Lamoille Valley Truancy Project

Lamoille Restorative Center, Hyde Park VT

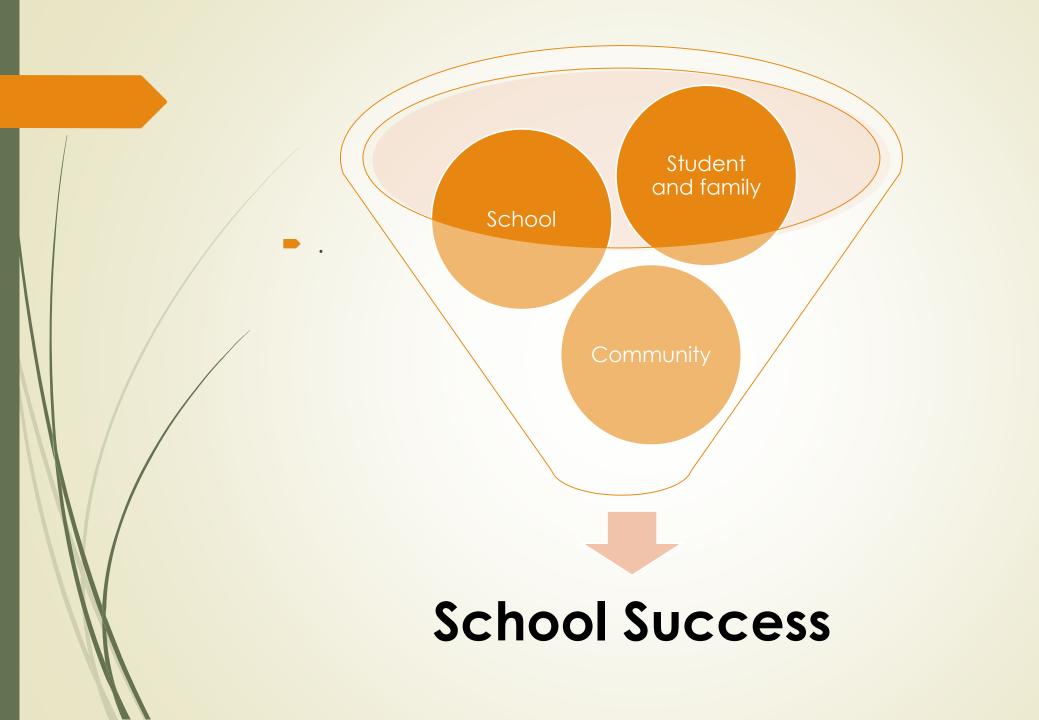
www.lrcvt.org

Heather Hobart, Executive Director Becky Penberthy, CD & PTS Director

Joint Child Protection Oversight Committee
October 31 2019

Iwenty years of experience

- "Research" in the late 90s
 - Large number of Court Diversion referrals crimes during the school day
 - Partnered with schools to do outreach to families
 - Funding from CFCPP
- Mid 2000s/
 - Borrowed practices from Burlington and Rutland
 - Funding from 3 Supervisory Unions to hire a school attendance specialist
- March 2010, Commissioner of Education required all SUs to develop countywide truancy protocols
 - In May 2010 LRC hosted a valley-wide summit, involving Orleans Southwest, Lamoille North, and Lamoille South supervisory unions and representatives from our local DCF-Family Services office.
 - Adopted a unified truancy policy. (See handout: Lamoille Valley Truancy Policy)



Lamoille Valley Truancy Project Protocol

Lamoille Valley Truancy Project Protocol

10 days absent

Intervention includes:

1. Letter to family notifying them of upcoming meeting (this triggers LVTP involvement);

15 days absent

- 2. LVTP holds a meeting with the student, parent(s)/guardian(s) and school to develop a written plan to improve attendance, set guidelines for appropriate absences, to document the impact of absences on academics and behavior, and to make referrals to support services;
- 3. The Superintendent seeks corroboration regarding the student's physical and/or mental fitness to attend school.

No improvement OR more than 20 days absent

5 days absent

Intervention includes:

1. Documented attempt to make contact with parent/guardian by school.

Intervention includes:

- Documented attempt to make contact with family by school;
- Support services offered by school;
- 3. Letter from school outlining consequences for further absences & possible prosecution;
- 4. Letter copied to Lamoille Valley Truancy Program (LVTP);
- 5. Determination by LVTP and school to take further action at this time.

Intervention includes:

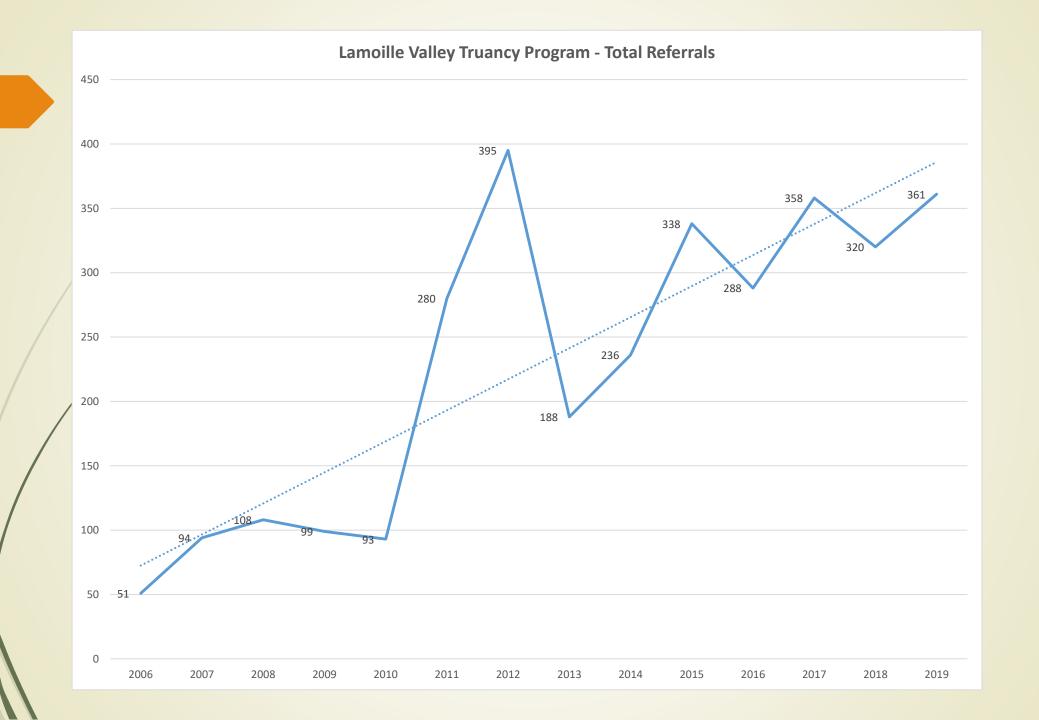
- LVTP facilitates document preparation with Principal, Superintendent and DCF;
- 2. LVTP and/or makes a report to DCF;
- 3. LVTP helps Superintendent and school submit paperwork to State's Attorney for possible petition to family court:
- LVTP continues to assist student/family and school as necessary.

Truancy Work: A day in the life

Typical Day:

- On the phone with a parent, a child, and/or a school
- In the home of a student to address attendance barriers
- Drive a child to school
- Work/with a school nurse to address a child's health issue
- Meet with a school team to develop an educational plan
- Visit a student at school to acknowledge attendance accomplishments that week

https://www.vpr.org/post/lamoille-county-program-fights-truancy-social-work-and-prevention#stream/0



Student data – 2018/19 School Year

OSSU 978 LNSU 1,800 LSSU 1,569

►Total: 4,347

361 referrals = 8.3% of total student population

Ages of Students

2017-2018: 358 Referrals

>50% of the students were elementary-aged

2018-2019: 361 Referrals

>60% of the students were elementary-aged

2018-2019 School Year

CHINS petition filed

17 students

(11 families)

5% of total

20 days absent

54 students

15% of total

15 days absent

121 students

34% of total

5-10 days absent

361 students

Reasons for Chronic Absences

- Family stress related to poverty and basic needs
 - Most families experience some type of economic hardship: access to water/heat, nutritious and plentiful food, or ability to shower and care for themselves while accessing clean clothes and shoes.
 - Of the 11 families that went to court (CHINS petition), 9 of them are children from a single-mother household.
- Parental substance misuse
 - School attendance specialist provides referrals to local substance treatment services when appropriate.
 - Access to MAT or other treatment services can conflict with school attendance.
- Anxiety is a major factor in reasons a child may not want to go to school
 - Parent may struggle with bringing the children to school. Often this looks like stomach aches, headaches, panic attacks, and encopresis.
 - At least a dozen youth identify anxiety and related symptoms as the major reason for missing school.

Strengths & Challenges:

Strengths:

- Community-based service
 - Supports and interventions exist outside of school and connect to social services in the community
 - In partnership with school & family
- Utilizes R-N-R principles
 - Intervention based on risk and needs of student & family
- Targeted Intervention Model
 - Reserve court process for 5% highest risk, highest need students and families
 - ≠ 95% are served successfully in community
- Supported by all schools, prosecutors, defense attorneys, judges, health-care providers (incl. mental health and substance use), other social service providers

Challenges:

- Ratio of families/students per 1.0 FTE school attendance specialist is too high
- BARJ resources are limited
- Current funding only allows for 10 months of work
- Patchwork funding

Current Funding

- Supervisory Unions contribute equally
- DCF/FSD Juvenile Delinquency Prevention Contract (BARJ)
- Full time, year-round school attendance specialist position at LRC is \$86,000

Resources

- Heather Hobart, Executive Director, Lamoille Restorative Center
 - hhobart@lrcvt.org (802) 279-1665
- Becky Penberthy, Court Diversion & Pretrial Services Director
 - bpenberthy@lrcvt.org (802) 730-2406
- http://www.lrcvt.org/community-programs/