

Otter Tail Family Services Collaborative

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Working Together...

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Truancy Prevention Work Group

7:45 - 9:30 AM August 22, 2007

Betty's Pantry – Ottertail City

Attendance: Jeff Drake (Battle Lake School-30); Tindy Rund (Fergus Falls Elementary Schools); Thomas Williams (Henning School-25); Blaine Novak (New York Mills School-30); Brad Vold (OTC Human Services-70); Connie Wenker & Caryl Gordy (Parkers Prairie Schools-60); Scott Bjerke & Kari Yates (Perham Schools-26); David Hauser & Nicole Hansen (OTC Attorney's Office-70); Joannie Gontarek (OTC Probation-70); John Hamann (Underwood Schools-50); and Jane Patrick (Collaborative Coordinator).

1. John Hamann was nominated and accepted appointment as the new work group chair replacing Brad Vold. Brad had served as the chair for the past several years and is now passing the torch along to another partner. Thanks John & Brad!!! John convened the meeting and welcomed the group.
2. Several districts welcome new administrators to their districts. Changes include:
 1. Brian Korf – the new Assistant Principal for Pelican Rapids
 2. Blaine Novak – replacing Matt Aker as the New York Mills High School Principal
 3. Tindy Rund has moved from the Fergus Falls High School to the Fergus Falls Elementary Schools
 4. Caryl Gordy is replacing Kari Yates as the Elementary Principal in Parkers Prairie
 5. Kari Yates is replacing Kim Grengs as the Elementary Principal for Perham Elementary
3. The group discussed Opportunities for Collaboration. The group discussed how valuable it is to have the Attendance Tools that the group has developed. The group also discussed the value of knowing the other administrators and gathering regularly to discuss challenges and opportunities. It would be helpful if Jane would send a list of email addresses for the entire group around to all the work group members so they can easily contact each other.
4. Jane reported on the FY08 Work Plan activities and accomplishments. All tasks were accomplished except for the following:
 - Two of the 18 schools have not yet submitted their attendance reports for last year. A total summary cannot be completed until these two have been received.
 - Only two districts have reported the graduation and dropout rates. Jane will send a reminder to the other districts to provide this information so a baseline and trends can be established.
5. The group reviewed the FY09 Work Plan. The following were highlighted which the work group members were reminded of the following items that need to be accomplished this year:
 - Schools are reminded to increase physical activities as a reward to good attendance

- Jane will send out copies of various chemical use assessment forms which the work group need to review and respond to in determining what tools would be most effective.
- The Attendance Campaign activities will be recirculated to the work group so they can begin tracking what activities they complete over the year.
- The group will keep in mind additional tools that might be helpful for the group to develop between now and the time of their next meeting in December. At that time the group will look at what additional tools they might wish to develop.
- Blaine reported that Arlene Scheidecker will be the new attendance clerk for New York Mills. Peg Conklin will be in charge of all attendance for grades 7 – 12 in Fergus Falls. Other districts will remain the same for attendance clerks.

6. The group reviewed the current strategies to address attendance. Each school and administrator was provided with a “Tool Box” containing current materials. Jane will also send the electronic copies of these documents out to the partners. The following was highlighted from the materials:

- The group would like to look at attendance records from students that attended the meetings at the courthouse for last year. They would like to see if we can provide data that will help to show an improvement in attendance for those students. The schools agreed that they could collect this information because there aren't that many students involved.
- The schools will begin using the chemical use assessment tool for all students prior to bringing them to the courthouse meetings. The group will begin using this tool as soon as one is identified.
- Some additional suggestions for rewards for good attendance included: a) students can't go to school dances if they don't have good attendance; b) option for not taking the semester finals if they have good attendance and if they choose to take it, it will only increase their grade, not hurt it; c) offer passes so students can go out of the building for lunch if they have good attendance.
- Early intervention is better!! Schools should make referrals for county attorney letters and courthouse meetings as soon as attendance becomes an issue.
- Schools shouldn't count on CHIPS or county intervention being an option when they wait until the end of the school year to make referrals on students that have had a long history of trancies throughout the school year. Again, early intervention is the key to successful county and school interventions.
- It would be helpful if OTC Probation could send an updated list of students that are on probation to each school. Schools may not know from year to year if students remain on probation or when a student's probation might expire.
- Schools should use the attendance tracking form provided in the tool box when making referrals for the Courthouse meetings and for other county involvement. This sort of documentation is necessary for successful intervention by outside agencies.

7. The group discussed updating the judges on the activities of the truancy work group. David and Nicole agreed to share information with the judges about our continued efforts, including the Courthouse meetings.

8. **The meeting was adjourned by consensus. The next meeting will be held on Friday, December 5 at 7:45 AM at Betty's Pantry in Ottertail City.**