Program Name: Truancy/BECCA
Secondary Education and K12 Supports

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Foundational Legislation: The Becca Bill passed in 1996 creating RCW 28A.225.010

Background
After the death of Becca Hedman (a 13 year old who was murdered on the streets of Spokane) legislation was created to enable schools and parents to access help from the courts to provide services and supports to truant youth. Unfortunately, the supports were never well funded and the resulting legislation has led to Washington state leading the nation in the last few years in incarcerating status offenders (youth who have not committed a crime, but become criminalized by defying the judge’s order to attend school or comply with other directives from the courts). Recent and ongoing changes to the legislation are creating a climate of identifying supports for schools and courts to use to assist youth and families and avoid court, including data informed interventions and community truancy boards.

Purpose/Equity Focus
Students in poverty and students of color drop out of school at a higher rate. Students who miss 18 days or more of school (unexcused or excused) annually are also more likely to not finish school and graduate. The move toward determining the underlying causes of truancy and addressing them in non-punitive measures should result in closing the equity gaps in graduation rates, and other key indicators of academic success.

Key Initiatives 16-17

Description:
- Administration of the grants for training community truancy boards across the state
- Supporting the state Becca Conference and an additional day of training as a pre-conference for the student support conference
- Providing technical assistance to districts, schools and families, including templates and translations for districts to use to inform parents of attendance expectations
- Continuing to work with the legislature to create a policy framework that embraces the current research on truancy amelioration
- Write the annual legislative report on truancy and publish the data for unexcused absences and truancy
Measures of Success:
- More than double the number of districts using community truancy boards (from about 50 to over 100)
- New legislation that creates consistent expectations for implementation
- Decreases in the numbers of students reaching the threshold of having a truancy petition filed with the courts

Successes:
- Over 300 people attended the state Becca Conference
- All 9 ESD’s and a juvenile court partner attended a training of trainers for implementing and training Community Truancy Boards
- Better data will be collected in the 16-17 school year on who is being impacted by truancy
- More school districts have entered into MOU’s with their local courts to address truancy

Challenges:
- A lack of funding to support the ongoing training needs of school districts
- No assessment tool for elementary age children to look at root causes
- A lack of resources in communities to deal with underlying causes of truancy
- A culture of punishment solves the problem
- Poor data

Partners/Resources:
- Educational Service Districts
- State Becca Task Force
- The Office of the Administration of the Courts
- Washington State University
- Models for Change
- Center for Children and Youth Justice
- the Mockingbird Society
- Juvenile courts
- Department of Commerce
- Department of Social and Health Services