



no "kid"ding did you know?

topic: targeting truant students

website resources

[Youth Out of School:
Linking Absence to
Delinquency](#)

[The Cost and Benefits of
Three Intensive
Interventions with Colorado
Truants](#)

[National Center for School
Engagement](#)

[Can You Go to Jail if Your
Kids Don't Go to School?](#)

The following "No 'Kid'ding" article appeared in the November 2008 issue of Alternative for Youth's (AFY) [Youth Matters newsletter](#).

Alternatives for Youth (AFY) is dedicated to helping youth succeed in school and in life. To this end, we offer a continuum of services from prevention (through our Celebrando la Familia program) to intervention (through our NorthStar program) to rehabilitation (through our Clearview Educational Center program). This fall and expanding in the spring semester, we have begun an early intervention program, Community Advocates, in partnership with the St. Vrain Valley School District (SVVSD) to work specifically with truant students.

Why target truant students? For several reasons, including:

- At a minimum, truant students are likely to be ill-prepared for skilled work, an increasingly serious problem in the U.S. for both businesses and tax-payers when adults are unable to earn an adequate living and turn to various welfare programs for help. One calculation estimates that one high school dropout can be expected to cost the public in excess of \$200,000 (in 1997 dollars) more over the course of his or her life than if he or she earned a high school degree.
- Problems with school have been shown to be a risk factor for drug and alcohol use and for involvement with the juvenile justice system, and students with school problems are often truant. Beyond the mere fact of juveniles involved in crime is the cost of juvenile delinquency. In 2007, Boulder County had 822 juvenile delinquency filings. ([Colorado Juvenile Delinquency Filings](#))
- In fact, in Colorado, over 90% of youth in detention for delinquent acts have a history of truancy; more than 70% of suspended youth were chronically truant in the preceding six months; and nearly half of expelled students have been chronically truant in the previous year. Truant students are also at higher risk of dropping out of school (for more information on high school dropouts from an earlier "No 'Kid'ding . . ." article, [click here](#)).
- Truancy is a red flag that may signal any number of problems in a student's home, including poverty, mental health, and physical abuse, or issues indirectly related to school. One of our Community Advocates recently worked with a truant student who missed school because she didn't want to dress for gym and had fallen so far behind in classes she had panic attacks before school.
- Responding to truancy costs the school district time and money as administrators contact parents, try to help students, and, on the extreme end, pay for court fees for truancy hearings.
- Minority students are at greater risk for truancy, thereby contributing to the achievement gap. In the SVVSD, Latino students face higher issues with attendance. Skyline and Frederick High Schools each have an 86% Latino attendance rate, considerably lower than the overall district attendance rate of 94%.
- The cost of effective programs that correct truancy greatly outweigh the tremendous costs of high school failure both financially and in helping youth succeed for a better individual and community quality of life.



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Research shows that highly effective truancy prevention programs must:

- Be comprehensive, flexible, responsive, and persevering.
- View children in the context of their families.
- Deal with families as parts of neighborhoods and communities.
- Have a long-term, preventative orientation, a clear mission and continue to evolve over time.
- Be well managed by competent and committed individuals with clearly identifiable skills.
- Have staff that are trained and supported to provide high quality, responsive services.
- Operate in settings that encourage practitioners to build strong relationships based on mutual trust and respect.

All of these elements are a part of AFY and St. Vrain Valley School District's Community Advocacy program to prevent truancy in the SVVSD.

Note: The above is provided as information and does not indicate an endorsement by Alternatives for Youth of the listed websites.