Truancy Assessment

**Objective:** This part of the training is not to duplicate what is already being done to build capacity in mentoring but to frame the work we do and will do for truants.

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**FRAMING THE WORK**

Theories provide principles that have been tested, to provide a plan of action; they offer ways to affect change in behavior, actions, and attitudes.

Theories that can inform our work with truants and Empowerment and Social Control theories:

**Empowerment Theory: (Lee, 1996)**

- Assumes that people are …
  - Capable of solving their own problems
  - Capable of overcoming barriers to resources
  - Our role is that of a helper - to identify and overcome barriers to resources.
  - Our role is to enable people to make the change they want to see in their lives.

**Social Control: (Hirschi, 1969)**

- Assumes that people are social beings that value bonding – social bonding
  - In the absence of social bonding we are disconnected
  - Social bonding is defined as opportunities or activities for student engagement in school that build attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief in the value of school.
  - Social bonding is measured using 4 constructs
    - Attachment
    - Commitment
    - Involvement and
    - Belief
  - Our role is that of capacity builder – to increase the level of the 4 social bonding constructs

**Role Summary** - In summary our role is to help identify and overcome barriers to resources while building capacity for social bonding
DEFINING TRUANCY & TRUANTS

Objective: To learn how to categorize and measure progress with this population

Definition of Truancy

- No nationally accepted definition of chronic truancy
- In Indiana: 10 or more unexcused absences
- Other definitions have included students
- “who, have been registered with a school, [but] have been identified as not attending when it, and the law says that they should” (Collins, 1998, p. 2).
  - Collins’ (1998) definition nicely describes the student, the act, and the legal requirements but does not define the frequency of the behavior.
- “who misses 20% or more of school days within a 6-week period” (OJJDP, 2006, p. 1).

3 Types Truants (Reid, 1999)
1) Specific lesson absence-(students skip a particular class, i.e Math, English, or PE)
2) Post registration truancy -(students register for class as present then leaves),
3) Parental-condoned truancy -(parent agrees child can miss school for various reasons)
- Current research often lumps all these students together as truants.

6 Categories of Truants
(Reid, 1999)
1) Traditional,
   - Often shy, has low self-concept, and removes himself/herself from unaccommodating surroundings, thereby missing school primarily for social conditions or difficulties.
2) Psychological,
   - More typical of behavioral manifestations of laziness, illness, fear of a person or thing (bullies), or other issues, thus missing school for emotional factors.
3) Institutional,
   - Often leaders. They head their own peer groups and are generally not physically absent from school.
   - Are withdrawn from lessons and skip school mainly for reasons related to the school itself or contextual school factors.
4) Generic
   - Absent from school haphazardly for various reasons and shows evidence of many of the other categories of truants

Bonikowske (1987)

5) Recreational
• Involves students of compulsory school age who skip classes for frivolous reasons or reasons of pleasure, (i.e. not wanting to take a test, not liking a teacher, or simply because of not having the next assignment completed)

6) Life-style truants
• Marginal member of the school community.
• They participate at the lowest level possible
• Believe that it is their right to skip school if they so choose.
• Have emotionally and physically detached themselves from school and others
  - Reasons vary from family, financial, individual learning or participation difficulties.
• Ones more prone to chronic truancy and eventually dropping out (Bonikowske, 1987).

WHY STUDENTS TRUANT

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<tr>
<th>Objective: To learn how to offer help appropriately</th>
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Two major influences as to why students truant: *Push* or *Pull* effects (Rumberger, 1987)

**Push Effects**
• (INTERNAL) Factors present within the child that harm or impede the relationship-forming patterns with and within the school.
• Eventually present themselves in the guise of …
  o unruly or disruptive discipline problems,
  o consecutive absences,
  o low grades, and
  o no sense of a willingness to work towards doing well in school
• these factors can be related to school climate, structure, or context

*Examples of Push effect factors,*
- Low intelligence (West & Farrington, 1973),
- Test performance (Farmer & Payne, 1992),
- Poor study habits (Titone, 1982),
- Level of achievement up to grade 6 (Wolfgang, Figlio & Sellin, 1972),
- Dislike of school, lack of interest in school, seeing no relation of current classes to future work, lack of suitable subjects offered, feeling too old for a particular grade (Titone, 1982),
- Unsuccessful school experiences (Rumberger, 1995).

**Pull Effects**
• (EXTERNAL) Are external factors, beyond the child’s internal feelings and views
• Are based on the ever-changing milieu of the child and his or her environment

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Examples of Pull effect factors,
- Separation from parents,
- Broken home (McCord, 1982),
- Crime in family (Robins, 1979),
- Parental neglect (Garry, 1996),
- Parental child-rearing behaviors, socioeconomic status/poverty, poor housing, excessive reliance on welfare (Farrington, 1980; Loeber & Dishion, 1983),
- Stigma of School failure (Loeber & Dishion, 1983), and
- Negative peer group influence, or unpopularity in school (Bonikowske, 1987; Conger & Miller, 1966).
Model

Section A - DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

| Name of Student: ____________________________________________________________ |
| First Name | Last Name | Middle Initial |

School Name: __________________________ Days of Absence per quarter: ______

Grade: _________  Age:  ____  Sex: ☐ Male  ☐ Female

Referred by:  ☐ Court  ☐ School  ☐ Community  Date of Referral: _________

Section B - TYPE OF TRUANT

Check one box that applies to the student based on the student, school, and parent reports.

Type of truant based on Student Self-Report
☐ Specific lesson absence,
☐ Post registration truancy,
☐ Parental-condoned truancy,
☐ Other: _________________________________________

Type of truant based on School Self-Report
☐ Specific lesson absence,
☐ Post registration truancy,
☐ Parental-condoned truancy,
☐ Other: _________________________________________

Type of truant based on Parent Self-Report
☐ Specific lesson absence,
☐ Post registration truancy,
☐ Parental-condoned truancy,
☐ Other: _________________________________________

Section C - CATEGORIES OF TRUANT

From the list provided check one box that applies to the student.

☐ Traditional (shy, low self-concept, misses because of school social conditions)

☐ Psychological (laziness, illness, fear, miss school for emotional reasons)

☐ Institutional (leader, miss school because of reasons related to the school itself)

☐ Generic (haphazardly misses school for different reasons)

☐ Recreational (misses school for reasons of pleasure or to avoid an activity or task)

☐ Life-style truants (Marginal member, misses school because has no bond to it)

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Overall Report of the Truant

This section of the report combines the ✓ marks above to identify the truant you are working with. This will help you tailor a plan to meet the needs of the student and create gradual change in behavior.

Directions: Review the types and categories checked off above and write up one statement about the current behavior of the child in regards to their truancy.

For example:
Let’s say in Section B (Type of Truant) and Section C (Category of truant) the student is defined as specific lesson absent by himself, teacher and parent and categorized as a recreational truant. Your statement would be …

Statement:
Based on my assessment thus far Johnny King is a student that primarily misses lessons and does so for recreational reasons to avoid an activity or task. Therefore when we develop our plan of action to change the behavior we will focus on which lessons he is having trouble with and why. Then develop an alternative strategy to missing classes when he feels the need to avoid those classes. It is the hope that within 3 months Johnny King would attend 90% or more of those classes rather than skipping them.
Theory USE & Plan of Action

Assessing the problem

☐ How do you feel about school? (i.e. Good, Bad, Sad, Happy, Disconnected, etc.)

☐ What do you think could be done to help you feel better about school?

☐ Who would you like to help you feel better about school?

☐ Do you think we can help you do this in 3 months?

☐ Are you willing to try to make these changes?

Determining the Needs

Let’s list some of the barriers you think affects you from attending classes regularly?

1)
2)
3)

Determining the Resources

Let’s list some of the resources you think you need in order to attend classes regularly?

(i.e. more opportunities or activities for to be involved, attached, and committed in so that you will value attending classes regularly).

1)
2)
3)
**Action Plan (Measurable Attainable Positive and Specific – MAPS)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 1: To identify all the lessons Johnny dislikes or has difficulty with</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Assess current attendance: Of this week how many days of school did you miss?</td>
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<tr>
<td>2) Of this week how many classes did you miss?</td>
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<tr>
<th>Week 2: To work with Johnny to determine 2 alternatives for missing classes he dislikes</th>
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<td>1)</td>
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<tr>
<th>Week 3: To practice using the 2 alternatives to missing classes &amp; determine 3 strategies to improve his commitment to doing well in the classes he dislikes</th>
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<th>Week 4: Invite teacher and parent for one consultation on how to get the Johnny more involved in his school, with his teachers, and classes.</th>
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<th>Week 5: Discuss strategies with Johnny and get his buy in. Implement the strategies he feels comfortable using</th>
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<th>Week 6:</th>
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<th>Week 9:</th>
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<th>Week 11:</th>
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<td>Week 12:</td>
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# Weekly Report Sheet

Name of Student: _____________________________________
Name of Mentor: _____________________________________
Date: _______________________________________________

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**Summary of Week 1:**

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References


