

Fulton County Student Attendance and School Climate Committee Protocol

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Table of Contents

1. Introduction	2
2. Mission	2
3. Vision	2
4. Commitment Statement	2
5. Protocol Partners / Committee Members	2
6. Relevant Law	3
7. School Intervention Process	3
o Tier 1 Attendance Interventions	3
o Tier 2 Interventions	4
o Tier 3 Interventions	4
8. Court Intervention Process	5
o Pre-Adjudication	5
o Adjudication	5
o Post-Adjudication	6
9. Measures	6
o Attendance Assessment Measures	6
o School Climate Assessment Measures	7
10. Community Partner Roles and Responsibilities	8
o Fulton County Superior Court	8
o Fulton County Juvenile Court	8
o Fulton County District Attorney's Office	10
o Fulton County Solicitor General's Office	12
o Fulton County Schools	14
o Atlanta Public Schools	15
o Fulton County Department of Family and Children Services	16
o Department of Juvenile Justice	17
o Fulton County Board of Health	17
o Fulton County Behavioral Health & Developmental Disabilities	18
o Truancy Intervention Project (TIP)	19
o Georgia Appleseed	19
o Atlanta Legal Aid	20
o Law Enforcement	20
11. Signature(s)	

Fulton County Student Attendance and School Climate Committee Protocol

Introduction

Every child in Georgia holds a fundamental constitutional right to receive an adequate education. In Fall 2024, the Superior Court of Fulton County, Georgia, in collaboration with the Fulton County Juvenile Court, reconvened the statutorily required Fulton County Student Attendance and School Climate Committee (hereinafter referred to as “the Committee”). The Committee’s statutory mandate is to develop a protocol outlining procedures for identifying, reporting, investigating, and addressing alleged violations of the compulsory school attendance law (O.C.G.A. § 20-2-690.2). This directive also includes identifying and supporting prevention, intervention, and school climate initiatives of community partners throughout Fulton County, aimed at assisting students and families in achieving attendance goals.

Mission

The Committee’s mission is to foster coordination and cooperation among state and local officials, agencies, partners, and programs engaged in promoting compulsory attendance and enhancing school climate throughout Fulton County. We are dedicated to identifying and overcoming barriers to regular attendance for students and families. Through collaborative and tailored measures, our goal is to establish a comprehensive, county-specific protocol that ensures effective processes to support student attendance and well-being.

Vision

Our vision is a community where every student thrives in safe, engaging school environments with minimal unexcused absences. We are committed to supporting proactive, intervention-focused strategies from our community partners that promote attendance and foster inclusive, welcoming school climates. Through innovation and collaboration, we strive to empower students and families to succeed in their educational journeys.

Commitment Statement

The members of the Committee are dedicated to the implementation of the joint Student Attendance Protocol (hereinafter referred to as “the Protocol”) as written and approved by the Committee. We are committed to proactive, intervention-oriented measures aimed at reducing unexcused absences and fostering safe, supportive school environments. Each member is accountable to the mission and vision of the Committee, striving to meet the diverse needs of students and families across Fulton County.

Protocol Partners/Committee Members

Pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 20-2-690.2(c), the following agencies, officials, and programs shall designate a representative to serve on the committee:

- (1) The chief judge of the superior court;
- (2) The juvenile court judge or judges of the county;
- (3) The district attorney for the county;
- (4) The solicitor-general of state court, if the county has a state court;
- (5) The Department of Juvenile Justice, which may include representatives from area juvenile detention facilities as defined in Code Section 49-4A-1;
- (6) The superintendent, a certificated school employee, and a local school board member from each public school system in the county and a certificated school social worker from each public school system, if any are employed by the school system;

Fulton County Student Attendance and School Climate Committee Protocol

- (7) The sheriff of the county;
- (8) The chief of police of the county police department;
- (9) The chief of police of each municipal police department in the county;
- (10) The county department of family and children services;
- (11) The county board of health;
- (12) The county mental health organization;
- (13) The county Family Connection commission, board, or authority, or other county agency, board, authority, or commission having the duty and authority to study problems of families, children, and youth and provide services to families, children, and youth; and
- (14) The court approved community based risk reduction program established by the juvenile court in accordance with Code Section 15-11-38, if such a program has been established.

Relevant Law

Children between the ages of six and sixteen who have more than 10 unexcused absences in a single school year are considered Truant under Georgia law. (O.C.G.A. §§ 15-11-381(6), 206-2-690.1). Recognizing that “certain behaviors or conditions occurring within a family or school environment indicate that a child is experiencing serious difficulties and is in need of services and corrective action,” the Georgia Legislature created a “Child in Need of Services” (“CHINS”) designation for students experiencing such behaviors, including Truancy. The CHINS Statute establishes a graduated response to the needs of these children, including various educational approaches, engagement with community-based services, and finally court intervention if needed. (O.C.G.A. §§ 15-11-390, 15-11-422). These statutes are included in full in the Appendices to the Protocol.

School Intervention Process

Tier 1 Attendance Interventions

For Fulton County Schools and Atlanta Public Schools, Tier 1 attendance interventions include the following measures:

1. **Automated Emails:** Sent via Infinite Campus (IC) and triggered at specific attendance milestones—3 consecutive unexcused absences, 5 cumulative unexcused absences, 7 cumulative excused or unexcused absences, and 10 instances of late arrival or early checkouts.
2. **Parental Engagement via Everyday Labs Communications:** Biweekly text nudges, six mail nudges, and 24/7 chatbot support to enhance parental engagement and awareness of student attendance.
3. **Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS):** Implemented to promote good attendance habits.
4. **Attendance Awareness Month:** Observed to highlight the importance of regular school attendance.
5. **Systematic Processes:** Established for attendance management and intervention support, providing direct guidance for attendance-related needs.
6. **District Attendance Needs Assessment Report:** Generated to identify and address systemic attendance issues.

Fulton County Student Attendance and School Climate Committee Protocol

7. **School-Level Reports:** Created for elementary, middle, and high schools to monitor attendance trends and progress.
8. **District-Wide Attendance Improvement Plan:** Aligned with school bands to provide targeted support.
9. **School Band Attendance Improvement Differentiated Support Plans:** Developed to address the specific needs of each school.
10. **District Guidance and Resources:** Provided to support attendance initiatives.
11. **Training and Professional Development:** Offered to enhance the skills and knowledge of school staff.
12. **Systematic Monitoring:** District monitoring of attendance improvement efforts ensures accountability and progress toward attendance goals.

These measures collectively describe the comprehensive approach taken by Fulton County Schools and Atlanta Public Schools to manage and improve student attendance.

Tier 2 Interventions

Students experiencing chronic absenteeism may have access to Tier 2 attendance interventions, which include targeted strategies and community partnerships:

School-Based Differentiated Supports:

1. **Attendance Team:** A multidisciplinary team that consistently reviews attendance data, engages with parents, generates attendance plans with students, and differentiates supports based on individual needs.
2. **Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS):** Designed to help schools identify struggling students early and intervene quickly. This system supports academic growth as well as behavioral, social, emotional needs, and absenteeism.
3. **Small Groups:** Evidence-based programs that address social skills, coping skills, grief, emotional regulation, conflict resolution, and peer mediation.
4. **Response to Intervention (RTI) and Student Support Teams (SST):** Provide targeted support for students with attendance challenges.

Community-Based Programs:

1. **Truancy Intervention Project**
2. **Mentorship Programs**
3. **Fraternity and Sorority Groups**
4. **Faith-Based Organizations**

Tier 3 Interventions

Tier 3 attendance interventions include intensive support measures for students with significant attendance issues:

1. **Collaborative Attendance Goals:** Developed with the student, with weekly contact initiated to monitor and encourage progress. Home connection visits are continued if a student is not making adequate progress.

Fulton County Student Attendance and School Climate Committee Protocol

2. **Social Work Case Management Services:** Utilized to address underlying issues affecting attendance, with mental health services offered to support students' emotional and psychological needs.
3. **Alternative Schedules:** Provided to accommodate students' unique circumstances.
4. **Mentoring Programs:** Implemented to offer guidance and encouragement.
5. **Individualized Education Programs (IEP) and 504 Plans:** Developed for students with specific educational needs.
6. **ESOL and Hospital Homebound (HHB) Services:** Support students with language barriers or medical conditions.
7. **Alternative Education Programs:** Available for students who require a different learning environment.
8. **Education Neglect Referral:** May be completed in cases of severe attendance issues, with the CHINS (Children in Need of Services) complaint checklist used to document and address these concerns.
9. **Parental Involvement Referrals:** Recommendations for unruly or ungovernable parent referrals are made when necessary to ensure adequate parental involvement and support.
10. **Parental Support:** Attendance goals are developed in collaboration with the student's guardian, with weekly contact to ensure their engagement and support. Parent conferences are scheduled as needed to address and resolve attendance issues.

Court Intervention Process

Once a school district in Fulton County has exhausted all appropriate and available intervention efforts, the district may file a formal complaint with the Fulton County Juvenile Court's Intake Office. The Fulton County District Attorney's Office (FCDAO) and the Fulton County Juvenile Court (FCJC) Children in Need of Services (CHINS) Unit will review each filed complaint within 72 hours to determine whether the case will be diverted for additional intervention services or proceed as a direct petition. The initial determination should be shared with the complainant (i.e., the school district) within seven days of the decision.

Pre-Adjudication

Diversion options prior to filing a petition include informal CHINS management through the CHINS Unit. If a petition is filed, parties may motion the court to hold the case in abeyance with agreed-upon conditions. Additionally, parties may request that parent(s) or guardian(s) be placed under a protective order to ensure compliance with enrollment, service provider intake, or other required responses prior to any reset adjudication hearings. Parents or guardians under a protective order from an FCJC judge are subject to contempt proceedings under O.C.G.A. § 15-11-31, including potential penalties of up to 20 days in jail or fines of up to \$1,000.

Adjudication

If a child is in custody at the time of the petition filing, the adjudication hearing must occur within 10 days of the filing. If the child is not in custody, the adjudication may take place within 60 days of the filing. Service of summons must be made by a suitable person under the court's direction and served upon the child and their parent or guardian at least 72 hours prior to the adjudication hearing (O.C.G.A. § 15-11-424). Continuances may be granted for good cause, as provided by O.C.G.A. § 15-11-403. Each child shall be appointed an attorney, and Guardian *ad*

Fulton County Student Attendance and School Climate Committee Protocol

litem (GAL) may be appointed if the court determines that the GAL is necessary to protect the child's best interests (O.C.G.A. § 15-11-402).

At the adjudication hearing, a child may make an admission to the court, and the petitioner (i.e., the state or school district) may provide a summary of the facts regarding the truancy petition. If the child makes an admission, the court may find the child to be in need of services. If no admission is made, the petitioner must present evidence, under the clear and convincing evidence standard, that the child was truant with at least 10 unexcused absences and that all elements of the petition have been met. This includes demonstrating that all appropriate attempts to engage the family in voluntary community services have been exhausted and confirming that the school district has evaluated the child for special education services and made necessary modifications where appropriate.

Post-Adjudication

If the child is adjudicated, the court may determine the disposition at the conclusion of the adjudication hearing or schedule a final disposition hearing within 30 days. The court will order the least restrictive and most appropriate disposition in accordance with O.C.G.A. § 15-11-442. Upon request, the court may place the case in a temporary disposition status under a short-term trial release, subject to standard court supervision and conditions. If the child is placed on a trial release, the final disposition hearing will be reset to determine the appropriate supervision, services, and supports for the child's ongoing needs.

Measures

Attendance Assessment Measures

Each protocol partner commits to sharing relevant attendance data and assessment measures with the Committee. These data and assessment measures will be shared at the Committee's regular meetings and used to identify effective interventions as well as areas for improvement.

Data to be provided includes:

- School Attendance data, including:
 - Overall attendance rates
 - Attendance rates of students referred to the Juvenile Court for truancy before and after the date of referral
 - Attendance rates by demographic characteristics
 - Attendance rates by school
 - Number of students served in pre-referral case management by school districts
 - Success rates of pre-referral case management by school districts
 - Interventions attempted and success rates
- Truancy referral data, including:
 - Number of referrals
 - Number of complaints
 - Number of youth with co-occurring delinquency or dependency cases
 - Success rates in referred cases

Fulton County Student Attendance and School Climate Committee Protocol

- Success rates in cases where complaints are filed
 - Interventions attempted and success rates
- Non-identifying data from Student Health Surveys related to attitudes towards school, attendance rates, and barriers to attendance
- Environmental and behavior indicator data, including:
 - Rates of absence for in-school and out-of-school suspension
- Parent/guardian feedback, including:
 - Responses to school surveys
 - Service provider satisfaction surveys
 - Qualitative feedback shared with school, court, and community partner personnel

The Committee will review this data at least annually and use it to propose changes to the Protocol.

School Climate Assessment Measures

- Joint identification of measurable school climate data for protocol modification and/or consideration, including:
 - Student behavior/Discipline data
 - GaDOE Ratings
 - Teacher and/or parent survey instruments
 - Parent perception survey (anonymous)
 - Student Health Surveys non-identifying data
 - PBIS, RTI, and Restorative Practices Data

School Climate Policy Recommendations

- Model school climate policies for district adoption [Appleseed and others]
- Positive Youth Development/Lived Experiences of Youth
- Staff Input/Attendance measures support

Fulton County Student Attendance and School Climate Committee Protocol

Community Partner Roles and Responsibilities

Fulton County Superior Court

Fulton County Superior Court is dedicated to the establishment and ongoing development of the Student Attendance and School Climate Committee, as well as the statutorily required student attendance protocol. The Chief Judge of Fulton County Superior Court, or a designated representative, will serve on the committee and provide all available support for the collaborative implementation of the protocol. The Chief Judge or designee will ensure that the committee meets at least twice annually to evaluate compliance and effectiveness of the protocol and to propose necessary modifications and revisions.

Fulton County Juvenile Court

The mission of Fulton County Juvenile Court is twofold: first, to protect children and the community in matters brought before the court, to rehabilitate children, and to restore families; and second, to create opportunities for the community, partners, and stakeholders to actively engage in this mission.

Prevention Efforts

Fulton County Juvenile Court (FCJC) prioritizes prevention by providing resources and services to the community. For example, the Child in Need of Services Unit (CHINS) offers services to pre-adjudicated youth identified as having committed status offenses, including unruly, truant, and runaway offenses. This proactive approach aims to eliminate and reduce formal court involvement by addressing issues early. Through comprehensive case management services, the CHINS Unit assesses the needs of children and families, developing individualized service plans tailored to their unique circumstances. As advocates for the rights and well-being of children and families, the CHINS Unit collaborates with other professionals to ensure clients receive the necessary support and resources, including education, healthcare, mental health services, and community resources.

Additionally, FCJC provides parents and legal guardians with knowledge on education, parenting skills, child development, and other relevant topics through The Parent Community Café. This platform enables parents to connect, share experiences, and receive guidance on supporting their children's education. By fostering a supportive community environment, parents can better address truancy issues at home.

FCJC also collaborates with stakeholders to organize community engagement events such as food, clothing, and school supplies drives. These initiatives ensure that children and families have the necessary materials to succeed academically. Through early engagement, continuous support, and comprehensive resource allocation, FCJC aims to re-engage students in their education, reduce truancy, and promote long-term academic success.

Fulton County Student Attendance and School Climate Committee Protocol

Intervention Efforts

FCJC addresses truancy through informal services provided by CHINS for pre-petitioned Truancy Complaints. This proactive measure seeks to re-engage students before formal legal action is required. By offering early support and resources, FCJC aims to address underlying issues contributing to truancy and prevent further escalation. The Truancy Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) meetings, a critical component of the Court's intervention efforts, involve students, parents, School Social Workers (SSWs), and other relevant stakeholders. Together, they develop a Truancy Action Plan tailored to each student's needs, outlining steps and resources required to improve attendance and overall school engagement. The Truancy Coordinator employs specific intervention methods, including service referrals, case monitoring, and school visits, to support truant youth and their families. By maintaining a presence in the school environment, advocates ensure students receive the necessary help and make progress.

For petitioned Truancy Complaints (formal court proceedings), FCJC collaborates with the District Attorney's Office, the Truancy Intervention Project (TIP), and local school districts to address truancy challenges effectively. This collaboration includes referring students to the Probation Department for supervision and support and the Behavioral Health Unit for evaluations and assessments to address any underlying mental health issues. Specific intervention methods include service referrals, case monitoring, and the appointment of Guardians ad Litem (GALs) and Education Advocates. GALs and Education Advocates ensure that the best interests of students are represented in both educational and legal settings, advocating for students with unmet and undiagnosed special educational needs to receive necessary special education services (Individualized Educational Plans and 504 Plans).

Attendance Support Goals

FCJC's primary goals are education, engagement, and collaboration. The Court aims to create more workshops and seminars similar to the Parent Community Café and Championing Children: A Parent Training Series, focusing on school attendance, signs of truancy, and effective prevention strategies. FCJC offers truancy-focused courses through Juvenile Court Solutions to pre- and post-adjudication youth to address attendance concerns. The Court will continue to support youth with attendance issues by referring them to the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities' County Youth Resiliency Program, which provides evidence-based services tailored to truancy cases.

Furthermore, FCJC will support local school districts, TIP, the DA's Office, and other stakeholders by conducting an annual Truancy Protocol Meeting to discuss and update the Court Truancy Protocol. This ensures that all stakeholders have the latest processes and procedures to effectively support students and families in improving attendance. FCJC also aims to increase the distribution of informative brochures, pamphlets, and posters outlining truancy prevention initiatives and available support services. Providing materials and outreach efforts in multiple languages ensures all families receive essential information and support.

School Climate Initiatives

Fulton County Student Attendance and School Climate Committee Protocol

FCJC's school climate initiatives aim to create positive, inclusive, and supportive environments for children and families. The School Pathway Partners Committee, led by Chief Judge Renata D. Turner, was established to collaborate with local school districts, law enforcement, the DA's Office, TIP, DJJ, DFCS, and other stakeholders to develop strategies to dismantle the school-to-prison pipeline. The Committee uses data-driven insights and restorative justice practices to emphasize repairing harm and restoring relationships rather than punitive discipline. This includes mediation, diversion programs, and conflict resolution strategies.

Additionally, FCJC has launched Family Solutions—a comprehensive 10-week program designed for parents and youth to foster positive outcomes tailored for CHINS youth. The initiative includes training for Fulton County Schools and Atlanta Public School staff to offer the program in-house, enabling early identification of warning signs and intervention before students become involved in the juvenile justice system. Early intervention is crucial in redirecting youth onto a positive path and reducing recidivism.

FCJC will continue to create inclusive and supportive environments through community engagement events, such as the Community Resource Health Fair, which provides free vision screenings, immunizations, haircuts, and school supplies. The Court's Education Advocates also launched a book donation drive supporting Law Day. FCJC will work closely with community partners to organize additional outreach events, providing resources, support, and information to help children and families understand the importance of education.

Fulton County District Attorney's Office

Prevention Efforts

The Fulton County District Attorney's Office (FCDAO) adopts a proactive approach to addressing truancy, focusing on prevention to support students and enhance educational engagement. FCDAO implements initiatives and identifies resources to prevent truancy and foster positive outcomes for children and families. Key initiatives include the REACH Transformational Youth Mentoring and Coaching Program (REACH), a skills-based risk reduction mentoring program that pairs students with mentors to provide life skills and personal development support. This program aims to re-engage students struggling with school attendance and reduce absenteeism.

Another key initiative is the Junior DA Summer Program, designed to engage young people in constructive activities during the summer months. The FCDAO Juvenile Intervention Initiative Diversion Program (JII) provides alternatives to traditional court proceedings for first-time and non-violent offenders, addressing underlying issues contributing to truancy and offering targeted interventions. FCDAO continuously seeks opportunities to divert youth from the justice system and set them on a path toward success.

In addition to student-centered prevention efforts, FCDAO prioritizes family and community support by hosting and partnering with community agencies in food and clothing drives. These drives provide essential resources that impact children's ability to attend school regularly, addressing socioeconomic factors contributing to truancy. By collaborating with the Court,

Fulton County Student Attendance and School Climate Committee Protocol

school and district staff, and students, FCDAO promotes educational engagement and underscores the importance and lifelong benefits of consistent school attendance. FCDAO also offers a range of resources to prevent truant and criminal behavior, including service referrals, mentoring, and general private complaint advice. Their adult and youth diversion programs provide tailored support to address individual needs and reduce the likelihood of further court involvement.

Intervention Efforts

FCDAO's intervention efforts are strategically designed to provide comprehensive support and solutions for students with attendance issues. By collaborating with key partners and leveraging available resources, FCDAO addresses the root causes of truancy and promotes positive outcomes for affected youth and their families. FCDAO's partnership with the CHINS Unit and TIP staff is central to these efforts. Together, FCDAO, CHINS, and TIP identify the unique needs of students experiencing truancy, allowing for tailored intervention plans that address specific challenges and barriers to regular school attendance.

In formal court proceedings, FCDAO makes informed recommendations on behalf of the State, ensuring that the best interests of the student are prioritized. The office advocates for appropriate interventions and services to help re-engage students with their education and prevent further truancy. FCDAO maintains strong relationships with school staff, fostering open communication and collaboration. This approach encourages school social workers, administrators, and district partners to implement proactive measures and interventions through community-based voluntary services that promote student attendance and engagement.

Additionally, FCDAO identifies and connects families with necessary services and support, working closely with community partners to ensure access to education, healthcare, mental health services, and other essential supports that address the underlying issues contributing to truancy.

Attendance Support Goals

FCDAO's role in addressing truancy includes a multifaceted approach focusing on prevention, intervention, and collaboration with key stakeholders. The office supports Court and District attendance goals by collaborating with local schools to develop and implement programs that promote regular attendance. This includes organizing workshops, seminars, and awareness campaigns to educate students, parents, and educators on the importance of attendance and strategies for preventing truancy. FCDAO will continue to work with school districts to implement early response systems that identify students at risk of chronic absenteeism and intervene proactively.

The office is committed to providing resources and support to families experiencing attendance challenges, advocating for the best interests of court-involved youth, and working with school staff to develop individualized attendance plans. FCDAO will maintain collaboration and coordination through established and emerging partnerships with local schools, law enforcement agencies, juvenile justice stakeholders, and community organizations. Through these

Fulton County Student Attendance and School Climate Committee Protocol

partnerships, FCDAO will share resources, coordinate efforts, and advocate for policy changes that support truancy prevention and intervention initiatives, striving for effective attendance support goals and positive educational outcomes for students in the community.

School Climate Initiatives

FCDAO has implemented various initiatives to enhance school climates and reduce truancy rates. Expanding mentorship programs and recruiting additional mentors ensures that at-risk students receive personalized support to promote educational engagement and deter truancy. FCDAO offers the REACH mentoring programs at over a dozen school sites across Fulton County, broadening access to these valuable resources and fostering a positive learning environment.

Enhanced collaboration with the Court and the Fulton County Public Defender's Office has resulted in a more integrated approach to student support, aligning legal and educational systems to address truancy comprehensively. Integration of truancy-specific resources within the DA's Office provides readily available information for students, parents, and educators, reinforcing the importance of regular school attendance. Additionally, creating pamphlets in collaboration with partners underscores the benefits of education, offering tangible resources to emphasize the significance of attendance.

Through activities such as forums, school presentations, partner engagements, mentoring programs, diversion programs, and community-facing initiatives like Court Watch, FCDAO strengthens community involvement and support. Leveraging social media platforms, panels, and educational training, the DA's Office effectively raises awareness and educates the public on the importance of school attendance and the repercussions of truancy. These multifaceted strategies collectively contribute to a supportive and proactive school climate, ultimately reducing truancy rates and promoting academic success for all students.

Fulton County Solicitor General's Office

Prevention Efforts

The Fulton County Solicitor General's (SG) Office is committed to implementing comprehensive prevention efforts to address truancy. Early intervention focuses on rectifying educational neglect at the elementary school level to ensure students receive the necessary support to stay engaged in their education. Another key strategy involves community engagement to highlight the issue of educational neglect and its consequences. Community outreach and education raise awareness about the importance of regular school attendance and the negative impacts of truancy on a child's future, fostering a community-wide commitment to education.

The SG Office supports and promotes diversion and community programs designed to keep students on track, offering alternative pathways for those struggling and providing resources and support to help them succeed academically while avoiding further involvement with the juvenile justice system. In collaboration with city and county school systems, the SG Office ensures schools have the necessary resources to support students at risk of truancy, including educational

Fulton County Student Attendance and School Climate Committee Protocol

materials, counseling services, and other supports that address underlying issues contributing to absenteeism.

Intervention Efforts

The Fulton County Solicitor General's Office actively engages in intervention efforts to address truancy and educational neglect. Collaboration with city and county authorities is crucial to identifying children suffering from educational neglect and taking appropriate action. Joint efforts with city and county diversion programs involve enrolling parents to rectify educational neglect, providing them with the support and resources needed to ensure their children attend school regularly.

Increasing awareness of the dangers associated with educational neglect is another vital intervention strategy. Through extensive community engagement initiatives, the SG Office aims to educate the public about the importance of regular school attendance and the negative consequences of truancy. Formal court proceedings may be initiated in cases where parents persistently engage in educational neglect despite interventions and support efforts. By holding parents accountable through the legal system, the SG Office emphasizes the seriousness of educational neglect and compels compliance with attendance laws. This approach includes working closely with city and county school systems and their respective police departments to identify and notify parents failing to fulfill their responsibilities regarding their children's education.

Attendance Support Goals

The Fulton County Solicitor General's Office leverages partnerships with city and county partners within the school system and the community to strengthen attendance support goals and combat educational neglect effectively. By collaborating with school officials and community partners, the SG Office facilitates referrals for students and families at risk of or experiencing educational neglect. This partnership extends to city and county school systems, where the SG Office works with school administrators to identify students with attendance issues and provide appropriate interventions.

The SG Office will continue collaborating with other community agencies to support local schools, the Courts, students, and parents. This involves coordinating with social service agencies, mental health providers, and youth organizations to offer comprehensive support services to families facing attendance challenges. By fostering strong partnerships and leveraging community resources, the SG Office enhances its capacity to address educational neglect and support positive student attendance outcomes across the jurisdiction.

School Climate Initiatives

The Fulton County Solicitor General's Office aims to initiate comprehensive measures to address educational neglect and promote a positive school climate. The SG Office has enhanced its efforts through programs such as Supporting Education Empowerment and Development Success (SEEDS), which fosters a positive school climate.

Fulton County Student Attendance and School Climate Committee Protocol

The SG Office educates the public about the importance of regular school attendance and the negative impacts of educational neglect through awareness campaigns, workshops, and community events. These coordinated approaches ensure that no child falls through the cracks and that families receive the support needed to overcome barriers to regular school attendance.

Additionally, the SG Office continues to raise awareness through city and county-wide programs, social media campaigns, and community appearances, educating parents and the public about the importance of school attendance. By leveraging these initiatives, the SG Office promotes a culture of educational engagement, ensuring that every child has the opportunity to thrive academically and succeed in school.

Fulton County Schools

Fulton County Schools recognizes the importance of collaboration among students, families, and community partners to ensure regular school attendance and overcome barriers to it. This involves focusing on prevention efforts, intervention methods, attendance support goals, and school climate initiatives. The following outlines the roles, responsibilities, and best practices necessary for achieving these objectives and connecting students and families with the district's academic services and resources.

Prevention Efforts

Fulton County Schools has established a structured framework to prioritize prevention efforts across the district. Key initiatives include implementing systematic processes for managing attendance and providing targeted intervention support. Weekly virtual office hours offer coaching support to school administrators and teams, facilitating ongoing communication and assistance. The district supports families with attendance issues through regular assessments, including the District Attendance Needs Assessment Report, School Level Reports, and Zone Reports. A District-Wide Attendance Improvement Plan is developed, featuring tailored guidance for different school levels and individualized support plans.

The district provides comprehensive training and resources to ensure staff can effectively address attendance challenges. Tier 1 Social Emotional Wellness Campaigns, such as Attendance Awareness, Mental Health Awareness, SOS-Signs of Suicide, and Red Ribbon Week, promote holistic student well-being. Additionally, the McKinney Vento Program supports students facing housing instability with program awareness, staff training, and provision of resources.

Intervention Efforts

Fulton County Schools utilizes a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) to address attendance issues. At Tier 1, school-level MTSS meetings review attendance data using Attendance Data Reviews and District and EveryDay Labs Dashboards to identify support gaps. For more intensive intervention, Tier 2/3 involves Small Group Programming, Attendance Support Plans, Check and Connect, Check in/Check out, Attendance Intervention Contracts, and Operation Bridge Back. Social workers conduct home visits to assess family needs and connect families with community resources, aiming to alleviate attendance barriers. Operation Bridge Back

Fulton County Student Attendance and School Climate Committee Protocol

provides intensive case management for students with severe chronic absenteeism, including needs assessment, barrier elimination, resource referrals, and goal monitoring. Specialized staff and agencies, including Social Emotional Support Social Workers, School Refusal Social Workers, and the Student and Family Engagement Team, collaborate to support students and address attendance challenges effectively.

Attendance Support Goals

Fulton County Schools is committed to enhancing attendance through improved communication and community awareness, especially regarding Participated Remote Days. The district will review attendance coding to accurately account for factors affecting student attendance, such as transportation issues. Support will be provided to strengthen Tier 1 foundations and implement Tier 2/3 interventions. Proactive communication plans for the 2024-2025 school year will raise attendance awareness, while resources will be allocated to schools with the greatest needs to boost engagement. The district will create accessible pathways for parents to access attendance resources and participate in Positive Parent Engagement/Education Models. Additionally, increasing capacity for attendance interventions and enhancing social-emotional education and support will be prioritized.

School Climate Initiatives

To foster a positive school culture, Fulton County Schools will focus on activities that promote parent and family engagement, positive behavior support, student success skills, and extracurricular involvement. Community partnerships are crucial in providing additional support, resources, and mentorship to students and families.

Parent and Family Engagement Activities, such as the "First Day Fulton" program and Family Matters Engagement Events, will encourage active participation in the school community. Positive Behavior Intervention Support strategies will be used to create a respectful and supportive environment. Student Success Skills programs will equip students with essential skills for success beyond academics, including communication, problem-solving, and resilience. A range of Extracurricular Activities will be offered to foster students' interests and talents.

Community partnerships with organizations like JII, Truancy Intervention Project, CHINS, Communities in Schools, and others will provide early intervention, case management, financial resources, and mentorship. Support services, including Mental Health Partners, Transitional Housing Agencies, Operation School Bell, Helping Mamas, and After School Programming, will address students' diverse needs both inside and outside the school setting.

Atlanta Public Schools

Prevention Efforts

Atlanta Public Schools (APS) employs a multi-tiered approach to address attendance challenges. At Tier 1, Universal Support initiatives include forming an attendance team, conducting monthly campaigns, and community outreach on issues like violence prevention, human trafficking

Fulton County Student Attendance and School Climate Committee Protocol

awareness, and homelessness. Parent engagement is emphasized through outreach and training. Tier 2 support is activated for students with three or more unexcused absences, involving case management, intervention plans, and communication strategies. Tier 3 provides intensive support for students with eight or more unexcused absences, including parent contact, needs assessment, and collaboration with external agencies. Dr. Jacquelyn Anthony has developed a comprehensive Multi-Tiered Attendance Prevention and Intervention Supports Handbook to guide schools on processes and interventions.

Intervention Efforts

APS collaborates with Elesha Curvey, the District Truancy Prevention & Intervention Social Worker, and other partners to address educational neglect. This initiative targets nine schools with unresolved educational neglect concerns, providing legal support and community outreach through diversion classes. The Truancy Prevention and Intervention Social Worker oversees case management and attendance, ensuring a comprehensive approach to educational neglect within the juvenile court system.

Attendance Support Goals

APS aims to enhance attendance response by completing school attendance action plans before the school year starts. Pre-planning will include training on the Multi-Tiered Attendance Prevention and Intervention Supports Handbook and implementation of tier 2 & 3 interventions. Collaboration with DFCS will address educational neglect, with established procedures for case screening, investigations, and court intervention. Increased support for schools, additional funding, and enhanced marketing efforts will strengthen the attendance support system.

School Climate Initiatives

APS values partnerships with community organizations, including the Fulton County Juvenile Court, District Attorney's Office, and Solicitor General's Office. These collaborations help address educational neglect and provide a supportive environment for students. Partnerships with DFCS, law enforcement agencies, and various support services aim to create a holistic support system for student success. After-school programs, parent engagement activities, economic support agencies, mental health services, and other resources contribute to a positive school climate and student well-being.

Fulton County Department of Family and Children Services

The Fulton County Department of Family and Children Services (DFCS) investigates allegations of educational neglect and related dependency issues that contribute to truancy. DFCS reviews school attendance for school-aged children in active cases and identifies truancy problems during monthly meetings. If needed, the department conducts collateral contacts with school and court officials. DFCS works to ensure school staff are aware of all available educational resources to address truancy issues and provides regular training and support to address these concerns. Additionally, DFCS attends IEP meetings as necessary.

Fulton County Student Attendance and School Climate Committee Protocol

The Department also connects families with various economic need services, tutorial programs, and parent aide services, often through the Promoting Safe and Stable Families Program, which provides funding, training, and technical assistance to meet the needs of families at risk of child welfare intervention. Other resources and referrals include the **Multi-Agency Alliance for Children (MAAC)** Thrive Program, which supports and strengthens families to prevent out-of-home placements and provides significant parental support; **The Black Rose Foundation (BRFC)**, which ensures abandoned children have opportunities to excel; **CHRIS 180**, provides parenting support with the use of parent aides, medication management and youth programs for ages 0-8; and **New Beginnings Today**, a behavioral health clinic located in Fulton County, that is committed to empowering parents and students by offering a comprehensive array of services that meet the needs of the family to include in home parenting support, behavioral modification, medication management, counseling and educational advocacy.

DFCS is committed to enhancing communication about educational resources available to families and regularly collaborates with Atlanta Public Schools, Fulton County Schools, the Fulton County Department of Juvenile Justice, and local law enforcement agencies. Through ongoing training and the support of the Fulton County DFCS Volunteer Services Team, the department aims to improve knowledge of truancy reporting protocols and work with partners to better serve children.

Department of Juvenile Justice

The Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) assists with the re-entry of children into the county school system after release from detention. DJJ helps with school enrollment, both traditional and alternative, and provides necessary documentation for enrollment. The department also offers online school options for eligible children and provides services across various educational levels, including middle school, high school, GED, and technical certificate programs.

DJJ monitors the school attendance of children on probation for progress tracking. The department facilitates the presence of officers in schools to address truancy concerns and provides service referrals, mentorship opportunities, economic need referrals, and educational parent liaisons. DJJ collaborates with community partners, including At Promise Centers, Urban League, and Chris 180, to provide services aimed at reducing crime, supporting economic success, and offering trauma-informed behavioral health services.

DJJ is actively involved in the community through initiatives such as the National Night Out, public forums, and various committees. The department is committed to positive incentivization and mentorship to address truancy and is working to develop new resources and partnerships. DJJ maintains standards in attendance policies and shares information via its website, hosting open houses for parents and youth to encourage collaboration and communication.

Fulton County Board of Health

The Fulton County Board of Health (FCBOH) addresses truancy by tackling factors such as infectious diseases, underage pregnancy, illicit substance use, and developmental issues. FCBOH shares protocols for preventing, detecting, and controlling respiratory and gastrointestinal

Fulton County Student Attendance and School Climate Committee Protocol

outbreaks with school districts and conducts school audits of immunization records for 7th and 11th graders. The FCBOH also educates school nurses on prevention methods and responds rapidly to respiratory illnesses through alerts and resources. The COVID-19 Outreach Strike Team provides education and resources to prevent illness spread.

The FCBOH offers education on safe sex practices through programs like the Skills, Knowledge, and Youth Empowerment (SKYE) Program and the Adolescent Health and Youth Development (AHYD) Program. These initiatives aim to reduce teen pregnancy and STI rates and facilitate communication between parents and students. Training for school staff on sexual trauma and general sensitivity is also provided. Teen clinics for sexual testing are available at several centers.

To combat tobacco and nicotine use, FCBOH offers programs like Intervention for Nicotine Dependence: Education, Prevention, Tobacco and Health (INDEPTH), Healthy Futures, and CATCH my Breath. These programs educate students on the effects of nicotine and provide quitting resources. The FCBOH also runs social media ads and distributes educational materials to further raise awareness.

For students with learning or physical disabilities, the FCBOH connects them with services such as Children Medical Services (CMS) for necessary equipment, Babies Can't Wait and Children 1st for early developmental screening, and the Early Hearing Detection Intervention Program (EDHI) for speech and auditory challenges. Ensuring students receive needed support helps reduce truancy related to educational frustration.

Fulton County Behavioral Health & Developmental Disabilities

The Fulton County Behavioral Health & Developmental Disabilities (Fulton County DBHDD) continues to address truancy issues by providing mental health support to parents and families both on and off campus. On-site school-based therapy is available at 66 schools within Fulton County, aiming to alleviate students' mental health burdens without requiring them to leave school and potentially miss class. Additionally, all middle and high school students in the Fulton County school district can access the "Text 4 Help" line, which operates 24/7. This service allows students to anonymously reach out to a licensed clinician and receive a response within three minutes, enabling discreet support for sensitive mental health issues at any time.

Off-site resources provided by Fulton County DBHDD are available to both students and parents. Behavioral health services are offered at six locations within Fulton County, with three locations serving adults and four serving youth and adolescents. These services help community members address mental health issues that may affect school attendance and academic success. The Clubhouse program supports youth exposed to substance abuse, and for more specialized mental health treatment, DBHDD has a broad network of providers for referrals.

The DBHDD also collaborates with the Juvenile Court for the Youth Diversion Program (YDP), offering early mental health assistance to youth with mental illness or co-occurring disorders. YDP aims to restore and reconnect children with their home, school, and community, guiding truant youths back onto the right path. Fulton County DBHDD is committed to expanding its network and resources to support students whose behavioral or mental health issues impact their school attendance.

Fulton County Student Attendance and School Climate Committee Protocol

Truancy Intervention Project (TIP)

TIP's truancy prevention efforts focus on community engagement, mental health support, family involvement, partner education, and peer mentoring.

- **Community Engagement:** TIP collaborates with local organizations, businesses, and community leaders to foster a supportive environment that promotes regular school attendance. This includes organizing events, workshops, and initiatives that highlight the importance of education and consistent attendance from an early age.
- **Mental Health Support:** TIP integrates mental health and counseling services to address issues contributing to absenteeism. Resources are available within schools and the broader community, including referrals to individual counseling, life skills groups, and partnerships with mental health professionals.
- **Family Involvement:** TIP provides workshops, support groups, and outreach efforts to strengthen the connection between home and school. By equipping parents and guardians with resources and information, TIP aims to encourage families to prioritize education and create a supportive environment for attendance.
- **Partner Education:** TIP offers training sessions, workshops, and informational materials to partner organizations, educating them about truancy and chronic absenteeism. This empowers stakeholders to actively address truancy within their communities and support student attendance and success.
- **Peer Mentoring:** TIP's peer mentoring programs encourage students to take ownership of their academic journey. Peer mentors provide guidance, support, and encouragement, fostering a positive school culture and promoting regular attendance.
- **Intervention Efforts:** TIP provides legal advocacy and representation for students facing CHINS-Truancy charges in Fulton County Juvenile Court. In addition to legal representation, TIP offers family support services and resources, including advice on attendance matters and service referrals. TIP also advises other agencies on effective intervention methods and provides education and advocacy to empower stakeholders.

TIP's goals include creating a supportive educational environment and addressing the root causes of absenteeism through targeted interventions. By building a positive school climate and implementing holistic strategies, TIP seeks to reduce truancy levels and support student engagement and success.

Georgia Appleseed

Georgia Appleseed focuses on proactive measures to address absenteeism and promote positive school climate practices. The organization conducts statewide surveys to identify Student Attendance and School Climate Committees, providing technical assistance to establish these committees effectively. Positive school climate practices, such as PBIS (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports) and restorative justice, are promoted to create supportive environments conducive to regular attendance.

Georgia Appleseed's intervention efforts include providing resources and support to stakeholders involved in disciplinary processes. Training modules for attorneys and families prepare them for

Fulton County Student Attendance and School Climate Committee Protocol

school disciplinary hearings, and backbone support is provided to the Georgia Education Climate Coalition (GECC) to advocate for policy reform. Help guides are also available for children with behavioral and learning challenges, offering valuable support and guidance.

Georgia Appleseed aims to ensure equitable access to due process protections for students facing disciplinary actions. Efforts include establishing a statewide pro bono attorney network to provide legal support for students and families. By enhancing access to legal resources, Georgia Appleseed seeks to address disparities in disciplinary outcomes and promote fairness.

Atlanta Legal Aid

Atlanta Legal Aid Society (ALAS) focuses on representing students with special needs, community partnership, and information sharing.

- **Representation and Advocacy:** ALAS provides legal advice and representation for students with special needs during MDRs (Manifestation Determination Reviews) and IEP (Individualized Education Program) meetings. This support addresses issues such as elopement or chronic absenteeism due to disabilities. The organization also engages with parents about IEP advocacy to prevent attendance issues from escalating.
- **Community Partnership:** ALAS partners with local organizations to provide proactive assistance to families struggling to obtain services for special needs students. Community outreach includes education on IEP advocacy and supporting DFCS caseworkers through the FAIR project with Georgia Appleseed.
- **Information Sharing:** ALAS offers community education on IEP advocacy and supports DFCS caseworkers through the FAIR project. Developing a special project focused on education advocacy would benefit students in Fulton County and other metro areas by enhancing information sharing and support services.

In terms of truancy intervention, ALAS develops Behavior Intervention Plans (BIPs) to address elopement with positive behavioral supports. The organization provides advice and representation to ensure students' rights and needs are met. A dedicated special project focused on education advocacy would further support students in maintaining regular attendance.

ALAS's goals include increasing proactive engagement with parents on IEP advocacy and ensuring students with special needs receive appropriate support to maintain regular school attendance. Establishing a special project devoted to education advocacy would enhance their ability to support students and families effectively.

Law Enforcement

Prevention Efforts

- **School Law Enforcement Agencies:** School-based law enforcement agencies play a crucial role in creating safe and secure school environments. By following national best practices, school officers work to prevent chronic school absences by fostering engaging and supportive spaces. They offer various school- and community-based programs, such as Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE), Gang Resistance Education and Training (GREAT), Police Athletic League (PAL), law and justice programs, and leadership

Fulton County Student Attendance and School Climate Committee Protocol

academies. These initiatives are designed to promote positive connections and decision-making among youth.

School officers may also serve as mentors for students with higher behavioral needs or engage in community policing initiatives. Consistent and gradual responses to identified or suspected behavioral concerns by school officers encourage attendance and active school participation. Additionally, school officers may partner with local businesses to provide incentives for good attendance and classroom engagement, as well as connect students and families with resources to address barriers to regular attendance.

- **Non-School Law Enforcement Agencies:** Municipal and county law enforcement agencies collaborate with school and district officials to enhance prevention efforts. Community officers may educate local businesses about municipal rules, school attendance policies, and appropriate actions when school-aged children are observed in or around their businesses during school hours. They may also distribute informational materials, such as window stickers, pamphlets, and QR codes to policies.

Community officers may lead educational sessions, such as the Sheriffs' Choosing Healthy Activities and Methods Promoting Safety (C.H.A.M.P.S) Program, addressing topics like attendance and graduation. Additionally, police agencies across the county offer summer programs, leadership academies, PAL programs, "Cops and Kids" unity events, and other initiatives focused on school success and positive community-police interactions.

Intervention Efforts

- **School Law Enforcement Agencies:** School officers rely on municipal and county officers for truancy intervention, such as dispatching truancy officers, transporting students to school sites, and documenting business trespass reports. They respond in real time to elopement incidents, initiating contact to keep students on campus who have attempted or expressed intentions to leave without permission. School officers are trained to engage youth facing challenges that could lead to elopement, aiming to reduce self-harm or harm to others. If intervention is unsuccessful, incidents are documented and reports are sent to municipal agencies according to site policies.
- **Non-School Law Enforcement Agencies:** Truancy officers from municipal agencies may be dispatched following reports of elopement, students unlawfully soliciting businesses, or occupying local businesses and dwellings during school hours. Recovered students are transported to their school of record after confirmation with school officials or law enforcement staff. Community or truancy officers, such as those from the Atlanta Police Department or MARTA Police Department, may conduct regular truancy sweeps to redirect youth to school during school hours.

Community or truancy officers may refer youth with chronic truancy concerns to the Juvenile Court through the formal CHINS Complaint process. Alternatively, they may refer youth to mentoring and intervention programs led by their agencies or community partners. Some officers, having built connections with youth and families, may engage with truant youth outside of school hours to encourage regular attendance and engagement.

Fulton County Student Attendance and School Climate Committee Protocol

Attendance Support Goals

- **School Law Enforcement Agencies:** School officers can participate in school-level meetings to set attendance goals and incentives. They may collaborate with district and municipal law enforcement leaders to optimize resources for incentives and community-wide recognition for good attendance. School officers can also partner with community officers to organize events that promote attendance and crime prevention, and participate in coalitions, truancy campaigns, and other broad efforts to enhance school attendance and community partnerships.
- **Non-School Law Enforcement Agencies:** Community officers may take part in school and partner agency events such as book bag drives, crime prevention events, school justice partnerships, and other initiatives that support attendance goals. They may also collaborate with local schools, Police Athletic Leagues, apartment complexes, subdivisions, parks, and recreation departments to organize quarterly recognition events for students with consistent attendance.

School Climate Initiatives

- **School Law Enforcement Agencies:** School officers frequently interact with students by leading classroom sessions and maintaining a constant presence in the school building. By setting high expectations and engaging in various school- and community-based activities, they contribute to a positive school climate. School officers work with administrators and staff to create spaces within schools that address barriers to positive experiences. They may also lead community drives to provide essential items, such as food, laundry detergent, and school supplies, to prevent disengagement.
- **Non-School Law Enforcement Agencies:** Community officers may lead class sessions using programs like C.H.A.M.P.S and other positive climate-building curricula. They can promote school engagement campaigns within their municipalities and counties, educating community members on the benefits of education. Community officers may also participate in field days, school game security details, and other school-related functions alongside school officers to demonstrate unity and community connections. Additionally, they can serve as mentors to youth and act as liaisons between schools and communities to build cohesive responses to youth needs.

Signature(s)