

Education and At Risk Youth Issue Team

A. Team Process, Information Collection and Internal Discussions:

Our team was divided into seven issue groups:

- Truancy: **Kevin Jennings**, Steven Jones
- School Connectedness: **Kevin Jennings**, Victor Medrano
- Push out: **Kellie Dressler**, Barbara Kelley, Cathy Girouard, Kara McDonagh
- Issues of access: **Kellie Dressler**, Barbara Kelley, Cathy Girouard, Kara McDonagh
- Educational instability: **Maria Lana-Queen**, Harry Wilson, LeBretia White, Karen Morgan
- Co-occurring factors: **Rob Vincent**, Aya Collins
- Absence of positive activities for after-school time: **Lisa Lauxman**, Nancy Valentine, Susan Ponemon, Gordon Martin

Each group met individually to research and develop a paper on an assigned topic. Periodic whole group meetings were held to brainstorm additional ideas and ensure the cohesiveness of the papers. Once all drafts were complete, the group met to discuss and finalize the compiled document. Issue groups reached out to specific program offices within their respective agencies to determine if policy recommendations in the issue papers aligned with current policy and regulatory language and/or if policy recommendations would require policy and regulatory language to be changed or updated.

Of the 57 public comments received as a result of the Federal Register notice, nearly 20 concerned education issues. The team is in the process of reviewing them and discussing their application to the team's work.

B. Selected Preliminary Recommendations:

General Recommendations

1. *Problem:* Lack of a clear, holistic approach to reducing school dropout. *Recommendation:* The federal government should adopt a positive youth development model to inform all youth programs and conduct regular audits to make sure that funds are balanced among both preventive and reactive programming.
2. *Problem:* A fragmented grant-making structure. *Recommendation:* Federal grant-making should move away from a systems-based orientation toward a client-centered approach that encourages the delivery of integrated services, requiring federal agencies to blend funding, share in accountability, and request similar coordination at the state and local levels.
3. *Problem:* A failure to evaluate past programs and apply lessons learned. *Recommendation:* An evaluation and dissemination component should be required of all grant programs, and new grant proposals should present a thorough analysis of past efforts and explain how the analysis informs new programming.

4. Problem: Systematic inconsistency in federal efforts. *Recommendation:* OMB should require federal agencies administering time-limited grant programs to present a clear rationale that justifies the time frame chosen for a particular grant and explains how the outcomes and/or work can be sustained by local and state authorities past the end of the grant period.

Issue-Related Draft Recommendations

To enact these and other recommendations, the federal agencies will need to work with SEA/LEAs and correctional education systems to help determine the best combination of means to the desired actions by the local institutions (e.g., incentives and/or penalties, technical assistance, measurement systems).

- *Issue: Truancy. Recommendation:* Incentivize states to collaboratively determine truancy, attendance, and graduation rate calculations and include statistics for withdrawn and expelled students within these calculations to allow for interstate comparisons and to hold schools accountable for all students, discouraging school push-out.
- *Issue: School Connectedness. Recommendation:* Fund research focused on risk and protective factors (including “school connectedness”) as well as best practices for prevention, for youth at risk, including priorities for youth in transition into and out of different educational settings (including correctional facilities, substance abuse treatment, military, and homeless families).
- *Issue: Access. Recommendation.* Enforce existing education policies for youth in residential settings including IDEA and issue clarification for application of policies such as FERPA for youth in custody to ensure all students have access to necessary educational services and increase communication between traditional and non-traditional educational settings.
- Enact Senate Bill 729, the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act of 2009 to allow illegal immigrant children who have completed high school temporary residence to attend college or serve in the military and allow them a path to citizenship. Such action will motivate these students to complete high school and declare a moratorium on such deportations of undocumented youth who entered US under age 16, who have lived continuously in US for five years, who are law-abiding through ICE or through the issuance of an executive order.
- Actively discourage the use of zero tolerance policies in schools with requirements and priorities in all related grant programs from HHS, DOJ, and ED to prevent the use of suspension or expulsion for minor disciplinary infractions AND support growth and improvement models and use of multiple measurement models in the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* to discourage push out of low achieving students to artificially inflate achievement scores.

D. Key Questions for Member Agencies to Consider:

1. Are there instrumental policies or agency priorities that relate to or affect the work of this group you want the team to take into account?