline of the Presentation:

- ❖ Trainer discusses with participants the definition of truancy including some relevant statistics.

Step 1:

The Trainer distributes **Handout #2 Definition of Truancy**. Using **Overhead #2 Definition of Truancy**, the Trainer presents the definition of truancy, how notice is given, possible outcomes following a truancy notice, and costs of truancy. The Trainer also provides statistics on truancy rates by writing the following information on a flip chart: national statistics on truancy are not available. However, best estimates place rates at approximately 5% of students in major city schools. Those rates are mirrored in Philadelphia and Pittsburgh schools. Still truancy has been identified as one of the top ten major problems facing schools today. Truancy does lead to dropping out of school. One student drops out of school in the United States every 9 seconds of every school day. The Trainer asks participants their opinions on how these rates compare to their local county statistics on truancy occurrence.

The Trainer closes this section by emphasizing that the roots of truancy are multifaceted and require a multifaceted approach for successful intervention. Successful approaches include collaboration between home, school, law enforcement, community businesses, and children and youth agencies. However, most communities view truancy as solely a parent/child problem and expect Children and Youth agencies to deal with truant children/adolescents with limited resources from the larger community. Since this is the case, this workshop presents strategies for dealing with truancy from this perspective. However, model programs that offer a multi-system approach do exist and will be presented at the end of the workshop.

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Section III: Correlates of Truancy

Estimated Length of Time:

30 minutes

Learning Objectives:

- Identify the risk factors for truancy in children/adolescents, and in their families, schools and communities

Method of Presentation:

Lecturette, small group discussion and large group discussion.

Materials Needed:

- **Overhead #3 Correlates of Truancy**
- **Handout #3 Correlates of Truancy**

Resources Used:

Manual to Combat Truancy (1996, July). U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Justice. *Problem of truancy in America's communities*. Retrieved May 3, 2003 from <http://www.ed.gov/pubs/Truancy>

Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (2001, September). OJJDP Juvenile Justice Bulletin NCJ #188947: *Truancy reduction - Keeping students in school*. Retrieved April 27, 2003 from http://www.ncjrs.org/html/ojjdp/jjbul2001_9_1/contents.html

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Section III: Correlates of Truancy (continued)

Outline of the Presentation:

- ❖ Trainer discusses with participants various correlates of truancy in adolescents.
- ❖ Participants discuss in small groups the information presented with their current caseload.

Step 1:

The Trainer distributes **Handout #3 Correlates of Truancy**. Using **Overhead #3 Correlates of Truancy**, the Trainer presents the following information to the large group:

Children/Adolescents

1. Children/adolescents who are marginalized within the school setting are at higher risk for truancy. Marginalization of students often surrounds issues of racism and classism.
2. Children/adolescents who experience learning difficulties, i.e., learning disabilities, neurological problems, drug and alcohol problems, and/or emotional disabilities are at higher risk for truancy. This is especially true if their learning needs have not been adequately addressed by the school system.
3. Children/adolescents who have a history of being victims of bullies in the school setting are at higher risk for truancy.
4. Truancy often masks undiagnosed and untreated school phobia or other anxiety-related disorders.
5. Truancy often masks issues of depression and/or drug and alcohol problems.

Families

1. Parents can contribute overtly or covertly to rates of truancy in their children/adolescents when: they keep their children home to care for younger children or to care for sick siblings so the parent does not miss work; send messages to their children that working to contribute to the family income is more important than school; depend on their children to negotiate agency/government “systems” when language is a barrier.
2. Parents who do not place a high value on education or who have a negative view of schools because of their own negative educational experiences as a child often send conflicting or overt messages that school is not important.
3. Children/adolescents sometimes are conflicted about attending school if spousal abuse or child abuse of a sibling exists in the family. Often the child/adolescent refuses to attend school so they can protect a parent or a sibling from harm by staying at home.
4. If the parent has a history of anxiety, their own fears/worries while the child is at school can contribute to truancy issues.
5. If the parent has a history of depression, they often don’t have the energy to get their child ready for school in time or take a firm stance when their child/adolescent refuses to attend school.
6. If the parent has not established parental authority in the home, they often can not insist that their child/adolescent attend school.

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Section III: Correlates of Truancy (continued)

Step 1 (continued):

Schools

1. Schools contribute to truancy by marginalizing students, by not adequately providing for the educational needs of students who have learning difficulties, and by not adequately responding to issues of bullying victimization. Additionally, if schools do not have sufficient personnel resources to adequately meet individual student needs (especially high risk students), children/adolescents do not receive adequate attention and services. This can lead to insufficient mentoring programs, guidance services and individual connections with students.

Communities

1. Some communities view truancy as solely a school/family problem. Law enforcement (police and district justices) fail to support schools that try to enforce policies and procedures. Additionally, businesses fail to see how truancy impacts the community and do not support schools in their truancy prevention/intervention endeavors.

Step 2:

The Trainer asks participants to move into small groups and discuss how closely the children/adolescents on their caseloads align with the researched-based risk factors. Each of the small groups report out their findings following their discussion.

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Section IV: Prevention and Intervention: Children and Adolescents

Estimated Length of Time:

1 hour and 15 minutes

Learning Objectives:

- Implement prevention and intervention strategies with children/adolescents who are truant or who are at risk for truancy

Method of Presentation:

Lecturette, role plays, case study, and video

Materials Needed:

- **Video: Bullying**
- **Overhead #4 Strategies for Prevention and Intervention with Children and Adolescents**
- **Handout #4 Strategies for Prevention and Intervention with Children/Adolescents, Families, Schools, and Communities**
- **Handout #5 Case Study of Keisha**
- **Appendix 1 Role Play of Bullying Incident**
- Flip chart and markers

Resources Used:

Bullying. Video. Available from South Carolina Educational Television, Marketing Department, P.O. Box 1100, Columbia, SC 20211 (800-553-7752).

Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (2001, September). OJJDP Juvenile Justice Bulletin NCJ #188947: *Truancy reduction - Keeping students in school*. Retrieved April 27, 2003 from http://www.ncjrs.org/html/ojjdp/jjbul2001_9_1/contents.html

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Section IV: Prevention and Intervention: Children and Adolescents

Outline of the Presentation:

- ❖ Trainer discusses some strategies for truancy prevention and education in adolescents.
- ❖ Trainer shows a video of a truant adolescent.
- ❖ Participants complete a case study, based on the video.

Step 1:

The Trainer distributes **Handout #4 Strategies for Prevention and Intervention with Children/Adolescents, Families, Schools, and Communities**. Using **Overhead #4 Strategies for Prevention and Intervention with Children/Adolescents**, the Trainer presents the five strategies for prevention and intervention with children/adolescents who are truant or who are at risk for truancy.

1. Promote home/school collaboration, communication and advocacy for students who are marginalized due to diverse cultural and learning styles. Techniques include linking parent to the Parent Education Network to advocate for special education supports and resources; explore with student the degree to which they feel marginalized in the school setting and ways to have student feel more integrated; encourage the parent to communicate with school on child's behalf to create greater student-friendly approaches to learning and inclusion.
2. Explore with child/adolescent whether or not they have been bullied at school. If this is the case, the caseworker needs to work with the family and school to immediately address the problem and not expect the student to "just live with it" or to "toughen up." Furthermore, the guidance counselor needs to be contacted to teach the child/adolescent ways to respond to the problem that won't escalate the situation. The facilitator acts out a role play of verbal bullying with one of the participants to demonstrate how a child/adolescent can respond to verbal bullying incidents. The skills demonstrated include: what to say (i.e. whatever, not really, so, and your point is..., etc.), how to say it with confidence, leave the area, and get adult help if necessary. The facilitator cautions that all physical bullying incidents should be addressed by leaving the area immediately (if possible) and seeking adult intervention. Finally, all adults (school personnel, parents, and caseworker) should check regularly with the child/adolescent to ensure that the bullying behavior has not continued in any way.
3. Explore whether or not the family and/or child/adolescent has a history of anxiety disorders. A family history of anxiety disorders or separation anxiety on the part of the child/adolescent often increases the risk for school phobia in the later years. Refer for mental health assessment and treatment if there is an indication school phobia is the underlying cause of truancy.
4. Assess whether or not the underlying cause of truancy could be due to depression or to a drug/alcohol problem. Refer for assessment and treatment

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Section IV: Prevention and Intervention: Children and Adolescents (continued)

5. Advocate for strict response to truancy on the part of the school and explore incentives for the child/adolescent to attend school (i.e. mentoring).

Step 2:

The Trainer distributes **Handout #5 Case Study of Keisha**. The Trainer indicates that participants are to read the case study, determine the child/adolescent risk factors involved in the case, and decide on possible prevention and intervention strategies to use with Keisha. The Trainer shows the **video: Bullying** (scene one only) that provides further background on what is occurring at school for Keisha regarding bullying. Participants work in small groups to complete the case study assignment. The Trainer asks each of the small groups to report out on their findings after writing their responses on a flip chart and posting it in the room. Facilitator hands out **Appendix 1 Role Play of Bullying Incident** and demonstrates with a participant scene one and two; ways of dealing with a bully.

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Section V: Prevention and Intervention Strategies: Families

Estimated Length of Time:

45 minutes

Learning Objectives:

- Implement prevention and intervention strategies with families of children/adolescents who are truant or who are at risk for truancy

Method of Presentation:

Lecturette, small group discussion, large group discussion, and case study

Materials Needed:

- **Overhead #5 Strategies for Prevention and Intervention with Families**
- **Handout #4 Strategies for Prevention and Intervention: Children/Adolescents, Families, Schools, and Communities**
- **Handout #6 Case Study of Ivan**

Resources Used:

Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (2001, September). OJJDP Juvenile Justice Bulletin NCJ #188947: *Truancy reduction - Keeping students in school*. Retrieved April 27, 2003 from http://www.ncjrs.org/html/ojjdp/jjbul2001_9_1/contents.html

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Section V: Prevention and Intervention Strategies: Families (continued)

Outline of the Presentation:

- ❖ Trainer presents four family-based strategies for working with truant youth.
- ❖ Participants apply information to a case study in small groups.
- ❖ Trainer processes out the small group case studies through a large group activity.

Step 1:

The Trainer refers participants to **Handout #4 Strategies for Prevention and Intervention with Children/Adolescents, Families, Schools, and Communities**. Using **Overhead #5 Strategies for Prevention and Intervention with Families**, the Trainer presents the four family-based strategies for prevention and intervention with children/adolescents who are truant or who are at risk for truancy.

Step 2:

The Trainer distributes **Handout #6 Case Study of Ivan**. The Trainer indicates that participants are to read the case study, determine the child/adolescent and family risk factors involved in the case, and decide on possible prevention and intervention strategies to use with Ivan. Participants work in four small groups to discuss all elements of the case study.

Step 3:

The Trainer places 4 flip charts around the training room. Each chart has one of the following four categories listed at the top: Ivan's risk factors; family risk factors; strategies with Ivan; strategies with family of Ivan. Trainer assigns each group one of the categories and asks them to place their ideas on the designated flip chart. Each group reports out their assigned section.

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Section VI: Prevention and Intervention Strategies: Schools and Communities

Estimated Length of Time:

1 hour and 15 minutes

Learning Objectives:

- Implement prevention and intervention strategies with schools regarding children/adolescents who are truant or who are at risk for truancy

Method of Presentation:

Lecturette, small group discussion, large group discussion, talking rounds

Materials Needed:

Overhead #6 Strategies for Prevention and Intervention with Schools

Overhead #7 Strategies for Prevention and Intervention with Communities

Overhead #8 Model Programs

Handout #4 Strategies for Prevention and Intervention with Children/Adolescents, Families, Schools, and Communities

Handout #7 Model Programs

Resources Used:

Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence. <http://www.colorado.edu/cspv>.
Manual to Combat Truancy (1996, July). U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Justice. *Problem of truancy in America's communities*. Retrieved May 3, 2003 from <http://www.ed.gov/pubs/Truancy>

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Section VI: Prevention and Intervention Strategies: Schools and Communities (continued)

Outline of the Presentation:

- ❖ Trainer presents information on strategies for adolescent truancy prevention when working with schools and communities.
- ❖ Participants work in small groups using the previous case studies in relation to school and community truancy prevention.
- ❖ Trainer presents a systematic community-based approach to adolescent truancy prevention.
- ❖ Participants work in pairs to discuss various community based strategies within their communities and then presents this information to the large group.

Step 1:

The Trainer refers participants to **Handout #4 Strategies for Prevention and Intervention with Children/Adolescents, Families, Schools, and Communities**. Using **Overhead #6 Strategies for Prevention and Intervention with Schools**, the Trainer presents the school-based strategies for prevention and intervention with children/adolescents who are truant or who are at risk for truancy. They include: communicating with the school regarding the possible marginalization of the child/adolescent regarding diverse cultural and learning styles; setting up a dialogue and resources to advocate for the child/adolescent; determine if the school has implemented the required policies on bullying prevention and/or implemented the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (see Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence website listed in the reference section for further information on this program); tapping the students guidance counselor for available support services; encouraging and supporting the parent to use the chain of command within their child's/adolescent's school district if the school refuses to sufficiently deal with the bullying incidents; reminding the school that lawsuits have been successfully brought against school districts throughout the United States for insufficient protection of students against bullying incidents; advocating for strict enforcement of school truancy policies and arranging for an in-school mentor; exploring the availability of support resources at school through SAP and IST programs.

Step 2:

The Trainer asks participants to return to the case studies of Keisha and Ivan. In small groups, the participants explore additional school options/resources to use with each of these two adolescents. Each of the small groups report out their findings.

Step 3:

The Trainer refers participants to **Handout #4 Strategies for Prevention and Intervention with Children/Adolescents, Families, Schools, and Communities**. Using **Overhead #7 Strategies for Prevention and Intervention with Communities**, the Trainer presents the elements of a systemic community-based approach for prevention and intervention for truancy. They include: daytime sweeps of students who are in the

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Section VI: Prevention and Intervention Strategies: Schools and Communities (continued)

Step 3 (continued):

community during school hours; support of school truancy petitions by district justices so that school efforts are not undermined by the justice system; business leaders provide options for community service and support community-wide truancy efforts through participation on committees that address truancy prevention and intervention, by providing incentives, and financial and infrastructure resources. The Trainer notes that these community strategies are usually initiated by Children and Youth Directors. However, the role of participants would be to take this information back to their directors as a resource for the directors to utilize.

Step 4:

The Trainer distributes **Handout #7 Model Programs**. Using **Overhead #8 Model Programs**, the Trainer presents examples of model programs that fully and effectively address truancy prevention and intervention issues.

In order to become aware of the counties in Pennsylvania that have implemented some or all of these systemic approaches, the Trainer instructs participants to stand up and find one other participant from another county. The pair of participants share information on the community-based strategies offered in their respective counties. The pairs describe the programs/strategies, and how they were started, funded and implemented.

The Trainer instructs participants to find a participant from another county and repeat the sharing exercise. If there is enough diverse county representation within the group, the Trainer instructs the participants to complete a third round of sharing. The Trainer then has a few participants share their strategies with the large group. The Trainer asks participants to take back this information to their county agencies and share how these programs were started, funded and implemented in other counties.

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Section VII: Action Planning

Estimated Length of Time:

30 minutes

Learning Objectives: Participants will be able to:

- Implement an action plan for a case study child/adolescent on their caseload

Method of Presentation:

Individual completion of case study action plan

Large Group Discussion

Materials Needed:

Handout #8 Case Study Action Plan

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Section VII: Action Planning (continued)

Outline of the Presentation:

- ❖ Participants record strategies learned from the day that they could implement with a client on their caseload.

Step 1:

The Trainer distributes **Handout #8 Case Study Action Plan**. Each participant is instructed to choose a child/adolescent on their caseload that is showing the risk factors for truancy or who has a history of truancy. Participants record the strategies learned in this workshop that they could use with their case study child/adolescent. The Trainer then asks participants to share the strategies learned that they will implement immediately with their case study child.

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Section VII: Wrap-Up and Evaluation

Estimated Length of Time:

15 minutes

Learning Objectives: Participants will be able to:

- Bring closure to their day of training
- Evaluate the training

Method of Presentation:

Lecturette, evaluation

Materials Needed:

Handout #9 Bibliography

Evaluation Form

Resources Used:

None

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Section VII: Wrap-Up and Evaluation (continued)

Outline of the Presentation:

- ❖ Trainer summarizes the learning objectives and the content of the day.
- ❖ Trainer distributes the bibliography to participants.
- ❖ Participants complete evaluations.

Step 1:

The Trainer summarizes the learning objectives of the day and encourages participants to implement their action plans in their work settings.

Step 2:

Distribute **Handout #9 Bibliography**. Distribute evaluation forms. The Trainer asks participants to complete evaluation forms.

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