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Weld County anti-truancy program recognized by U.S. Justice Department *Truancy Response and Intervention Program included in “best practices” database*

GREELEY, Colo. – A multi-tiered and multi-agency truancy intervention program in Weld County has been selected by a U.S. Justice Department agency for inclusion in its database of best practices for such programs.

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) in Washington, D.C., evaluates programs across the country to recommend best practices models for interested agencies to follow. This month, Weld County’s Truancy Response and Intervention Program (TRIP) was included in that list of programs.

“Being recognized as a best practices program is a huge honor for our district,” said 19th Judicial District Magistrate Rebecca Koppes-Conway, president of the Board of the Weld County Juvenile Assessment Center (JAC), which built the program.

“It certainly is due to lots of work and dedication by our court staff, staff from the district attorney’s office, school districts as well as the JAC. All were instrumental in working toward creating the protocol and practices that are being recognized,” Koppes-Conway said.

With the help of a centralized attendance-tracking database brought online for the 2008-09 school year, a truancy intervention program that was launched in 2006 evolved into TRIP, which involves 16 police agencies and 10 school districts in Weld County.

Recognition of the program through inclusion in the OJJDP’s best practices database “validates the work we’re doing with truant kids,” said JAC Executive Director Michael Guthrie. “Our program not only has proved to reduce unexcused absences, it also does so at a lower cost than other truancy intervention programs in Colorado studied by the National Center for School Engagement.”

Participation in TRIP's Level I program is voluntary for students and parents, but continued noncompliance may result in a court-ordered referral to Level II, a mandatory program that includes development of an individual case plan and weekly monitoring by a case manager. Youth or parents who fail to comply with provisions of their individual plan may be moved to Level III, in which they continue to receive truancy-intervention services, but may be held in contempt of court and face sanctions such as daily fines or jail.

In the 2008-09 school year, 198 youths were referred to Level I TRIP services, 342 were court-ordered to Level II, and 139 were ordered to Level III services.

An analysis of the program by the Omni Institute of Denver found large percentages of students in TRIP improved their attendance.

The institute studied outcomes for 213 students entered into the program in the first half of the school year and found 63 percent of the Level I students and an average of 85 percent of youth in Level II and Level III improved their attendance. Among those students, the average number of unexcused absences decreased by nine days for Level I, 16 days for Level II and 18 days for level III.

For more information, please contact Michael Guthrie at 970-351-5460. The JAC Web site is at <http://www.weldjac.org> and the OJJDP Web site is at <http://www.ojjdp.ncjrs.gov>.