

Testimony of Connecticut Junior Republic Family Support Center
By Ana Aquino and MARRISA ALVES
March 17, 2008

Regarding Bill No. 5926, Section 6, 7, 8

The educational component of the Family Support Center (FSC) is an integral part of a successful program, along with its staff. The school and parents work in sync to uncover the root cause to various issues. The expertise of the staff and additional resources the Family Support Center offers allow for the facilitation and successful reintegration of the students to engage back into their educational setting.

The truancy issues in Waterbury are being addressed through an Attendance Counselor and/or a Truancy Prevention Specialist. They will make phone calls; write letters to the parents, conduct home visits and various schools will issue fines to parents who do not cooperate. Connecticut Law on Truancy violation of Statute Section 10-184, the parents can be fined up to \$25.00 per day for absences. At this point, the parent must appear before the judge and if a parent cannot afford the fine, they must complete a given community service. During this time the school will file a FWSN, for the child is truant. The school may also file a FWSN if the student's behavior is defiant of school rules. The Family Support Center would obtain a referral for said student after review from the probation officer supervisor.

The staff and Educational Consultant (EC) will meet with the family. The Educational Consultant will also meet with school personnel to gain a history on attempts made to help the student return to school. The FSC will meet with the student and discuss a Success Plan, inclusive of educational goals. The Educational Consultant will explore options such as: proper placement, returning to school, alternative school settings such as a smaller classroom instruction, school interests, recreational/sport interests, mentoring, and if needed, psychological evaluations to have a better understanding of what is causing such truancy or behavior issues.

Client Illustration:

This client has been truant during the entire 2007-2008 school year. The school counselor and parental attempts have failed to ensure the client attended school regularly. Regardless of the attempts, the client refused to return to school and also became defiant at home. Through the assessment phase of the Family Support Center, the Program Director and Educational Consultant conducted an educational assessment with the client and parent to identify what barriers prohibited the client from attending school. During the assessment the Client and parent expressed an interest in Adult Education due to the child's lack of desire to attend the high school setting. Educational Consultant met with Adult Education counselor and obtained all the information necessary to enroll the client. In the meantime, client agreed he would return to his regular school setting until Adult Education classes commence. The agreement made with the client and parent is to meet with Educational Consultant at the school to reintegrate the client into school. After several attempts, including phone calls, home visits and going to wake him up, the plan was unsuccessful. The Family Support Center staff during weekly team meetings

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identified what could make a difference for this adolescent. Like most adolescents it is the connection they make with the people and their sense of belonging. In many families this is one of the most common areas where adolescents experience difficulties within their environments. The team and parents strategize different engagement techniques to build a connection with the client. The Consensus in this particular client was that the client felt important when helping others. The Family Support Center staff then translated the same concept into providing the client with an opportunity of belonging by having the client support the staff in undertaking various projects at the Family Support Center. This in turn helped the client realize that he wanted to pursue his education. By this time, the Education Consultant had followed up with schools and client to pursue Adult Education. Many initiatives were taken by guiding and transporting the family to follow through with transferring the client into adult education and not having the client drop out of school. In the meantime while the Adult Education classes were not scheduled to begin until March 13, 2008 the client continued to attend his scheduled groups at the Family Support Center and began tutoring services provided at the Family Support Center. The Program Director also set up an appointment with the Family Support Center psychiatrist of which his recommendation was for the client to receive mentoring services. Additionally, the Family Support Center is working on providing this client with a mentor through the flex funds which were allocated to the Family Support Center.

Lastly, the Educational Consultant followed up with the family and Adult Education staff and the report is the client has attended school and plans to return next week in order to continue pursuing his education. With the Family Support Center programming, support and initiatives such as the one discussed above allows for the FSC clients to receive the much needed opportunities and services to assist them in achieving their goals. Please convey our wholehearted support for this legislative bill to be passed. Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,

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&

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