

The information contained in this document is intended to serve as guidance for schools across Utah in addressing truancy at the local level. School districts across the state are each unique and what works in one district may not work in another. With many options and alternatives available each district should be able to address truancy either through utilizing an existing program or creating a new program, protocol or process that meets the district's unique needs.

I. Options available for schools to respond to truancy are described below:

- Schools may offer counseling or make schedule or curriculum adjustments to meet the child's needs
- Schools may establish or operate truancy support centers
- Schools may establish or operate truancy mediation
- Schools may establish or operate a restorative justice program or other intervention
- Schools may refer a child or family to a Mobile Crisis Outreach Team
- Schools may refer a child to a local Receiving Center operated by the Division of Juvenile Justice Services (JJS)
- Schools may refer a child to a Local Mental Health Authority
- Schools may refer the case to the Division of Child and Family Services if they believe the home is unfit and the child is the victim of abuse or neglect by the parents
- Parents may be charged with a Class B misdemeanor for intentionally or recklessly failing to prevent a child's absence at school

II. Additional programs available in Utah to address truancy and increase student attendance are described below¹:

1. Mobile Crisis Outreach Teams

Mobile Crisis Outreach Teams use a multidisciplinary group of community partners to provide family-based interventions to empower parents when a youth is identified as needing mental, emotional, and behavioral supports. Families can contact MCOT when a youth is experiencing mental, emotional, or behavioral crisis and a two-person team will respond in-person to a home, school, or other community location and work with the family to create and sign a behavioral contract to give parents tools for responding to escalating behavior in order to hold youth accountable. Services include weekly in-home contact and over the phone counseling and may also include crisis respite and linking to community resources.

2. JJS Youth Services and Receiving Centers

These centers provide immediate assessment and crisis counseling for youth and families as well as temporary crisis residential services. Youth may be referred after arrest or directly by schools, parents, or law enforcement. Strengthening Families group is offered by Youth Services free of charge to parents

¹ For more information about specific services available in your community, please visit <https://justice.utah.gov/Juvenile/hb239.html> under "Service Catalog Options by Judicial District"

and youth prior to court involvement. The program provides parents with behavior modification tools and effective responses for curbing youth's behavior.

3. Youth or Peer Courts

Peer courts are used as an alternative to the formal court process for youth who have no prior history and a presenting Class B misdemeanor or below. If a youth meets these requirements, they can participate in peer court with a jury of their peers. If successful, the youth does not enter the juvenile justice system.

4. School-based Health Services

School-based health services partners with 300 Utah schools and Local Mental Health Authorities to provide mental, emotional, and behavioral health services.

5. ADAPT²

ADAPT is a small-group intervention for middle and high school students who are at risk for substance use, aggression, truancy, poor school performance, and depressive moods. The program includes 12 sessions that teach fundamental skills such as: effective problem solving; decision making; refusing drugs; effective communication; and anger management. JJS teaches these classes in school and in the community.

6. Functional Behavior Assessment of Absenteeism and Truancy

An assessment and intervention system that will guide you to evidence-based interventions for students who are chronically absent or truant. The materials help schools implement procedures to minimize absenteeism and truancy and describes 25 research-based interventions for use with individual students, small groups, and classes.

III. Examples of how some school districts in Utah are finding success to address truancy:

• **Davis School District (DSD)**

DSD uses a multi-tiered system of support to identify and address truancy and attendance concerns among its students. The multi-tiered system of support includes five steps at the school level involving student and family outreach, assessment, and targeted intervention to understand the root of the problem and link family to needed resources. More information can be found here:

<https://www.davis.k12.ut.us/page/1419>

• **Juab School District (JSD)**

JSD takes a collaborative approach to addressing truancy, as well as other issues students and their families might be facing. JSD has established the Local Interagency Council (LIC) with other agencies including Juvenile Justice Services, county mental health, hospital, local police department, sheriff's office, Division of Child and Family Services, and others to meet monthly to staff all students and

² Currently being evaluated by the program developer and JJS.

families that might be struggling. The LIC works to coordinate individualized plans to help students stay out of the juvenile justice system and find success.

- **Nebo School District (NSD)**

For many years NSD has had a truancy protocol that uses administrative conferences, truancy classes, and truancy court. During the 2017/2018 school year NSD has added a tier three intervention which is a Restorative Intervention Team to provide additional help and support to students and parents who are struggling with truancy. For more information please contact Mike Brown: mike.brown@nebo.edu.