



A message from King  
County Prosecuting  
Attorney's Office

See CTV Truancy Talk  
Channel 22

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At 206-296-9035

## Third annual Washington State BECCA Conference Parent, Child and School, Collaboration for Success

*By Toni Kirschenmann, Lead Probation Officer,  
Yakima County Juvenile Court*

Yakima was the site for the third annual BECCA conference where people from all over the state met to exchange ideas and find additional resources in working with the youth of Washington State.



*Justice Bridge & King County Prosecutor Maleng,  
Co-Chairs Washington State Becca Task Force*

There were more than 260 attendees who participated on behalf of schools, courts, prosecutor's offices, defense counsel and social workers. Justice Bobbe Bridge, Prosecutor Norm Maleng and Mayor Dave Edler welcomed the conference attendees with words of praise and motivation. Dr. Scott Larson, the keynote speaker from Boston, gave tools and food for thought on ways to deal with troubled youth. The panels at the conference covered partnering between Mental Health and School Districts, Gangs in School, Educational Stability for Foster Children, the history of BECCA, Effective Sanctions from the Bench, an over view of the Priorities and Issues for the BECCA Task Force and Systems Integrations: Field guide for Outlining facts and Myths about Information Sharing.

The conference was praised for the diversity of topics and the caliber of the panel members.

We look forward to next year's conference and hope to continue to network throughout the coming year.



*Anna Todd directs a Mariachi Band made up of 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders from McKinley Elementary School in the Yakima School District. These students performed for attendees of the State Becca Conference.*

## The Truancy Crisis: Do we know where our students are?

*By: Jan Solomon, Becca Program Manager  
King County Superior Court*

They're calling it a crisis. Nationally, students are graduating at a rate of only 60%. In Washington it's approximately 70%, depending on whose data you use, and how it's analyzed. But, however you look at it, the dropout rate is horrendous. In 2004, the on-time graduation rate in Washington State was 70% for the class of 2004 (using a group start date of 9<sup>th</sup> grade). So, 30% of Washington State kids are *not* graduating high school. And, alarmingly, the number is much higher for students of color – approximately 50% for Hispanic, African American, and American Indian. And in addition, we know that students in low income categories are up to 6 times more likely to become dropouts.



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Student enrollment in King County is approximately 250,000; thirty percent is 75,000.

In the last several decades, despite millions of dollars spent on education reform, the dropout rate has remained essentially the same, with increasing rates for minorities and youths of color. So, why is this suddenly a “crisis?” What happens to these kids?

In 1970, dropouts could still earn a decent living wage. Now, however, with the emergence of new technologies, there are less well-paying blue-collar jobs, and more need for technological know-how, and a different set of problem-solving skills. “*Time*” wrote “Dropping out of high school today is to your societal health what smoking is to your physical health, an indicator of a host of poor outcomes to follow, from low lifetime earnings to high incarcerations rates to a high likelihood that your children will drop out of high school and start the cycle anew.” A high percentage (nearly 70%) of prison inmates say they were dropouts, and a survey in 2002 from Northeastern University found that about 50% of all dropouts aged 16-24 were unemployed.

So, is there anything we can do to retain more of our students in school? Is there a common risk factor among dropouts? Yes, you guessed it – truancy and attendance problems. A revealing statistic has recently come from the Denver Public Schools, whose dropout rates became public information last month...*50% of their dropouts, or about 18,250 students, were also chronically truant (with 10 days or more unexcused absences). Yet they filed under 1,000 petitions last year. As of this writing, we don't have a statistic for the number of chronically truant kids in Seattle, King County, or in Washington State, but we do know that we don't file on all kids that meet the minimum criteria for filing truancy petitions.*

We also know that filing a petition is not only mandatory, but is part of the collaboration that the court has been building with the schools and other community providers to enable us all to work together to help get our kids back into and connected with school. If you read either of the above- mentioned articles, you'll see that dropping out is not just a problem for the students, it's a problem for all of us.



*The 2006 King County Truancy School Representatives, with Adam Myers and Jan Solomon of the King County Superior Court and Bonnie Glenn of the King County Prosecuting Attorney's Office.*

## **Reinvesting In Youth Update:**

*By: Darryl Cook, Deputy Director  
Reinvesting in Youth - City of Seattle*

The Reinvesting in Youth Steering Committee has decided to seek regional consensus and resources to extend the Reinvesting in Youth model beyond juvenile justice to include a focus on youth who have dropped out or are at high risk of dropping out of school.

The dropout problem is chronic. Many of these youth are already involved in the juvenile and adult justice systems, and most are at risk of disconnection with the systems they will need to gain employment and lead productive lives; existing institutions have not adequately responded to their needs; and the Steering Committee believes that the Reinvesting in Youth model offers useful paradigms to address the problem.



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## Did You Know?

Research by Twyla Carter  
Seattle University School of Law Student

- ✓ A 2002 study conducted by the Washington State Institute for Public Policy found that the truancy provisions of the Becca Bill appear to result in a statistically significant increase in high school enrollment. An estimated 2,664 additional high school students were enrolled in 2002 as a result of the Becca Bill, at a cost of \$1,314 per program success.<sup>1</sup>
- ✓ Reports from the Washington State Administrative Office of the Courts show that as Truancy filings across the state rose between 1998 and 2002, Juvenile Arrest rates have simultaneously been drastically lowered. A similar, though less dramatic trend occurred in King County. Officials attribute a significant portion of the improvement directly to truancy reduction and particularly the diversion services and interventions that follow the truancy filings.<sup>2</sup>
- ✓ Studies have shown that two thirds of male juveniles arrested while truant tested positive for drug use.<sup>3</sup>
- ✓ During a recent sample period in Miami more than 71 percent of 13 to 16 year-olds prosecuted for criminal violations had been truant.<sup>4</sup>
- ✓ In Minneapolis, daytime crime dropped 68 percent after police began citing truant students.<sup>5</sup>
- ✓ In San Diego, 44 percent of violent juvenile crime occurs between 8:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m.<sup>6</sup>
- ✓ In Philadelphia, approximately 2,500 students a day are absent without an excuse, which represents about 70% of all student absences.<sup>7</sup>
- ✓ In Milwaukee, on any given school day, there are approximately 4,000 unexcused absences.<sup>8</sup>
- ✓ Detroit's forty public school attendance officers investigated 66,440 truant complaints during the 1994-95 school year.<sup>9</sup>
- ✓ When Van Nuys, California, officials conducted a three-week sweep for truants on the streets, shoplifting arrests dropped by 60 percent.<sup>10</sup>
- ✓ In a longitudinal study of African-American males, researchers found that of those students who were often truant in elementary school and truant in high school, 75 percent failed to graduate. Failure to graduate, in turn, is associated with diminished earning potential in adulthood and other poor outcomes.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Washington State Institute for Public Policy:  
<http://www.wsipp.wa.gov/rptfiles/BeccaTruancyES.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> National Center for School Engagement:  
<http://www.truancy prevention.org/TruancyPreventionRegistry/Admin/Resources/Resources/42.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Denise Witmer, "Parenting of Adolescents,"  
[http://parentingteens.about.com/cs/troubledteens/a/truancy\\_3.htm](http://parentingteens.about.com/cs/troubledteens/a/truancy_3.htm) (2006).

<sup>4</sup> Ibid

<sup>5</sup> Ibid

<sup>6</sup> Ibid

<sup>7</sup> Ibid

<sup>8</sup> Ibid

<sup>9</sup> Ibid

<sup>10</sup> Garry, Eileen. "Truancy: First Step to a Lifetime of Problems." Washington, DC: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, October 1996. ED 408 666.

<sup>11</sup> Robins, Lee, and Kathryn Ratcliff, "Long Range Outcomes Associated with School Truancy." Washington, DC: Public Health Service, 1978. 35 pages. ED 152 893.



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## Successful Truancy Programs Across the Country



*Research by Twyla Carter  
Seattle University School of Law Student*

### Travis County, Texas

*Program elements:* Truancy Court is partnership between the Austin Independent School District, the Travis County Juvenile Probation Department, the City of Austin, and the Travis County District Attorney's Office. This program is designed to provide quick intervention to chronic truants at the students' home school. It provides supervision, referrals to community services, and regular review of a student's progress towards reduced truancy.

*How do you know the program is effective?* Of those discharged from the program in 2002-2003, approximately 6% were re-referred to the program for subsequent truancy behavior and 18% were referred to the Department for a criminal offense within one year. A total of 79% of juveniles completed the program successfully in 2003-2004. The number of unexcused absences for juveniles going through Truancy Court in 2003-2004, decreased by an average of 42%. The average time to process a case from referral to the first court hearing was 26 days.

### St. Louis County, Missouri

*Program elements:* The mission of St. Louis County Truancy Court is to instill hope, improve student attendance, enhance achievement, and reduce

delinquent behavior through an active partnership of schools, courts, and families. The school-based court diversion program is a collaborative partnership between the Family Court of St. Louis County, nine public school districts, the judicial and legal community, and the students and families they serve. Program strategies are three-fold: non-punitive student conferences with the judge; case management by the school social worker; and character education lessons, all done during "Truancy Court" sessions held weekly at the school.

*How do you know the program is effective?* A 3-year evaluation report conducted by the University of Missouri – St. Louis shows that the overall attendance patterns of all participating students showed a statistically significant improvement from 84.42% to 85.63%. Additionally, the majority of students (60%) successfully responded to Truancy Court, showing a mean attendance rate improvement from 82.39% to 90.16%. Among all responding students, the total number of attendance days gained during Truancy Court exceeds 2500 days.

### Horry County, South Carolina

*Program elements:* In an effort to deal with the root causes of truancy, Horry County provides counseling for children and families as well as monitoring of academics, attendance, and discipline. The program works with the local school district to assist in tutoring and to keep truants from entering the court system. They also run a summer program for some of their students to provide them with positive activities during the summer.

*How do you know the program is effective?* So far they have kept all but one of their referrals from entering the court system.

From the National Center for School Engagement Website



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## Externs and Assistants: Helping Keep our Kids in School!

*By Bonnie Glenn, Deputy Chief of Staff*



*Bonnie Glenn & Twyla Carter*

I want to thank this year's law students and assistants for their work with our truancy prevention program. Without your assistance, we could not do the work that we do. You are a valuable part of helping this office reach out to students and families who are in need.

Special thank you to Twyla Carter, who enters her 3<sup>rd</sup> year at the Seattle University School of Law in the fall. Twyla helped work with truancy prevention last semester and assisted with work on juvenile justice issues, research on youth courts, and putting this newsletter together. Twyla served as the chair of the Black Law Student Association, "BLSA," at Seattle University School of Law last year. In addition to her externship with the Prosecuting Attorney's Office and her studies at Seattle University, Twyla works as a transition counselor for a nonprofit organization that offers transitional support and residential services for ex-offenders. Thank you so much, Twyla!

This spring, John Lynch also assisted our office with work on juvenile justice issues, our Academic Awareness Awards, and putting this newsletter together. After serving for a year in the Fraud Division of the Prosecuting Attorney's Office, John has spent the last few months assisting executive staff with various projects. He will attend the Southern Methodist University Dedman School of

Law in Dallas beginning this fall. He's getting married in August, so we know he'll have plenty of adjustments to make when he leaves our office! Thank you, John.



*John Lynch*

This summer, Philip Sanchez will serve as an extern in our office, assisting with our Truancy Prevention efforts. Philip is a 2<sup>nd</sup> year student at the University of Idaho College of Law, and is interested in legal issues facing the Latino Community in Washington State. Philip is a member of the Multi-cultural Law Caucus at the University of Idaho, and he is involved in service efforts with the Spanish-speaking community in Moscow, ID. We look forward to having him work with our office this summer, and thank him for his work on Juvenile Justice projects.



*Philip Sanchez*

**Thank you again - with sincere gratitude!**





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**2006 Winners:**

- Melissa Baskett - Kent School District*
- Halldin Bridges - Tahoma School District*
- Justin Cannaday - Highline School District*
- Amber Coven - Seattle School District*
- Sam Fanene - Kent School District*
- Sharon Fanene - Kent School District*
- Brittany Leonard - Kent School District*
- Martha Martinez - Seattle School District*
- Blake McBride - Lake Washington School District*
- Bart Sorensen - Kent School District*
- Susan Omtvedt - Kent School District*
- Colin Scott - Lake Washington School District*
- Jeff Sperry - Federal Way School District*
- Jessica Torrance (Martin) - Federal Way School District*

**Outstanding Achievement Award Winner**

- Taneum Fox - Kent School District*
- Lisa Lieberman - Enumclaw School District*

**Angel Award Winners**

- Sue Inglis, RN - Federal Way School District*

**Peer Award Winner**

- Dawn Nannini - King County Case Manager*

**Special Recognition for Outstanding Service**

- Bruce Knutson*

**Congratulations to the 2006 Academic Awareness Award Winners!**



*Commissioner Nancy Bradburn-Johnson, King County Chief Juvenile Judge Patricia Clark, School Representative Erin Grotting, Outstanding Achievement Award Winner Taneum Fox, Washington State Supreme Court Justice Bobbe Bridge, & King County Prosecutor Norm Maleng*



*Case Manager Dawn Nannini, Ann Marie Stuth (Lisa's Mother), Commissioner Bradburn-Johnson, Outstanding Achievement Award Winner Lisa Lieberman (with her daughter), Justice Bobbe Bridge, & King County Prosecutor Norm Maleng*



*Commissioner Bradburn-Johnson, Judge Clark, Angel Award Winner Sue Inglis, RN, Justice Bobbe Bridge, & King County Prosecutor Norm Maleng*



*Commissioner Bradburn-Johnson, Judge Clark, Peer Recognition Award Winner Dawn Nannini, Justice Bobbe Bridge, & King County Prosecutor Norm Maleng*



*Keynote Speaker, King County Prosecutor Norm Maleng*



*Commissioner Bradburn-Johnson, Judge Clark, Special Recognition Award Winner Bruce Knutson, Bruce's wife Tanya, Justice Bobbe Bridge, & King County Prosecutor Norm Maleng*



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*Sharon Fanene, Taneum Fox, Lisa Lieberman, & Blake McBride*



*The County Council Chambers were filled with family, friends, school administrators, court employees, judges, and law enforcement who came to support and be inspired by this year's award winners.*



*Sharon Fanene, Sam Fanene, Susan Omtvedt, & Bart Sorensen*



*Sharon and Sam Fanene were joined by their father, Poni Fanene (center).*



*Sgt. Reid Johnson of the King County Sheriff's Office presents Jessica Torrance with a Police Activity League T-shirt.*



*Lisa Lieberman, Justin Cannaday, & Melissa Baskett*



*Judge Clark, Commissioner Bradburn-Johnson, Melissa Baskett, Justice Bridge, & King County Prosecutor Norm Maleng*



*Judge Clark, Commissioner Bradburn-Johnson, Halldin Bridges, Justice Bridge, & King County Prosecutor Norm Maleng*



*Judge Clark, Commissioner Bradburn-Johnson, Justin Cannaday, Justice Bridge, & King County Prosecutor Norm Maleng*



*Judge Clark, Commissioner Bradburn-Johnson, Sam Fanene, Justice Bridge, & King County Prosecutor Norm Maleng*



*Judge Clark, Commissioner Bradburn-Johnson, Sharon Fanene, Justice Bridge, & King County Prosecutor Norm Maleng*



*Judge Clark, Commissioner Bradburn-Johnson, Justin McBride, Justice Bridge, & King County Prosecutor Norm Maleng*



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