

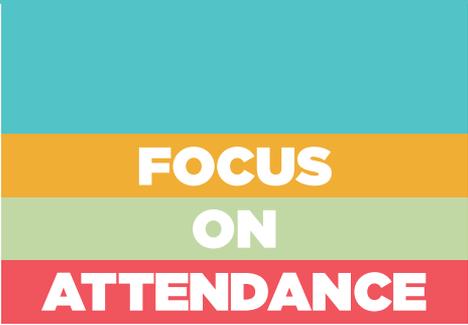
**FOCUS  
ON  
ATTENDANCE**



The Focus on Attendance:  
**Childhood Welfare  
Handbook**

*Allegheny County Department of Human Services*





**FOCUS  
ON  
ATTENDANCE**

## **What is the Focus on Attendance Partnership?**

- Focus on Attendance is a Community Based Attendance Improvement Program used by school staff.
- It is an Adjudication Alternative Program for the Magisterial District Courts approved by the Fifth Judicial District.
- Focus on Attendance facilitates positive communication between systems, provides technical assistance and offers coordination of services.
- Offers direct supports to children and families by providing a variety of resources and services.

Here is what is going on with FOCUS...

## Where We Help



### **School Attendance Concerns**

All K-12 schools within Allegheny County



### **Magisterial District Court Hearing(s)**



### **CYF & JPO Educational Supportive Service**

## **DHS Integrated School Outreach Specialists**

DHS Integrated School Outreach Specialists work with school staff, students and families to connect them to community supports to address poor school attendance. The Integrated School Outreach Specialists work in collaboration with DHS Resource Specialists and the AIU Education Records Consultant to bring together cross-system stakeholders to inform policies and procedures around truancy and poor school attendance.

**AVAILABLE FOR CONSULTATIONS!**

If you need further assistance contact us at:

[Focus\\_Attendance@Alleghenycounty.us](mailto:Focus_Attendance@Alleghenycounty.us)

## **DHS Resource Specialists**

DHS Resource Specialists, as part of the Integrated Program Services Unit, will be providing coverage to the 46 Magisterial District Courtrooms throughout Allegheny County. The work within these courtrooms will focus on identifying human service resources when needed as well as training and coaching the Magisterial District Judges (MDJ) regarding important human service needs they see in their courtrooms. Weekly the Resource Specialists attend truancy citation hearings and adult criminal hearings.

**To connect with a Resource Specialist, please contact:**

**Erin Williams, Resource Services Supervisor**

(412) 657-7840 (cell) or [Erin.Williams@alleghenycounty.us](mailto:Erin.Williams@alleghenycounty.us)

**Stacy Ransaw, Resource Services Supervisor**

(412) 304-4619 or [Stacy.Ransaw@alleghenycounty.us](mailto:Stacy.Ransaw@alleghenycounty.us)

## **AIU Education Records Consultant**

The Education Records Consultant supports staff at the Allegheny County Department of Human Services regarding the educational needs of the young people actively involved in their systems. This includes locating education records and school enrollment barriers.

For all requests, please contact **Alta Moquette** at 412-394-5786, Fax: 412-394-5915 or [Altagracia.Moquette@AIU3.net](mailto:Altagracia.Moquette@AIU3.net)



## Why Would Focus Contact You?

We received a notification from one of the sources below about a child on **YOUR** caseload, who is in violation of compulsory school attendance:



**SCHOOL:** Community-Based Attendance Improvement School Referral



**DHS:** Attendance Alert notification(s)



**MDJ:** A Magisterial District Court Summary Trial Notice

## Community-Based Attendance Improvement SCHOOL REFERRAL

The school identifies a student, who is habitually truant (6 or more unexcused absences) and submits a referral to Focus. The referral is assigned to an Integrated School Outreach Specialist.

The Integrated School Outreach Specialist will:

- Email to the student's team (includes a caseworker, caseworker supervisor, clinical manager, attorneys, Juvenile Court Judge, and/or Juvenile Probation Officer) information about the referrals and provides recommendations of services and/or resources
- Connects the caseworker with the appropriate school contact
- At caseworker's request, Focus will arrange a school teaming meeting

## **Attendance Alert Notification(s)**

Attendance alerts are attendance notifications that are generated by DHS's ATP for students that are in foster care and/or attending a data-sharing school.

- An Integrated School Outreach Specialist sends an email to the student's team that includes information about the notification, along with recommendations for services and/or resources
- If there are errors, the Integrated Outreach Specialist will provide the dates to be corrected by the school
- If the student appears to be in an inappropriate and /or incorrect educational placement, the Integrated School Outreach Specialist will provide different school options

## **Magisterial District Court Summary Trial Notice**

The DHS Resource Specialists receives all summary trial notifications from the Magisterial District Courts for students that are in Violation of Compulsory School Attendance Requirements.

The DHS Resource Specialists will:

- Notify the student's team (caseworker, probation officer, Juvenile Court judge, etc.) of the scheduled hearing
- Contact the worker for any updates before the hearing
- Attends the hearing and can inform the Judge of OCYF involvement and any services that may be active with the family
- Provides the outcome of the hearing and any recommendations to the caseworker

## Summary Trial Notice For Truancy: Adjudicated Delinquent and/or Dependent Youth

DHS Resource Specialist will:

- Notify Juvenile Court that a summary trial notice has been filed before a Magisterial District Judge
- Complete and submit the required documentation for a transfer of jurisdiction from MDJ to Juvenile Court
- A court order confirming jurisdiction for dependent delinquent, and/or dually adjudicated youth to Juvenile Court will be completed

**Note:** The Magisterial District Judge will typically dismiss the citation against youth and the Juvenile Court Judge will handle truancy at next review hearing.



## McKinney-Vento Act

A federal law designed to increase the school enrollment, attendance, and educational success of children and youth experiencing homelessness.

Homeless children are children “lacking a fixed, nighttime residence”. They are:

- Doubling up with others
- Living in hotels, shelters, etc.
- Sleeping in public areas
- Couch surfing

*Homeless children have the right to attend their home district (with school transportation) or their district of residency. They may enroll with 0 documents and should be enrolled immediately.*

**The McKinney-Vento Act NO LONGER includes children and youths who are awaiting foster care placement in the definition of “homeless children and youths.”**

School Staff (Homeless Liaison) should be contacted and a McKinney Vento form should be completed ASAP to assist with transportation needs.

For information on district’s designated Homeless Liaison, please visit: <https://directory.center-school.org/homeless/liaison/display/type/county>

## Did you know that...

### Compulsory School Age is NOW 6 to 18 yrs. of age

Pennsylvania's Truancy Law was changed in November 2016 and the changes that have taken effect are:

- Fines have increased up to \$750 for the 3rd Truancy offense
  - School must assist the family in addressing the poor school attendance by completing an attendance plan
  - Parents can be jailed for up to 3 days if they fail to pay the fine or complete court ordered community service
  - For more information, please visit the Education Law Center website at [www.elc-pa.org](http://www.elc-pa.org)
- If your child is waiting for the school to set up transportation, the school is to mark those absences as a BUS EXCUSE
  - Students CANNOT be cited for excused absences!
  - If the school is NOT A GOOD FIT for the student, OTHER SCHOOL CHOICES (charter, private, etc.) are available
  - If the child is under the age of 15, citations will be filed against the "person in parental relation", which means:
    - Custodial biological or adoptive parent
    - Noncustodial biological or adoptive parent
    - Guardian of the person of a child
    - Person with whom a child lives and who is acting in a parental role of a child

**Note:** This does not include any county agency or person acting as an agent of the county agency in the jurisdiction of a dependent child (42 Pa.C.S. § 6302)

# CYF Supportive Service

## We are here for you!

The Integrated School Outreach Specialist offers support to CYF caseworkers to assist them with school attendance and truancy-related issues.

- Support includes but not limited to collaborating with all education-focused workers and child-serving systems
- Collaboration with DHS Resource Specialists regarding truancy citation hearings
- Collaboration with the AIU Education Records Consultant regarding school attendance notifications for students that are dependent or dually adjudicated
- Offers consultation where school attendance and truancy are a concern
- Provides educational resources and school staff single point of contact information
- Available to attend CYF Regional Office Staff Meetings and arrange office hours if requested

Check us out on



**#FOCUSONATTENDANCE**

Any questions, please contact us at:

[Focus\\_Attendance@AlleghenyCounty.US](mailto:Focus_Attendance@AlleghenyCounty.US)

# NOTES

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**The Focus on Attendance Partnership:  
A Partnership between DHS, AIU and JPO**

