
THE TRUANCY INTERVENTION PROJECT

I. Project Description

The Truancy Intervention Project (TIP) is a dropout prevention program initiated by the Atlanta Bar Association in late 1991. TIP serves children in metro Atlanta who are chronically absent from school and as a result, either become involved with the Juvenile Court or are referred for early intervention at the school level before a juvenile court referral becomes necessary.

By pairing trained legal professionals who are willing to donate their time and services, with children and their families, TIP strives to decrease absenteeism rates and provide families with the resources and services necessary to ensure good attendance and success in school.

II. Project Planning/Development

A. Identification of Need

Founded by then Chief Judge of the Fulton County Juvenile Court, Glenda Hatchett, and the Atlanta Bar Leadership, TIP was founded to serve the needs of truant children enrolled in Atlanta City and Fulton County school systems. Serving school age children who are at risk of school failure, TIP is now a thriving partnership among the Atlanta Bar, the Fulton County Juvenile Court and Kids in Need of Dreams, Inc (KIND, Inc.).

The overwhelming majority of children served by the Truancy Intervention Project are economically disadvantaged, minority children, who are not only living, but also trying to *learn* within the violent and dismal boundaries of inner city life. In the city of Atlanta, hundreds of school age children are regularly seen loitering in unsafe areas during school hours and unbeknownst to them, putting themselves in dangerous situations that could lead to future delinquency, teen pregnancy, prostitution, drug use, homelessness and, sometimes, even death. Without intervention, far too many of these significantly at risk children would fall victim to these dangers and become lost among the uneducated, unwanted and disenfranchised population of citizens in the community.

The following statistics also illustrate the need for more intervention on behalf of truant children.

- In the United States, a student drops out of school every 13 seconds of every school day.
- Dropouts are **6** times as likely to be unwed parent, **7 ½** more likely to be dependent on welfare and **3 ½** times more likely to commit a crime as a juvenile than high school graduates.
- Each school failure costs society a minimum of **\$440,000** in lost earnings and taxes over the lifetime of the individual. This does not include any costs associated with crime or public assistance.
- More than **82%** of adult prison inmates in Georgia are high school dropouts.

Questions to ask when conducting a needs determination:

- Q. Why target truants when there are children facing far more serious charges who desperately need attorneys and resources?

Truancy is often a child's *first* encounter with the court system. Intervention at this stage is critical. The court becomes less of an influence on a child's behavior as the child becomes accustomed to the court process. An effective truancy project can provide strong intervention when it is most effective, early.

Q. How does the program improve the handling of truancy cases?

The program responds in three ways:

Responsiveness- A separate juvenile court calendar may be established to ensure a timely response. Timing is critical in truancy cases. The longer the hearings are delayed, the longer a child is likely to be out of school.

Representation- The child will be represented by an attorney volunteer who may have more time to devote to the individual case than a Court Appointed attorney or a Public Defender.

Resources- The project staff, volunteers, and probation officers will help families to better locate and utilize existing resources: tutoring programs, summer camps, clothing resources, and transportation and healthcare providers.

Q. How did the Atlanta Truancy Project begin?

Atlanta's Truancy Intervention Project began in 1991 as a joint effort by Fulton County (Atlanta) former Juvenile Court Judge Glenda Hatchett and W. Terence Walsh, then President of the Atlanta Bar Association. The project was started in response to the recurring factor of truancy among children who appeared in Juvenile Court. Walsh and Hatchett saw truancy as a symptom of underlying problems. If the underlying problems were addressed and treated, Atlanta's at-risk children would stand a much better chance of attaining an education.

The Court implemented several changes. Two probation officers were assigned to the truancy unit, each carrying a maximum caseload of 60 children, all experiencing their first encounter with the court. A separate court calendar was established to hear only truancy cases. The separate calendar facilitated the flow of truancy cases, allowing cases to be heard faster and more efficiently.

At the same time, the Atlanta Bar Association loaned a member to serve as the Referral Coordinator/Executive Director for the new truancy project. The project was publicized through bar association mailings and meetings. As attorneys started volunteering, the first CLE training seminar was held at a local college. Once this pool of trained attorneys was organized, the first truancy cases were referred to the volunteers. In 1992, 90 children entered the truancy project.

Today, more than 200 attorneys actively represent truancy project cases. New volunteers are trained twice each year. As of July 2002, TIP has served over 1,750 children. The project continues to evolve to meet the changing needs of Atlanta's children and families.

B. Determination of Project Goals and Design

1. Decisions to be made

i. Project Goals

By pairing trained legal professionals who are willing to donate their time and services, with children and their families, TIP strives to decrease absenteeism rates and provide families with the resources and services necessary to ensure good attendance and success in school. TIP volunteers not

only contribute their time to serve as legal counsel in juvenile court proceedings, but also serve as caring advocates and mentors for the child and family.

The main objective of the Project is to provide early, positive intervention when children are reported as truants or educationally deprived. The Project's real hope is that once the reasons for absences can be determined and resolved, and the child returns to school, then perhaps the child's life can be redirected to a more positive and constructive future.

ii. Project Design

In Fulton County, Georgia, after attending a short training program, each legal volunteer is assigned to represent a child in one of three types of cases: truancy, educational neglect or early intervention. Truancy cases typically deal with children between the ages of 11 and 16. As a truant's attorney, volunteers provide direct representation to children at the adjudication and disposition proceedings in Juvenile Court. In educational neglect cases, volunteers serve as *guardians ad litem* and represent the best interests of children whose parents are charged with depriving their child of an education. The newest facet of TIP is the early intervention case, which addresses chronic absenteeism at the school level before court intervention becomes a necessity. Elementary school aged children are targeted for services at the first sign of an attendance problem and assigned a TIP volunteer. The TIP volunteer then works with the child and family to ensure that adequate services and resources are in place to prevent the case from reaching the court level.

Volunteers work with the school social worker, school counselor, staff of KIND, Inc. and in truancy and educational neglect cases, the Juvenile Court probation officer, to devise an individualized plan for each child that will provide the child with the services and resources necessary to ensure regular school attendance in the future. Working with the court, KIND, Inc., the school and community agencies, volunteers are able to serve as an invaluable resource for the children and families participating in TIP.

Conceived in response to the overwhelming number of children appearing in juvenile court with truancy issues and the undeniable adverse consequences of school failure, TIP, now in its eleventh year, has represented more than 1,650 children through the pro bono efforts of hundreds of dedicated volunteers. Since truancy is always a symptom of something which has gone wrong in a child's life, TIP volunteers are trained in Bar sponsored CLE seminars to look for warning signs of more serious problems and are able to make available community agencies and social services available to TIP children and their families. So often, these volunteers have been the catalysts, serving as the first point of contact with the children and, perhaps, the first person in the child's experience who has emphasized the significance of education on the potential quality of the child's experience. Volunteers spend an average of 25 to 30 hours on each case and, often, maintain contact with the child and family long after the TIP case is closed.

2. Decision making process

Key Figures in decision making process:

These key figures should be interviewed for their insights:

- Parent Associations
- Associate Judges/ Probation Officers
- School System Social Worker Supervisor/ Social Workers
- School Principals
- Local Bar Association
- Local Child Advocates/ Juvenile Public Defenders
- Local Law Firms/ Corporations/ Businesses

3. Considerations in Project Planning

a. Community Resources

Once it is determined that an attorney-generated truancy program could benefit children in the community, a decision must be made to decide if it is possible to actually get a program operating. The most important factor is the Juvenile Court Judge's support. Without the Judge's support, this kind of program simply is not possible. Of course, this does not mean that the Judge must immediately embrace the idea, but it is important to know that the Judge is open to discussing and investigating the project.

The aforementioned key figures must also be receptive to the idea and believe in the project in order for the project to be effective.

From these informational interviews, inquire about the following:

1. Is there a history of successful volunteer programs in the community?
2. Will the bar association support this program?
3. Will court-appointed attorneys support it?
4. Is there a potential for local funding?

This project can only operate as a partnership between various entities.

b. Personnel

The program requires at a minimum, a referral coordinator, part or full time, who can match children with volunteers. The referral coordinator contacts trained volunteers to accept cases and is responsible for forwarding the corresponding case files to volunteers from the court. Depending on the number of children to be served, a community may need 20 volunteers or it may need to 200. Each community must assess the needs of the children in the community in order to assess how many volunteers will be needed to meet their needs.

Volunteers can expect to serve for at least one year or as long as the child has an open case to provide legal and advocacy services with the child as well as to develop a mentoring relationship with the child.

c. Revenue Availability/Fundraising

A major obstacle in the early planning stages is creating a budget. The following is intended to help with the design of a limited, yet feasible first year budget.

Model Annual Budget: \$15,000 or \$11,500 with in-kind support

**Indicates that this expense may be absorbed by an existing agency or donated in-kind.*

| Need | Cost | Description |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------|--|
| Personnel-Referral Coordinator | \$10,000.00 | One existing staff person-- either fully donated, or partly donated. Probably part-time |
| Personnel-Probation Officer | within existing court budget | Maneuver a single probation officer into the role of "truancy probation officer" to focus only on children experiencing their first encounter with the court. |
| Insurance | \$500.00 | Liability insurance for staff and volunteers. Volunteers carry their own malpractice insurance. |
| Volunteer Recruitment | *\$200.00 | Flyers, mailings, optimize free sources-- legal periodicals, firm publications, etc. |
| Office supplies | * \$200.00 | Share copiers, faxes, computers, etc., with other bar associations, firms, school or court programs. |
| Phone use/ e-mail | * \$2400.00 | Definitely your most valuable asset in the early stages. This project relies on communication. This number reflects an annual approximate budget for one phone and one fax/modem line. |
| Office space | *in kind | Locate an office within the juvenile court, school system or bar association offices. |
| Volunteer appreciation | \$300.00 | Appreciate your volunteers through holiday cards, newsletters, or an annual party to thank and recognize volunteers. |
| Volunteer Training | \$200.00 | Copying costs, refreshments |
| Postage | *\$400.00 | Mailing case files to attorneys, incidental postage. |
| Student incentives | \$500.00 | Annual prizes, certificates, or a party to recognize children in the project who have shown improvement. With enough effort, community donations may fulfill this need. |
| TOTAL | \$11,500-15,000 | \$11,500 with * services provided in-kind \$15,000 without |

d. Other/Equipment/Physical Needs

Currently, TIP occupies a small suite of offices, roughly 680 square feet in size. Outside of this space, TIP staff secures donated training space from area law firms. Equipment needs are relatively basic. Desktop computers capable of word-processing, Internet ready and minor publishing capabilities (newsletters, flyers, etc.), a copier, fax machine and telephone are the main components necessary.

III. Implementation-How to Replicate the Project

A. Timetable

Every community in the United States is affected by truancy. One of the first steps for combating the problem is to assess both the need and the current available resources.

The first point of contact should be the school board to inquire about internal dropout and truancy (excessive unexcused absence) statistics. If this information is not readily available through statistics (or

if it is difficult in obtaining this information), begin to assess the need through informal interviews with key players: school social workers, parents, and students. The school system is an excellent resource.

The next step is to assess the availability of existing programs. Ask school social workers how they typically handle truancy cases. What resources are available in the school and in the community? A valuable resource is the National Dropout Prevention Center at Clemson University. NDPC publishes a quarterly newsletter and maintains an extensive web page located at www.dropoutprevention.org. This web site outlines the NDPC network and will highlight all NDPC members in your community.

Assess whether an attorney-generated program is appropriate. Answering the following questions may be able to help you in this process:

1. Does the local school system file truancy and educational neglect petitions with the juvenile court or use some other mechanism for dealing with the issue of chronic absenteeism?
2. If so, how many were filed in Juvenile Court last year?
3. How many educational neglect petitions were filed against parents with children too young to be held responsible for their education?
4. Of the truancy petitions filed, how many were adjudicated with children placed on supervision?
5. Who currently represents these children in court proceedings?
6. Is the Judge satisfied with the representation and subsequent follow-up?
7. How does the school board rate their truancy issues?

It should already be established that the community has a truancy problem and needs an effective program to combat the problem. Gathering this preliminary information is still a good first step because it will support any proposals submitted to obtain the assistance of volunteers, judges, probation officers, schools, parents, and, of course, potential funding sources. The sources of this information: the Court, the schools, social workers, students and parents, are all future partners in this endeavor.

Year One Developmental Activities Checklist

For programs that will be incorporated into an existing structure, the italicized portions of the planning stage may be disregarded.

Planning Phase

- Research liability issues and obtain insurance
- Attorney volunteers' own malpractice insurance should protect them in the very unlikely event that they are sued for malpractice (it would be extremely difficult to commit legal malpractice in a truancy case). However, the truancy project must obtain director's and officer's liability insurance for all other issues.
- Create an organizational plan, determine staffing needs
- Document staff and (board, if applicable) job descriptions
- *Assemble a Board of Directors*
- Develop written goals and objectives
- Document volunteer job description
- Identify office space
- Identify a Program Director. Hire and train this person

Initial Operational Stage

- Continue to train the Program Director and any other staff hired
- Develop and implement a public relations/ volunteer recruitment plan
- Create public relations and training materials *(see publications section)

- Document guidelines for the partnership with the court, the school system, the local bar association, etc.
- Develop policies, procedures forms and case management tools
- Establish guidelines for screening volunteers. Generally, for attorney volunteers, this may be accomplished by obtaining the volunteer's state bar number and verifying it with the state bar. Most (if not all) Juvenile Courts have established formal guidelines for screening all volunteers. Usually this process is fairly inexpensive and requires the assistance of the local police.
- Train volunteers *to obtain Atlanta's comprehensive training manual for volunteers, please contact us.*
- Refer the first cases
- Develop a formal support system for volunteers
- Develop a formal evaluation system for the program
- Create methods of providing incentives for children
- Establish methods of recognizing volunteers

Administrative Basics

The list of tasks that need to be accomplished even before the first case may be placed may seem daunting, but with regular communication between the partnerships involved, all may flow smoothly. A crucial element of the success of your program will be the level of communication between the various individuals and organizations involved. Perhaps the best (and most obvious) way to overcome communications difficulties is to establish **regular** meeting dates. For example, the KIND staff meets with the President, and Secretary of the Board of Directors and the Paralegal Resource Advisor on a bi-weekly basis to discuss upcoming events, office needs, and overall progress. The entire TIP team meets monthly in the Judge's chambers to discuss the process-- better ways to communicate with school social workers, to provide incentives for students, or to reasonably accommodate for volunteers schedules in the court calendar.

It is strongly suggested that you establish **regular** meetings. During the early planning stages, meet more than once a week until the basics are established. Generally, the more regular the meetings, the more productive each meeting will be since agendas will flow from one meeting to the next. The program director should design an agenda for each meeting. This agenda should be forwarded in advance to everyone who will be present at the meeting. This allows additional matters to be formally added to the agenda. Each item of the agenda can then be discussed in order. Especially during the early stages, it may be wise to stipulate both a starting and ending time for each meeting.

Consider the basic needs of the project when choosing the location. It is ideal to be located close to the Juvenile Court so that the referral coordinator may meet volunteers and families before hearings, answer last minute questions, and talk with the probation officers. If that is not a possibility, consider other locations where court projects may be located so that case files may be transferred conveniently and inexpensively. Also consider other expenses-- where will the project pay a discounted phone service charge, or where will the project have use of a photocopy machine?

What to look for in the ideal location:

- Within the juvenile court, bar association or school system building, , or in close proximity
- In a location where files may be inexpensively transferred with the court via and/or schools inter-office mail, etc.
- In a location (the bar association office, the Juvenile Court, a law firm) where the phone usage will be discounted at a bulk rate.

- In a space where costly office supplies (photocopiers, postage meters, fax machines) can be shared with another organization.
- In a space where the confidentiality of court cases can be protected.

d. Recruitment and Training of Volunteers/Personnel

The Atlanta TIP model offers two live CLE training seminars each year for volunteers, in addition to numerous video replay sessions throughout the course of the year. Volunteers are recruited through the State Bar of Georgia's Younger Lawyers Division, various law firms in the city and surrounding areas as well as community businesses, civic groups and major corporations. Each seminar costs volunteers approximately \$45.00 if they are seeking CLE credit and official TIP training manual and resource guide is provided.

e. Publicity

Once the need for a program is established, partnerships with affected entities have been formalized and the administrative basics have been established, it is time to begin publicizing the program to potential volunteers, clients and the community.

Suggested Publications

1. Agency/Program brochure – this is the most important volunteer recruitment tool. It should have general information about the agency and state the agency mission, goals, objectives, and list contact information.
2. Client pamphlets – these will be placed in schools, Juvenile Court waiting areas and other agency locations to educate children and parents on their rights and responsibilities in truancy and/or educational neglect proceedings.
3. Newsletters – these will be regularly newsletters (monthly, quarterly, etc.) informing volunteers and supporters of the progress of the program and upcoming events, such as CLEs, annual events and other gatherings.
4. Annual statistics or Fact sheet – Maintain accurate case statistics each month showing information such as, the number of children served, their age, type of case, etc. Then, at least annually, compile the numbers for the year on a one page “fact sheet” showing the program’s positive impact in the community.
5. Special Event Flyers – seize every opportunity to publicize the good works of the program to the community! Preparing and distributing flyers are an inexpensive yet effective way of sharing the program’s events and generating interest and involvement with potential sponsors, volunteers and others.

f. Day to Day Operations

THE TRUANCY PROJECT PROCESS

Step One: The Role of the School Social Worker*

Before a truancy petition is filed with the Juvenile Court, school social workers should provide the following services to students and families:

1. Function as a child advocate to promote good school attendance for all students.
2. Consult with all school personnel to encourage early identification of students with a pattern of irregular or poor attendance
3. Conference with students at school to identify factors that may cause or contribute to poor school attendance.
4. Inform students and parents of their individual and collective responsibility in regard to compulsory school attendance laws.
5. Provide direct services to students and families during home visitations.
6. Collaborate with parents to identify problems at the home and school level, which may contribute to poor school attendance.
7. When appropriate, provide parents with a list of community resources that can provide a variety of services to families. (physical and mental health, financial, etc.)
8. Identify personnel and programs within the school that can provide additional support for students (psychological services, guidance and counseling, etc.)
9. Monitor the student's attendance on a weekly basis.
10. Provide ongoing written correspondence to parents regarding their student's school attendance (pre-legal, First and Final legal notices).

After a truancy petition has been heard in Juvenile Court and the student has been placed on supervision, the school social worker will:

1. Maintain contact with the student, parent, and appropriate school personnel to monitor school attendance.
2. Collaborate with probation officers to insure effective supervision of the Court order as it pertains to the student's school attendance.

**From the Fulton County School System policies*

Step Two: Referral

1. A petition is filed by a school social worker at the Juvenile Court.
2. If the student is a first time truant with no history of other status offenses or delinquencies, the case is referred to the Truancy Intervention Project probation officer.

3. The probation officer calendars the case and sends all pertinent paperwork to the Truancy Intervention Project referral coordinator.

Step Three: Placement

1. The referral coordinator phones trained project volunteers until she/he finds a volunteer willing and able to take the case.
2. Once the attorney officially accepts, the referral coordinator makes a copy of all case information and sends it to the attorney, keeping the original copies on file in the office.
3. The referral coordinator sends a letter to the child letting him/her know the attorney's name/work address, and work phone number, and asks the child to contact the attorney.
4. When the attorney receives the file, s/he begins making the appropriate contacts (i.e. probation officer, school social worker, parents, child) to learn more about the case. At this juncture, non-attorney volunteers may be assigned by the referral coordinator if the attorney needs assistance.

Step Four: Representation

1. The assigned attorney represents the child in Court at the first scheduled hearing and at all subsequent truancy-related hearings. The attorney will not be required to represent the child in any delinquency or deprivation issues should they arise in the case.
2. After the first hearing, the probation officer will notify the attorney of future hearings. (Ideally, the probation officers and attorneys are in contact and may arrange hearings based on the child's best interest and the attorney's schedule).
3. After the first hearing, the attorney fills out the case update form and returns it to the referral coordinator to keep her informed of developments in the case.
4. After the hearing, the attorney continues to advocate for the child, seeking appropriate incentives and services, and building a positive relationship with the child.
5. The attorney continues involvement with all parties until the case is officially closed in Juvenile Court. The referral coordinator is available to provide help at any point.

Attorney Volunteer Job Description

The attorney is asked to commit to one year, or as long as the child remains on Juvenile Court supervision, to provide legal and advocacy services for the child and to develop a mentoring relationship with the child.

The attorney has two major roles:

1. To represent the child as a lawyer and Guardian ad Litem in school attendance issues.
2. To be a role model and mentor to the child.

Attorney as Lawyer and Guardian ad Litem:

- The attorney will be present at all hearings and will represent the child in any court proceedings pertaining to school attendance issues.
- Always keeping in mind the best interests of the child, the attorney will advocate for services and programs, which will address the causes of the truancy.
- The attorney will communicate regularly with the Referral Coordinator, to update the Referral Coordinator of the child's progress and to locate resources for the child.
- The attorney will not be required to represent the child in any delinquency or deprivation issues should they arise in the case.
- The attorney does not represent the parent/family of the child.

Attorney as a Role Model and Mentor:

- The attorney will work to build a positive/supportive relationship with the child.
- In this role, the attorney will identify the needs in the child's life that are contributing to the child's truancy and will assist in locating resources to meet those needs.
- The attorney will encourage the child to attend school.
- The attorney will help to confront issues that might be contributing to the truancy.
- The attorney will strive to be a positive role model for the child.

Non-attorney Volunteer Job Description

Non-Attorney as a *Guardian Ad Litem*

A *guardian ad litem* is an appointed officer of the court who serves to *represent the best interests of the child*. The *guardian ad litem* is given a court order that allows him/her to investigate the child's situation and make reports to the court upon completion of that investigation. The non-attorney volunteer can serve as *guardian ad litem* in two circumstances: in truancy cases, or in educational neglect cases. In each situation, the volunteer will build a relationship with the child and seek resources to try and meet the child's needs.

Guardians Ad Litem in Educational Neglect Cases

Educational neglect is the term used in Fulton County Juvenile Court to describe truancy cases involving children under the age of 11. Barring unusual circumstances, a child under this age is not deemed responsible for the truancy. Complaints are filed against parents who have allegedly violated Georgia's school attendance laws. In these cases, attorney or non-attorney volunteers are assigned as *guardians ad litem* to inform the court of the best interests of the child(ren). Parents in educational neglect cases are represented by another attorney, not affiliated with the truancy project.

An attorney may find that he/she needs help in meeting the needs of the child. It is a challenge to form a relationship with the child and simultaneously locate and utilize the resources, which may help to put an end to the child's truancy. In this situation, an attorney may ask the Project staff for assistance

from a non-attorney volunteer. (It is important that the attorney utilize the process in place in order to preserve the confidentiality and training requirements for volunteers). The Project staff will select a volunteer who may serve as a partner with the attorney or as a *guardian ad litem* for the child, depending upon the circumstances of the case.

Non-Attorney Volunteer as a Partner

In this role, the non-attorney should first be in contact with the attorney to see what help is needed. The volunteer will then help in developing a mentor relationship with the child and in locating resources to meet the child's needs. The child will certainly benefit as the attorney and non-attorney volunteers work together with regular communication to serve the child.

Guardians Ad Litem in Truancy Cases

At times, the attorney may come to a stage when he/she feels that the dual role of attorney and guardian ad litem are in conflict. At that time, he/she will contact the Referral Coordinator to find another volunteer to serve as guardian ad litem. The second volunteer will not act as attorney for the child in the courtroom, but will make recommendations as to what would be best for the child. The volunteer will build a relationship with the child and seek resources to try and meet the child's needs.

An example:

Mary Jones is the attorney for a thirteen year-old child, Emily. Emily has been acting out at home and at school and has missed over 40 days of school. The school social workers, counselors, and the child's probation officer all strongly believe that Emily would benefit from a psychological evaluation and subsequent counseling. Emily absolutely refuses any sort of psychological treatment and has told Mary that she will run away if any attempt is made to treat her. Mary is concerned about Emily's emotional and physical well being if she does not receive treatment. As Emily's attorney, Mary would violate her ethical obligations if she revealed this belief to the court or the probation officers. Mary should contact the Project staff immediately and request that a Guardian Ad Litem be appointed to the case. Then Mary can argue on behalf of her client and inform the court that Emily does not feel she needs counseling. The Guardian Ad Litem, who represents the child's best interests, but does not have the same confidentiality constraints as the attorney, will inform the court that it would be in Emily's best interest to receive counseling.

IV. Evaluation and Impact

Conceived in response to the overwhelming number of children appearing in juvenile court with truancy issues and the undeniable adverse consequences of school failure, TIP, now in its eleventh year, has represented more than 1,650 children through the pro bono efforts of hundreds of dedicated volunteers. Since truancy is always a symptom of something which has gone wrong in a child's life, TIP volunteers are trained in Bar sponsored CLE seminars to look for warning signs of more serious problems and are able to make available community agencies and social services available to TIP children and their families. So often, these volunteers have been the catalysts, serving as the first point of contact with the children and, perhaps, the first person in the child's experience who has emphasized the significance of education on the potential quality of the child's experience. Volunteers spend an average of 25 to 30 hours on each case and, often, maintain contact with the child and family long after the TIP case is closed.

Since inception, over 1000 attorneys have been trained to take cases with TIP and have, collectively, saved Fulton County, through their pro bono contributions, over \$3,450,000 in court appointed legal fees.

The effectiveness of the Truancy Intervention Project has been well documented over the past few years with statistical reports maintained and updated on a yearly basis. Of the almost 1,800 children represented before July 1, 2002, more than 75 percent had not returned to Juvenile Court for any reason. In the 2000-2001 school year, 88 percent of the 243 children represented by TIP returned to school without further incident in the Juvenile Court. As the attached Report Card for school year 2000-2001 shows, as the number of children represented has increased, so did TIP's overall success rate.

Further evidence of the success of the project is the adaptation of the Atlanta/ Fulton County TIP model around Georgia and nationwide. In 1999, aware of TIP's success in Fulton County, the Georgia Bar Foundation generously awarded a grant to TIP to expand the program to other communities across the state and since that time, five Georgia jurisdictions have adopted the TIP model to fit their needs and another six are presently in the early stages of development, working towards the same goal. Nationwide, TIP has been recognized as a program with an innovative approach and unique adaptability to urban, rural and suburban communities. Communities in Minnesota, Florida, South Carolina, Wisconsin, Tennessee and Ohio have adapted the TIP model or are in the process of doing so and TIP has fielded inquiries and supplied information from Maine to California.

V. Bibliography/Resources

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