



**DATA SHARING AND PRIVACY AGREEMENT
BETWEEN
THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC CHARTER BOARD
AND
CHOICE RESEARCH ASSOCIATES**

This Data Privacy Agreement (“Agreement”) is entered into by and the District of Columbia Public Charter Board (“PCSB”) and Choice Research Associates (“CRA”), (collectively, the “Parties”) performing an evaluation of the Justice Grants Administration Community-Based Truancy Reduction program, a student aid program, and requires confidential student data.

This Agreement is entered into by the Parties, for the purpose of sharing information between the parties in a manner consistent with the Family Education Records Privacy Act of 1974, 20 U.S.C. § 1232g (“FERPA”) and any other relevant federal law. For purposes of this Agreement, “FERPA” includes 20 U.S.C. § 1232g, any reauthorization of or amendments thereto, and Part 99 of Title 34 of the Code of Federal Regulations.

SECTION 1: DEFINITIONS

- 1.1 “Data,” as used herein, means recorded information, regardless of form or the media on which it may be recorded. The term includes technical data and computer software. The term does not include information incidental to contract administration, such as financial, administrative, cost or pricing, or management information.
- 1.2 The term “Technical Data,” as used herein, means recorded information, regardless of form or characteristic, of a scientific or technical nature. It may, for example, document research, experimental, developmental or engineering work, or be usable or used to define a design or process or to procure, produce, support, maintain, or operate material. The data may be graphic or pictorial delineations in media such as drawings or photographs, text in specifications or related performance or design type documents or computer printouts. Examples of technical data include research and engineering data, engineering drawings and associated lists, specifications, standards, process sheets, manuals, technical reports, catalog item identifications, and related information, and computer software documentation. Technical data does not include computer software or financial, administrative, cost and pricing, and management data or other information incidental to contract administration.
- 1.3 The term “Computer Software,” as used herein means computer programs and computer databases. “Computer Programs,” as used herein means a series of instructions or statements in a form acceptable to a computer, designed to cause the computer to execute an operation or operations. “Computer Programs” include

operating systems, assemblers, compilers, interpreters, data management systems, utility programs, sort merge programs, and automated data processing equipment maintenance diagnostic programs, as well as applications programs such as payroll, inventory control and engineering analysis programs. Computer programs may be either machine-dependent or machine-independent, and may be general purpose in nature or designed to satisfy the requirements of a particular user.

- 1.4 The term “computer databases,” as used herein, means a collection of data in a form capable of being processed and operated on by a computer.

SECTION 2: DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

2.1 Data Required

- 2.1.1 CRA intends to conduct a process and outcome evaluation of the Community-Based Truancy Reduction Project for the period from November 2012 through September 30, 2015 (hereinafter, the “Project”).
- 2.1.2 CRA represents that this evaluation will employ secondary data analysis to assess the impact of services provided by seven Community Based Organizations (“CBOs”) to students in DC public charter schools (“Charter Schools”). Ideally, these youth will be compared to youth fitting the same criteria from similar schools. The evaluation will incorporate scores from assessment tools utilized by the CBOs, process measures such as engagement with families during home visits and school activities, and provision of case management and referral services (for truant youth and their family). Outcome measures include academic performance, school attendance, and school disciplinary actions (e.g., suspensions and expulsions). Data will be sought from Children and Family Services Agency (CFSA) to ascertain if youth referred to the CBOs in this intervention are then referred to CFSA and if the truancy case is substantiated. The core of the project is analysis of programmatic data routinely gathered by the CBOs during the course of their project, and the outcome data provided by PCSB, DCPS and CFSA. Neither the Principal Investigator (PI) or CRA staff has any direct contact with the families or clients served by the CBOs.
- 2.1.3 CRA’s research question for the Project is: *Do family focused services provided by a community based organization reduce truancy for elementary school youth in grades K-5 who have between 5 and 9 absences compared to youth who are not referred for services? If so, which of those services are more effective?*
- 2.1.3 CRA’s evaluation is in the developmental phase and the goal will be to determine both which factors are effective at reducing truancy including program services such as home visits, parent training, and referrals to other needed services (outcome), and what are the steps that need to be taken to ensure that the crucial services are provided (implementation or process).

2.1.4 In order to properly assess if there is an impact of services on truancy, CRA seeks to control for other factors that could explain the outcomes. For this reason, CRA seeks the prior academic, attendance, and disciplinary performance of youth in both the treatment group and in a comparison group of similarly situated youth in schools in the same or similar wards. This information would be coupled with assessment data, demographic, and family structure information (e.g., socio-economic status, number of siblings, single vs. duo parent household) which is obtained by the CBO in their routine programmatic process.

2.1.5 To perform services for the Project, CRA will require access to confidential information, education records, and information that identifies particular individuals, including students. Student data required for the Project may include: demographic data (age, gender, race/ethnicity, home zip code); Academic performance data (grades and test scores); attendance records: (number of excused absences, number of unexcused absences, and number of times tardy); and disciplinary actions (number of disciplinary actions, suspensions and expulsions).

2.2 Charter Schools Involved in the Project

2.2.1 CRA requires the confidential student data of students at the following Charters Schools: Cesar Chavez Public Charter School (specifically, its Parkside campus); DC Bilingual Public Charter School; Friendship Collegiate Public Charter School (specifically, its Tech Prep campus); Hope Community Public Charter School (specifically, its Lamond and Tolson campuses); Paul Public Charter School; and Two Rivers Public Charter School. These schools and campuses are working with CBOs as described in the following table.

| School (Campus) | CBO |
|---|---|
| Cesar Chavez Public Charter School (Parkside) | East River Family Strengthening Collaborative |
| DC Bilingual Public Charter School | Collaborative Solutions for Communities (formerly known as Columbia Heights Family Support Collaborative) |
| Friendship Public Charter School (Tech Prep) | Far Southeast Family Strengthening Collaborative |
| Hope Community Public Charter School (Lamond) | Catholic Charities |
| Hope Community Public Charter School (Tolson) | Boys Town |
| Paul Public Charter School | Catholic Charities |
| Two Rivers Public Charter School | Edgewood Brookland Family Support Collaborative |

- 2.2.2 PCSB represents that it has received written consent for the data needed to complete the Project from the charter schools listed in Section 3.1.5, above.
- 2.3 Student-Level Data
 - 2.3.1 PCSB intends to share confidential data that includes personally identifiable information as defined in FERPA, for which parents have not provided consent, with CRA.
 - 2.3.2 The Data will be used by CRA's employees to fulfill the duties and responsibilities needed for the Project.
 - 2.3.3 CRA requires the following data from PCSB for students at the Charter Schools listed in Section 2.2.1, above:
 - 2.3.3.1 Student Name (first and last)
 - 2.3.3.2 Student address
 - 2.3.3.3 Student Identification Number
 - 2.3.3.4 Free/Reduced Lunch status
 - 2.3.3.5 English language learner status
 - 2.3.3.6 Special education status
 - 2.3.3.7 Race/Ethnicity
 - 2.3.3.8 Attendance (by year and quarter and number of days enrolled)
 - 2.3.3.9 Number of excused absences
 - 2.3.3.10 Number of unexcused absences
 - 2.3.3.11 Number of days tardy
 - 2.3.3.12 Number of out-of-school suspensions (by year)
 - 2.3.3.13 Exit codes (i.e., transfer – if applicable) and dates
 - 2.3.4 CRA will link data provided by PCSB with 4 to 5 digit research code which will replace personally identifying information provided by PCSB; personally identifying information will not be part of any linked datasets.
- 2.4 Scope of the Project

2.4.1 CRA represents that the Project will be completed by January 31, 2016.

SECTION 3: FERPA

FERPA provides for circumstances under which educational agencies such as PCSB are authorized to release confidential data from students' education records regarding individual students without prior parental consent. While PCSB does not intend to share any personally identifiable information with CRA, this agreement governs the use of data that PCSB will share with CRA to meet the specific ends of the Project.

SECTION 4: TERMS AND CONDITIONS

- 4.1 The following terms further specify the manner in which PCSB agrees to share Data with CRA, subject to FERPA and any other applicable federal law:
- 4.2 Parties
- 4.2.1 PCSB is a public charter school authorizer with oversight responsibility for public charter elementary and secondary institutions, is authorized to maintain student information subject to FERPA, and may disclose such information as authorized by FERPA.
- 4.2.2 CRA has contracted Zachary Rowan, M.A., and Laura Gerhard, B.A., to perform services, as outlined in the Research Application, attached as Exhibit A.
- 4.2.3 CRA represents that Shawn M. Flower, Ph.D, is the Principal Investigator and will lead the Project, assisted by Zachary Rowan, M.A., Research Associate and Laura Gerhard, Research Associate.
- 4.3 CRA agrees to:
- a. Use any and all Data shared under this Agreement only for legitimate purposes and for no purpose other than the contractual services authorized by the statement of work for the Project.
 - b. Refrain from linking the Data provided to any data set in a way that reveals personally-identifiable student data and/or in contravention of the terms of this Agreement.
 - c. Limit the custodians of the Data to Shawn Flower, Zachary Rowan, and Laura Gerhard.
 - d. Use reasonable methods to identify and notify PCSB of any inadvertently disclosed personally identifiable student data

received, protect such data from re-disclosure, and to not share any personally identifiable data received under this Agreement with any other entity.

- e. Ensures that it has policies and procedures to protect the Data provided by PCSB from further disclosure and unauthorized use.
- f. In the event that it does re-disclose Data, including but not limited to student information, CRA will inform PCSB immediately upon any re-disclosure of student information.
- g. Require and maintain a confidentiality agreement with each employee, contractor or agent with access to Data pursuant to this Agreement. The agreement will require all employees, contractors and agents of any kind to comply with all applicable provisions of FERPA and other federal laws with respect to the Data. Nothing in this paragraph authorizes sharing or allowing access to Data provided under this Agreement with any other entity for any purpose other than completing CRA's work authorized by the statement of work for the Project.
- h. Protect and maintain all Data obtained or permitted access to pursuant to this Agreement in a secure computer environment and not copy, reproduce or transmit data obtained or permitted access to pursuant to this Agreement except as necessary to fulfill the services described in the statement of work for the Project. All copies of data of any type, including any modifications or additions to data from any source that contains information regarding individual students, are subject to the provisions of this Agreement in the same manner as the original data. The ability to access or maintain data under this Agreement shall not under any circumstances transfer from CRA to any other institution or entity or unauthorized individual or agent.
- i. Not to provide any Data, including student data, obtained or permitted access to under this Agreement to any party that is ineligible to receive data protected by FERPA or prohibited from receiving Data from any entity.
- j. Destroy all data, including student data, and provide written verification of the destruction of all copies of the student data obtained under this Agreement to PCSB 3 years following the date of completion of the Project. All data no longer needed shall be physically destroyed or returned to the PCSB in compliance with and as outlined in 34 C.F.R. § 99.35(b)(2). CRA agrees to require

all employees, contractors, or agents of any kind to comply with this provision.

- 4.4 Breach.
- 4.4.1 In the event of a breach of this Agreement in the form of a disclosure of data that is not otherwise permissible pursuant to this Agreement, CRA shall notify PCSB of the breach within two (2) business days of the date on which CRA becomes aware of the breach by e-mailing PCSB's Executive Director with a read receipt at spearson@dcpcsb.org. PCSB may take any actions authorized it by law to remediate the breach, including, without limitation, termination of this Agreement and exclusion of CRA from future access to PCSB's confidential data.
- 4.4.2 CRA agrees that Shawn M. Flower shall serve as PCSB's primary security contact and shall be available to assist PCSB twenty-four (24) hours per day, seven (7) days per week as a contact in resolving obligations associated with a Breach, defined in Section 4.4.1, above.
- 4.5 Nothing in this Agreement may be construed to allow either party to maintain, use, disclose or share student information in a manner not allowed by federal law or regulation.
- 4.6 CRA represents that Shawn M. Flower, Ph.D. is authorized to bind to the terms of this agreement, including confidentiality and destruction or return of Data, all related or associated institutions, individuals, employees or contractors who may have access to the data or may own, lease or control equipment or facilities of any kind where the data is stored, maintained or used in any way.
- 4.7 Data may be stored on a server with additional data but may not be merged with any other data in contravention of the terms of this Agreement.
- 4.8 This Agreement takes effect only upon acceptance by authorized representatives of the CRA, by which that institution agrees to abide by its terms and return or physically destroy all student data covered by this Agreement 3 years following the date of completion of the Project.
- 4.9 This Agreement takes effect upon signature by the authorized representative of each party and will remain in effect until completion of the Project.
- 4.10 The parties further understand that PCSB may cancel this Agreement at any time, upon reasonable notice. PCSB specifically reserves the right to cancel this Agreement should PCSB, in its sole discretion, determine that confidential student information has been released in a manner inconsistent with this Agreement, has not been maintained in a secure manner, or that substantially similar data access

has become generally available for research purposes through any other mechanism approved by PCSB.

4.11 All data shared by PCSB with CRA shall be the sole property of PCSB. CRA agrees not to assert any rights in common law or in equity in such data. CRA shall not publish or reproduce any personally identifiable student data, in whole or in part or in any manner or form, or authorize others to do so.

4.12 CRA understands that the Agreement does not convey ownership of student data to any entity with which CRA has or intends to have a contractual relationship.

4.13 GOVERNING LAW

This Agreement, and any disputes arising out of or related to this Agreement, shall be governed by, and construed in accordance with, the laws of the District of Columbia.

4.14 PCSB's Executive Director or his or her designee, the DC Inspector General, and the District of Columbia Auditor, and/or any of their duly authorized representatives shall, until three years after the completion of the Project payment, have the right to examine any directly pertinent books, documents, papers, and records of CRA involving the data shared by PCSB pursuant to this Agreement.

Entered into this 17 of December, 2014.

Agreed to and accepted by:



Shawn M. Flower, Ph.D.
Principal Researcher

Agreed to and accepted by:

PCSB


Scott Pearson
Executive Director

EXHIBIT A



Date: May 27, 2013

Title: Evaluation of the Justice Grants Administration (JGA) Community-Based Truancy Reduction (CBTR) Project Years 1 and 2

Requester/Organization: Shawn M. Flower, Ph.D., Principal Researcher
Choice Research Associates

Description: The purpose of the overall project is to conduct a process and outcome evaluation of the Community-Based (CBO) Truancy Reduction Project (CBTR) for the period from November 2012 through November 2014. Confidential Data is requested.

This evaluation will employ secondary data analysis to assess the impact of services provided by five CBOs to approximately 600 students per year in K-3rd grade (year 1) and K-5th grade (year 2) with 5 to 9 unexcused absences attending DC public schools. Ideally, these youth will be compared to youth fitting the same criteria from similar schools. The evaluation will incorporate scores from assessment tools utilized by the CBOs, process measures such as engagement with families during home visits and school activities, and provision of case management and referral services (for truant youth and their family). Outcome measures include academic performance, school attendance, and school disciplinary actions (e.g., suspensions and expulsions). Data will be sought from Children and Family Services Agency (CFSA) to ascertain if youth referred to the CBOs in this intervention are then referred to CFSA and if the truancy case is substantiated. The core of the project is analysis of programmatic data routinely gathered by the CBOs during the course of their project, and the outcome data provided by DCPS and CSFA. Neither the Principal Investigator (PI) or Choice Research Associates (CRA) staff has any direct contact with the families or clients served by the CBOs.

Timeline: 2011-12; 2012-13; 2013-2014

Data Collection from Schools: None

Data Requested from ODA/DCPS: Three times over the course of the project (Aug 2013; April 2014 and Aug 2014), we request the following data for all youth in the treatment and comparison groups:

- Demographic data: age, gender, race/ethnicity, home zip code;
- Academic performance: grades and test scores;
- Attendance records: (number of excused absences, number of unexcused absences, and number of times tardy); and
- Disciplinary Actions: Number of disciplinary actions, suspensions and expulsions.

DCPS Advocate: Melissa Hook, Director, Justice Grants Administration

DCPS Research Application

Project Title Evaluation of the Justice Grants Administration (JGA) Community-Based Truancy Reduction (CBTR) Project Years 1 and 2

Requestor Shawn M. Flower, Ph.D., Principal Researcher, Choice Research Associates

Abstract

This evaluation will employ secondary data analysis to assess the impact of services provided by five CBOs to approximately 600 students per year in K-3rd grade (year 1) and K-5th grade (year 2) with 5 to 9 unexcused absences attending DC public schools. Ideally, these youth will be compared to youth fitting the same criteria from similar schools. The evaluation will incorporate scores from assessment tools utilized by the CBOs, process measures such as engagement with families during home visits and school activities, and provision of case management and referral services (for truant youth and their family). Outcome measures include academic performance, school attendance, and school disciplinary actions (e.g., suspensions and expulsions). Data will be sought from Children and Family Services Agency (CFSA) to ascertain if youth referred to the CBOs in this intervention are then referred to CFSA and if the truancy case is substantiated. The core of the project is analysis of programmatic data routinely gathered by the CBOs during the course of their project, and the outcome data provided by DCPS and CFSA. Neither the Principal Investigator (PI) or Choice Research Associates (CRA) staff has any direct contact with the families or clients served by the CBOs.

Statement of the Problem

Washington D.C. Public Schools experience high rates of truancy. The causes of truancy vary but are found in the nexus between the child’s individual protective and risk factors within their home/community and school environment. Children with unmet physical, mental and social needs, living in communities and households strained by drug and alcohol abuse, poverty, violence and mental illness are more likely to be truant. This project seeks to step into the lives of these children at the earliest school period (age 5 to 8 – kindergarten to third grade in the first year, an age 5 to 10 - kindergarten to 5th grade in the second year) by providing these children and their families wrap-around services, referrals for services, parenting classes, and skills that reduce the risk of chronic truancy that will inhibit their chances of future academic and life success.

Objectives of the Study

This project is a program evaluation attempting to discern and develop critical program factors, and as such, there are no formal hypotheses to be tested. However, our research question for this project is:

Do family focused services provided by a community based organization reduce truancy for elementary school youth in grades K-3 (K-5 in year 2) who have between 5 and 9 absences compared to youth who are not referred for services? If so, which of those services are more effective?

This project will conduct a process and outcome evaluation of this truancy prevention effort. As this is a new project, the evaluation is in the developmental phase and the goal will be to determine both which factors are effective at reducing truancy including program services such as home visits, parent training,

and referrals to other needed services (outcome), and what are the steps that need to be taken to ensure that the crucial services are provided (implementation or process).

In order to properly assess if there is an impact of services on truancy, it will be important to control for other factors that could explain the outcomes. For this reason, this research application seeks approval to obtain the prior academic, attendance, and disciplinary performance of youth in both the treatment group and in a comparison group of similarly situated youth in schools in the same or similar wards. This information would be coupled with assessment data, demographic, and family structure information (e.g., socio-economic status, number of siblings, single vs. duo parent household) which is obtained by the CBO in their routine programmatic process.

Significance of the Problem

The District of Columbia Crime Policy Institute at the Urban Institute examined variations in truancy among the District's middle and high schools (Lieberman & Cahill, 2012). Their findings support both early interventions and family-based interventions for younger students. In searching for predictors of high school truancy, they found that high school absences are predicted by 8th grade truancy. Variations in high school truancy rates were not indicative of varying interventions at the high schools themselves, but rather dependent on the students' truant behavior in middle school. The authors thus concluded that the most effective and efficient approach to lowering high school truancy rates would be lowering middle school truancy rates. Additionally, their research found that residential neighborhood features had more influence on high school students' truancy than middle school students'; concluding that family influences have a stronger effect on younger children so that, "truancy interventions that are primarily family-based are more likely to prove effective at earlier ages" (p. ii). Both of these findings support the findings in the literature that early truancy interventions impact later truant behavior and should address the powerful influence of the family.

In recent years, the District of Columbia made changes to its policy regarding truancy. The 2009 Compulsory Education and School Attendance regulation lays out specific policies and procedures District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) must follow regarding attendance.¹ Schools are required to have an absenteeism protocol focused on prevention of unexcused absences that includes academic and behavioral interventions addressing their needs.² Schools must maintain, among other things, a procedure of personal contact with parents after one unexcused absence, and a set of practices offering supports, incentives and consequences, and intervention strategies to deal with absenteeism.³ Additionally, schools must refer students accumulating five or more unexcused absences to a school-based Student Support Team (SST) that will work with parents to develop an attendance intervention plan and to review the underlying causes of the absences as well as make recommendations for needed services (academic or social).⁴ After 10 unexcused absences, students aged 5-13 are referred to Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA); students aged 14 and over are referred to Court Social Services Division of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia and to the Office of the Attorney General

¹DC Municipal Regulations and DC Register
<http://www.dcregs.dc.gov/Gateway/ChapterHome.aspx?ChapterID=230295>

² Sec 2103.2

³ Sec 2101.2 (c)(1)(2)

⁴ Sec 2102.2 (c)(3)

Juvenile Section after 25 absences [starting with the 2014-2015 school year referrals are made after 20 absences].⁵

In testimony before the District of Columbia Council Committee of the Whole and the Judiciary, Judith Sandalow (2012), Executive Director of Children’s Law Center, praised the Council’s passing of the Families Together Amendment Act of 2010 which allowed changes in CFSA policy she argued allowed more opportunity for truant District youth and their families to get the help they needed. Further, Michele Rosenberg (2012), Chief of Staff of CFSA, remarked that the new policy enabled them to better help families by focusing on services keeping families together rather than removing children from homes. She testified that CFSA was able to work closely with DCPS as a result of the new policies and that both wished to be able to “identify the main issues behind chronic truancy as a foundation for undertaking targeted prevention” (Rosenberg, 2012).

Addressing a Key Research Priority

This project addresses the major research priority of **Compelling Schools**, particularly as it relates providing “strong support for social and emotional needs”. This evaluation seeks to shed light on the “main issues behind chronic truancy” – in particular with respect to *early* intervention. The knowledge gained from this project is likely to illuminate the social and emotional needs of these truant students and their families. In addition, the process or implementation component of the evaluation will highlight the barriers, challenges and successes of the partnership between DCPS and the CBO providing the services to these children and their families. This, in turn, can lead to refinement of policies and procedures which can strengthen the approach to truancy intervention and prevention practices.

Review of the Literature

Chronic youth absences from school are generally recognized to negatively affect school performance, be indicative of school detachment, and to enhance the likelihood a student will drop out completely. The issue of truancy reduction and prevention has thus received a lot of attention as an effort to address one of the issues perceived to be at the root of both poor school performance and juvenile delinquency. Available literature provides insight into both the risk factors involved for truant behavior and the negative effects of prolonged absence and dropping out of school. With the opportunity to prevent these long term negative effects and deter delinquency, the literature supports early interventions—preventing elementary truancy from developing into long term detachment from school (Dembo & Gullledge, 2009; Chang & Jordan, 2011; Lehr et al, 2004). While there appears to be a lack of rigorously evaluated truancy interventions due to limitations (e.g., the lack of a universal definition of truancy and the consequent difficulties in collecting data) (Dembo & Gullledge, 2009; Gandy & Schulz, 2007), some interventions have produced significant reductions in truant behavior thus providing a set of best practices to draw upon.

Truancy interventions should involve multi-modal services at an individualized level. Demonstrated successes in the literature appear when multiple agencies and providers work together to target the varying factors involved in truant behavior. Youth behavior is influenced by many factors; thus truant behavior could be a result of a student’s academic difficulties, a family’s financial difficulties, or substance use or abuse by parent or student. Understanding the various potential causes of truant behavior is imperative to determining which services provide the best opportunity for improving student

⁵ Section 2103.5

outcomes; multiple services may be needed (academic tutoring, housing assistance, substance counseling). From this it should also be clear that each student's needs will be different, so interventions must be individualized to each student specifically. An individualized course of action and consistent and persistent involvement with each student and family improve the likelihood of positively impacting behavior. This important aspect of interventions is also one which poses challenges. It may be difficult to maintain such interaction with students and/or parents throughout the course of an intervention due to inconsistent contact information and interest, but parental involvement is crucial. Truant behavior may also be reflective of a lack of attachment to school—on the part of parent and student—so that an important aspect of any intervention should focus on changing family attitudes towards school and attendance in order to build a strong attachment and better prepare students for overall success. The earlier this attachment is made stronger the better, as it allows children to fully enjoy the benefits of their education.

The potential to prevent not only truancy but further delinquent and negative behavior supports efforts to intervene at the earliest possible stages. Dembo and Gullledge (2009) caution against delaying attention or intervention until after a youth's absence becomes chronic, as at that point additional, more serious problems are likely to have developed. Chang and Jordan (2011) also stress the importance of early interventions as a means to prevent later academic difficulties which lead to increased likelihood a student will dropout. Citing the findings of an Attendance Works Report,⁶ they state that only 17 percent of kids chronically absent (missing at least 10 percent of school) in kindergarten and first grade were proficient readers by the end of third grade compared to two thirds of their peers with regular attendance (Chang & Jordan, 2011).

Stating that “the detrimental path leading to school withdrawal starts early,” Lehr et al (2004, p. 280) also support early interventions based on evidence showing that early home environment and the quality of care-giving are powerful predictors of whether students remain in or drop out of school. Most dropouts exhibit signs of school withdrawal and disengagement including poor attendance and academic or behavioral troubles prior to making the decision to drop out (Lehr et al, 2004). Citing a Barrington and Hendricks retrospective study⁷ of early school patterns of dropouts, they state that, “students who dropped out could be differentiated from those who completed school with nearly 70 percent accuracy by third grade” (Lehr, 2004, p. 280). Thus the authors stress the importance of early identification of attendance issues and building student engagement in school so as to prevent the long term negative effects experienced by dropouts—unemployment, underemployment, incarceration, and long term dependency on social services (Lehr et al, 2004).

Literature Supported Best Practices

The available literature appears to concur that the most effective truancy interventions involve a comprehensive understanding of the contributing factors to truancy and thus according to Lehr et al (2004) requires a “complementary model of intervention to address the complexity of associated issues” (p. 282). The effort involves both multiple targets and multiple players; most of the literature calls for a collaborative effort reaching across schools, families, and communities (Dembo & Gullledge, 2009; Gardner Center, 2012; Gandy & Schulz, 2007; NCSE, 2007; Lehr et al, 2004). Involving multiple

⁶ Applied Survey Research. (2011, May). Attendance in Early Elementary Grades: Association with Student Characteristics, School Readiness and Third Grade Outcomes. Watsonville, Calif.

⁷ Barrington, B.L., & Hendricks, B. (1989). Differentiating Characteristics of High School Graduates, Dropouts, and Nongraduates. *Journal of Educational Research*, 89, 309-319.

stakeholders such as law enforcement, courts, social services, and mental health communities not only increases the pool of resources but also allows multiple issues to be addressed (Gardner Center, 2012). Effective truancy interventions focus on multi-modal strategies that target these various underlying issues and offer a continuum of supports—academic, behavioral, family, and health (Gardner Center, 2012). Such collaborations also include training for parents/guardians and teachers of affected youth to allow them to better cope with truant behaviors in students (Gandy & Schulz, 2007). Additionally, the literature supports a staged approach to interventions that becomes more individualized: letter home, phone call to parents, home visit (Gardner Center, 2012) with court utilized as the last resort (Gandy & Schulz, 2007).

Truancy: Contributing Factors and Negative Outcomes

Students with truant tendencies often face numerous contributing factors ranging across personal, family, and school issues. Literature shows the common causes of withdrawal from school to include among others: low self-esteem, substance use or abuse, poor academic performance, poverty, unstable home, poor access to health care and transportation, and poor teacher relationships (National Center for School Engagement, 2007; Dembo & Gullledge, 2009 Baker et al, 2001). Many of these issues prevent children from being able to attend school regularly—through no fault of their own—causing long term negative effects. Given the wide range of contributing factors, truancy interventions should be collaborative efforts that attempt to address as many of the root causes as possible; truancy is not strictly a school or law enforcement problem.

Truancy itself is also considered a contributing factor to further negative outcomes such as delinquency, substance use and abuse, and poor financial outcomes as it is linked to higher likelihood of high school dropout (NCSE, 2007; Baker et al, 2001). A National Center for School Engagement (NCSE, 2007) report describes the relationship between truancy and such negative behaviors as delinquency, substance use and abuse, and high school dropout as “circular” because truancy is both a “ cause and consequence” of these behaviors.

Sample and Selection

The data requested in this research application are for youth referred to CBOs who have between 5 and 9 absences and a comparison group of similarly situated students in schools in or around the same wards. For those participating in the first year, JGA identified the set of comparison schools and paired the schools (See Table 1, below). Data were obtained from the DC School Profiles⁸ including 2012-2013 enrollment (total enrolled and population by race (percent Black, Latino, White etc), percent of English Language Learners, percent receiving free lunch, percent in Special education, percent living “In Boundary”) and test statistics (percent of population at below basic math, basic math, basic reading etc). JGA provided aggregate statistics on truancy by school and grade -- number and percent truant 5 to 9 times in the 2011-2012 school year.

The schools were group as either a treatment or comparison site and were compared overall and also grouped by the assigned CBO assigned. Statistical analysis using difference of two-means test revealed that the treatment schools (N=17) varied little from the comparison schools (N=17). Only a few factors varied significantly. The treatment schools had significantly lower percent white students ($p<.10$), a higher percentage of youth receiving free lunch (significant at $p<05$), and had fewer youth in the fourth

⁸ <http://profiles.dcps.dc.gov/>

grade who were truant 5 to 9 times (significant at $p < .10$). For all other factors, the schools, based on these metrics, were substantially the same.

Conducting the comparison of treatment and control schools when grouped by CBO assigned to work with the treatment schools reveals, again, that overall, the treatment and comparison schools are largely similar. For instance, exploring the 3 schools working with East River (C.W. Harris; Kenilworth and Davis Elementary) and their paired comparison schools, the only statistically significant are that those in the treatment schools have fewer second grade youth meeting the 5 to 9 truant threshold (average of 6.67 youth in the treatment schools compared to 11.33 of the comparison schools) ($p < .05$) and a lower percent of fourth grade youth truant 5 to 9 times in the treatment schools ($p < .10$). For schools serviced by Boys Town, (Langley, Garrison, Barnard, Noyes, and Marshall) those in the treatment schools are lower percentage of youth, on average who are In Boundary (42% vs. 59% - significant at $p < .05$) and have higher percentage of youth who are at an advanced math level (treatment schools average 9.2% compared to comparison schools at 3% -- significant at $< .10$). Boys Town schools also have fewer fifth grade youth with 5 to 9 absences (average of 7 compared to 16 youth at $p < .10$). Overall, this pattern of finding only a few factors significant different between the treatment and comparison schools is consistent across the school grouping by CBO (although the factors vary by CBO)⁹. In sum, while there are differences in the treatment and comparison schools, most of the differences found using these measures, are not statistically significant, and thus, at this juncture, these schools would appear adequate to serve as comparison sites for this program.

Table 1: List of Treatment and Paired Comparison Schools – Year 1

| <u>Treatment School</u> | <u>Paired To:</u> <u>Ward</u> | <u>Comparison School</u> | <u>Ward</u> |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------|
| Marshall Elementary School | 5 | Brookland Education Campus | 5 |
| Noyes Education Campus | 5 | Wheatley Education Campus | 5 |
| Langley Education Campus | 5 | Peabody Elementary | 6 |
| H.D. Cooke Elementary | 1 | Watkins Elementary | 6 |
| Tubman Elementary | 1 | Seaton Elementary | 2 |
| Cleveland Elementary | 1 | Payne Elementary | 6 |
| Marie Reed Elementary | 1 | Tyler Elementary | 6 |
| C.W. Harris Elementary | 7 | Nalle Elementary | 7 |
| Kenilworth Elementary | 7 | Houston Elementary School | 7 |
| Davis Elementary | 7 | Aiton Elementary School | 7 |
| Walker-Jones Education Campus | 6 | Brent Elementary | 6 |
| J.O. Wilson Elementary | 6 | Maury Elementary | 6 |
| Browne Education Campus | 5 | Winston Education Campus | 7 |
| Amidon-Bowen Elementary | 6 | Randle Highlands Elementary | 7 |
| Barnard Elementary | 4 | Brightwood Education Campus | 4 |
| Garrison Elementary | 2 | Drew Elementary School | 7 |
| Bruce Monroe Elementary | 1 | Langdon Education Campus | 5 |

⁹ Complete results of this analysis are available upon request.

As a few of the schools listed above are closing this year, and as there may be new CBOs in year 2 (and perhaps assigned to different schools), this process of exploring these differences will be conducted again before requesting data for comparison in year 2.

The selection procedure for the treatment group would be that this researcher would compile the names of youth referred for service, along with their dates of birth, and name of school of the youth and submit this list to DCPS to match with student records in order to obtain the requested data. (This list could be provided to DCPS in a variety of formats including comma delimited, excel, SPSS, etc.).

The selection process for the comparison group would be more complex because we are requesting the assistance of Office of Data and Accountability (ODA) to select youth (either a random sample or cohort) who are in grades K-3 (year 1) from the designated comparison schools who have between 5 and 9 absences in 2011-2012 school year. For year 2, a similar process would be to select youth with the same criteria but from grades K-5.

Research Design/Methodology

This is a secondary data analysis of administrative and program data collected by the Community Based Organizations, ODA/DCPS, and decisions of truancy substantiation/no substantiation by CFSA.

The first step in the analysis is to examine the treatment group by computing descriptive statistics (e.g., frequencies, measures of central tendency, and measures of dispersion) on demographic characteristics, data contained in the assessment and intake instruments, as well academic, attendance, and disciplinary data from the prior year (2011-2012). We will then use multi-level models (regression, logistic regression) to examine the association between these specific variables, the interventions employed by the CBOs, and the impact on DCPS data of academic performance, attendance and disciplinary actions in the 2012-2013 school year.

The second step is to conduct an analysis looking at both the treatment youth and the comparison group on the academic, attendance and disciplinary action outcomes in the current year, controlling for demographic characteristics and prior academic, attendance and disciplinary actions. A comparison group is critical to determining the amount of change that can be attributed to the CBO intervention because otherwise, it is possible that youth may have improved on their own, without the benefit of the program. With a comparison group, we set the baseline of what to expect when there is no intervention, and use that to compare to those who received the intervention. This same process will be repeated in year 2.

Data Requested

Three times over the course of the project (Aug 2013; April 2014 and Aug 2014), we request the following data for all youth in the treatment and comparison groups:

- Demographic data: age, gender and race/ethnicity;
- Academic performance: grades and test scores;
- Attendance records: Number of excused absences, number of unexcused absences, and number of times tardy; and
- Disciplinary Actions: Number of disciplinary actions, suspensions and expulsions

Request for Confidential Data without Consent

We request an exception for obtaining data under FERPA § 99.31(a)(6) **Organizations conducting studies**, which states: *Current regulations restate the statutory provision that allows a school district or postsecondary institution to disclose personally identifiable information from education records, without consent, to organizations conducting studies “for, or on behalf of” the disclosing institution for purposes of developing, validating, or administering predictive tests; administering student aid programs; or improving instruction ... [and under section § 99.31(a)(3)] for audit, evaluation, or enforcement purposes.)*¹⁰

The data requested is necessary to conduct an evaluation of the intervention provided by the CBOs in *administering this student aid program* in their efforts to address the root causes of truancy. The information gleaned from this evaluation will build our understanding of the impact of early intervention on youth outcomes, and highlight the barriers, challenges and successes of the partnership between DCPS and the CBO providing the services to these children and their families. This, in turn, can lead to refinement of policies and procedures which can strengthen the approach to truancy intervention and prevention practices.

This research applicant understands and agrees that information disclosed under this exception must be protected so that students and their parents cannot be personally identified by anyone other than representatives of the organization conducting the study, and must be destroyed when no longer needed for the study. If this application is approved, I also understand that a Memorandum of Agreement and DPCS Confidentiality Agreement are required.

In addition, all data will be reported on an aggregate basis and to ensure confidentiality, a four digit code will be assigned to each subject to protect their identity. Any electronic files containing identifying information will be maintained on secure personal computer drives and will be password protected. A list linking the name of the subject with the identification number will be kept in a locked filing cabinet and/or will be maintained electronically but password protected at all times and will be under the express control of Shawn M. Flower, Ph.D. All other files, data, and information will contain only the four digit ID number and no other identifying information.

Treatment Group Identifying Data Process

When the name of the treatment group youth is submitted to ODA to match to school records, the dataset will also include a 4 digit research Identification number. When the academic performance, attendance and disciplinary data are returned from ODA, we request that any identifying information be removed, retaining only the research identification number so that these records can be linked back to the CBO programmatic files.

Comparison Group Identifying Data Process

While individual level data is necessary to conduct the analysis, the identities of youth in the comparison group are not necessary to conduct the evaluation. For this reason, we ask if ODA, if they can accommodate our request for the comparison group, to submit the data to the applicant without names or other identifying information. However, if the performance, attendance, and disciplinary data are

¹⁰ <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/pdf/ht12-17-08-att.pdf>

submitted in separate datasets, we would request some means (e.g., an assigned number) to identify the same individual across those data sets.

Primary Data Collection Plan

Not Applicable – this is a secondary data analysis. There is no direct interaction with the subjects, nor does this require any interaction between the research applicant and any individual school or school staff.

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