

**TESTIMONY OF ST. FRANCIS FAMILY SUPPORT CENTER AND WHEELER
CLINIC FAMILY SUPPORT CENTER IN SUPPORT OF RAISED BILL NO. 5926,
AN ACT CONCERNING FAMILIES WITH SERVICE NEEDS**

March 17, 2008

The St. Francis Home for Children Family Support Center, in (FSC) in the city of New Haven, strongly supports the committee to pass *Raised Bill No. 5926* specifically sections pertaining to truancy issues and FWSN families. It has been the FSC's experience thus far in New Haven that close to 80% of the referrals received from New Haven Juvenile Probation have truancy issues even though they were referred as Beyond Control Issues. This observation demonstrates that Truancy issues/referrals go hand in hand with Beyond Control at Home issues, similar to comorbid issues in the mental health field.

The Wheeler Clinic FSC, in the city of Hartford, also meets the needs of the FWSN children and is in support of *Raised Bill No. 5926*. The Hartford FSC's Educational Advocate who currently collaborates with the public school systems in our judicial district would be able to consult with the truancy pilot programs to help not only identify this population early, but to assist the school with a variety of services that would meet the needs of the identified clients.

Students with a history of habitual truancy could be assisted with programs such as:

- Early identification and intervention
- Development of study and time management skills
- Alternative learning centers for students not achieving success in traditional class room.
- Transitional class rooms for students returning from extensive absences
- Positive incentive and behavioral plans for students.

As a result of the Family Support Center existing, there are many cases that the staff are working on to better improve youth school attendance and decrease challenging behaviors at home.

One of the most powerful cases addressed in New Haven has to do with a 15 year old male who had increasing anxiety about attending school. He stopped going to school and as a result demonstrated many challenges at home. His parents filed a FWSN. The FSC Educational Coordinator began working with the family to find out that the youth had stopped going to school all together and had been hospitalized three times for attempted suicides between December 2007 and January 2008 due to school anxiety. After discharging from the hospital, beginning an IOP, the plan was for him to begin school at the same school. The FSC Educational Coordinator suggested an alternate plan of a modified school day. The youth attempted but still experienced serious anxiety. The Educational Coordinator then worked with the family and the school to arrange for homebound tutoring until the youth could begin at an alternate school, Pathways. The

youth visited with his family in early March, and has begun school and has not missed at day yet as a result of the educational advocacy.

For the foregoing reasons, the FSC's in the city of New Haven, Hartford, Waterbury, and Bridgeport strongly support *Raised Bill No. 5926*.

Respectfully submitted,

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