

Otter Tail Family Services Collaborative

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Working Together...

Serving Families

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Truancy Prevention Work Group

9:00 – 10:30 AM August 14, 2009

Otter Tail Operations Center, Ottertail City

Attendance: Jeff Drake (Battle Lake School-35); Tindy Rund & Shane Thielke (Fergus Falls Schools-66); Thomas Williams (Henning School-25); Blaine Novak & Travis Hensch (New York Mills School-30); Nicole Hansen (OTC Attorney's Office -66); Brad Vold (OTC Human Services-66); Connie Wenker (Parkers Prairie Schools-60); Brian Korf & Sheila Flatau (Pelican Rapids Schools – 80); Angie Schreader (Perham Schools-24); and Jane Patrick (Collaborative Coordinator).

1. Jane Patrick served as chair in the absence of John Hamann. Introductions were made including new school administrators Shane Thielke from Fergus Falls, Travis Hensch from New York Mills and Sheila Flatau from Pelican Rapids. Jeff Drake also reported that he is now acting as both the elementary and high school principal for the Battle Lake Schools.
2. The group reviewed the day's agenda and the Minutes of the February meeting as posted to the website. Both were approved by consensus.
3. The group discussed their earlier decision to track graduations rates separate from those required by No Child Left Behind. They had previously decided to collect graduation data for 12th grade seniors but decided it is too difficult to find students when they leave the district, and the information is really rather meaningless as far as true graduation rates go.
4. Jane shared the 2008-09 Attendance Campaign outline with the group and reminded them that all schools needed to report what activities they conducted throughout the school year. Several partners completed the information and returned it to Jane. School partners agreed to ask other administrators not at the meeting to complete any other missing information so the summary could be completed.
5. Jane reported that the 2008-09 attendance summary attendance report was not yet completed due to the fact that one school had not yet completed all of the information needed. Jane is working with that school's administrators to try and get the data. A report will be provided once the information is received.
6. The group reviewed the FY10 Work Plan and initiatives. The following items were noted:
 - Attendance tracking – what is acceptable and expected for elementary absences?
 - The group agreed to continue tracking and reporting on what attendance activities they conduct during the school year. The same outline as used last year will be used.

- A packet of resources and tools developed thus far by the work group were distributed. Jane noted that the video web addresses, chemical use assessment and flow chart had been updated and added to the packet.
- Otter Tail County will continue to offer intervention meetings at the Courthouse for students with attendance issues. Meetings can be arranged through Brad's office after the school has made contact and after the County Attorney's Office has sent a letter to the family. Early referrals are the most effective. Brad reported that meetings will likely be scheduled on Thursday mornings. Several examples of what programs are available in other counties were shared.
- **NEW THIS YEAR:** The County will host meetings at the elementary schools for families of students under the age of 12 who are establishing poor attendance habits. The schools should identify the students who have a poor attendance history relatively early in the school year. The parents will then be invited to attend a meeting at the school, and the County Attorney's Office and Human Services will share information about educational neglect and the importance of attendance. Elementary Schools wanting to set up such a meeting should contact Brad Vold at Human Services. The group discussed that it will be important for schools to utilize teachers to help identify these students early. This meeting will not be held late in the school year for students with unreasonable excessive absences since this is to be considered a primary prevention strategy.
- Jane shared information about the potential for grant funding through an RPF process offered by United Way. There was some interest by the group in participating. Jane indicated that she would assist with a letter of intent to respond to the RFP. If invited to participate, it would provide funding to establish parent involvement processes in schools that are interested in participating.
- Several questions were raised about current processes including:
 - ✓ Can students legally be withdrawn from school by a parent before age 18?
The group thought that there might have been a change in this law and Nicole agreed to check.

7. Partner sharing:

- Battle Lake reported success with their new policy for students to be exempt from final exams for good attendance and good grades.
- Jane shared updates with school-based mental health programming. Five of the eight school districts currently have programs in place which are funded through a collaborative effort by school funding, federal funds, third party revenues and Collaborative dollars. Jane encouraged all school administrators to visit with their superintendent about the importance of school-based services. Jane also indicated that additional funding was available to each of the eight school districts for FY10.
- Brad shared that the Parent Support Outreach Program had been funded through 2011. Home visitors are available to serve families in each schools district that have at least one child age 10 or younger and who are struggling with multiple stressors. Principals were encouraged to share flyers with teachers and encourage them to make referrals.

8. The meeting was adjourned by consensus. The next meeting will be held on **Friday, December 4, 2009 in Ottertail City.** All principals will be invited to attend.