

# **Evaluation of the Truancy Court Program in Baltimore City**



**Administrative Office of the Courts**

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## **Executive Summary**

The Maryland Judiciary, Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC), under a grant awarded by the State Justice Institute (SJI), partnered with the University of Maryland, Institute for Governmental Service and Research (IGSR) to conduct an evaluation of the Truancy Court Program (TCP) in Baltimore City, operated by the Center for Families, Children and the Courts (CFCC) at the University of Baltimore School of Law. This report on TCP is part of a series of reports evaluating truancy intervention programs in Maryland, including the court-based intervention Truancy Reduction Pilot Program (TRPP) in the First Judicial Circuit and the mediation intervention Baltimore Students: Mediation about Reducing Truancy (B-SMART) in Baltimore City schools.

TCP is one of several programs created over the years to address the high level of truancy in Baltimore City public schools. TCP is a voluntary, 10-week, in-school intervention program for students who are beginning to demonstrate a pattern of truancy. Students who had between 5 and 20 unexcused absences/tardies within the previous two marking periods are eligible for the program. Students are selected for TCP by teachers, counselors, and other staff at the individual schools. Each student's parent/guardian decides whether the student will participate. The program emphasizes mentoring and service referral for student participants and their parents/guardians. Volunteer "judges" conduct mock court sessions in participating schools to monitor student progress in the program and to provide encouragement to participants and their families. The TCP team also includes school-based representatives, including the principal or vice-principal, who is involved with the students; parents and guardians; and non-school-based members, including CFCC staff and University of Baltimore School of Law students. This team, with financial resources provided by both public and private organizations, has provided the TCP program to more than 500 students at 14 different schools since the spring semester of 2005. With additional funding from a federal stimulus grant, TCP has expanded to include a total of eight schools in Baltimore City, as well as schools in other Maryland jurisdictions (Montgomery and Anne Arundel Counties) during the 2009-2010 academic year.

The evaluation of the Truancy Court Program (TCP) was designed to contribute to the empirical literature on the implementation and operation of truancy reduction intervention programs. This report examines the following: (1) TCP's goals and objectives; (2) the

organizations and individuals involved in TCP's operation and the resources they contribute (directly or indirectly); (3) implementation of TCP, including the number and characteristics of program participants, and types and levels of services, and how each compares to the planned program; and (4) perceptions of individuals who deliver the program and those to whom the program is delivered regarding strengths, weaknesses, successes, and failures. The study focused on TCP implementation at six Baltimore City schools during the 2008-2009 academic year. The methods used to gather data include: (1) structured interviews with CFCC staff members, TCP team members, and participating students and their parents or guardians; (2) interviews with key stakeholders; (3) observations of TCP sessions; and (4) review of administrative, archival, educational and delinquency data.

### **Process Assessment**

The TCP model incorporates many of the recommended elements of truancy reduction and prevention programs, including interagency collaboration, family involvement, incentives and sanctions, prevention strategies such as mentoring, and provision of services in a supportive environment. CFCC accepts only schools with well-organized and complete applications and indications of commitment to TCP among school staff. Given the voluntary nature of the program and its implementation in a small number of Baltimore City schools, TCP does not reach all of its target population.

Based on data for the six TCP schools in Baltimore City during 2008-2009, TCP participants are representative of BCPSS students in terms of race and gender, except that TCP participants included a higher percentage of Hispanics than are present in BCPSS as a whole. This finding was not surprising given that two of the TCP schools serve neighborhoods with relatively large Hispanic populations. The average age of TCP participants was 11. Nearly 20% were special education students. More than 17% changed schools one or more times between 2007 and 2009. TCP serves a low income population. All but one of the TCP schools during 2008-2009 was a Title 1 school, and 90% of TCP participants were eligible for low or reduced cost lunches.

Attendance data provided by BCPSS was aggregated by academic year and did not distinguish between excused and unexcused absences. Consequently, the evaluation team was not able to confirm whether attendance by TCP participants fit the guideline of 5 to 20

unexcused absences during the previous two marking periods. The median number of total absences among TCP students during the academic year prior to their participation was 21. This level of total absenteeism is consistent with expectations for a group chosen for having 5 to 20 unexcused absences during the prior two grading periods (equivalent to half an academic year).

Students that participated in TCP tended to have low grades in English, math, and science, with mean scores in the mid-60s prior to their participation. A few students though had grades in the 90s prior to participating in TCP. Only about 15% of TCP participants had been suspended during the academic year prior to their TCP participation. Among the participants who had been suspended, the average number of suspensions was 2.1 and the average number of days per suspension was 4.4.

Nine TCP participants were referred to the Department of Juvenile Services prior to their participation in the program. These nine students experienced a total of 16 referrals to DJS, with one referral resulting in a finding of delinquency.

About 45% of the 2008-2009 TCP participants graduated from the program after one semester of participation. Some of the students who did not graduate after one semester chose to participate again. Roughly half of the 2008-2009 TCP participants graduated from the program after one or two semesters of participation. The graduation rate varied greatly from school to school, however. At the one high school offering TCP, only 27.3% of participants graduated from TCP after one or two semesters. TCP graduation rates at elementary and middle schools ranged from 36.4% to 80.0%.

The researchers developed a logistic regression model to test whether race, gender, age, mobility, free lunch status, special education status, prior academic performance, prior numbers of absences, or prior numbers of suspensions predicted whether a participant graduated from TCP. For students who participated in TCP during the fall of 2008, none of the variables tested had a statistically significant effect on graduation from TCP. For the spring 2009 group, the only variable found to have a statistically significant effect on graduation from TCP was the number of suspensions during the 2007-2008 academic year, with a higher number of suspensions associated with a reduced likelihood of TCP graduation. CFCC representatives noted that TCP was designed for elementary and middle school students and that inclusion of the one high school in analyses may skew the results. To alleviate this concern, researchers repeated the

analysis with high school students excluded. Once high school students were removed from the analysis, suspension ceased to have a significant impact on graduation.

Schools implement TCP guided by the TCP Toolkit, a handbook that outlines the program, the role of some team members, session activities, and graduation requirements. Beyond the guidelines presented in the Toolkit, CFCC designed TCP to be a flexible program that can be adapted to the context and needs of individual schools, including choosing the students to whom the school offers participation.

Based on survey results and observations, it appears that a number of TCP functions are being performed adequately. A principals' workshop, held prior to the beginning of the academic school year, informs interested principals about the level of commitment expected of school staff participating in TCP and reviews TCP operational requirements. Training is provided to TCP team members and is generally considered to be valuable. Most respondents agreed that the training was detailed, organized and prepared them for their respective roles in TCP. The majority of team member respondents indicated that team members worked together and that conflicts did not arise among team members. CFCC staff meets weekly with the Law Student Fellows and weekly amongst themselves to review cases, gather feedback on the program, and discuss future development of the program.-TCP is a multiagency program requiring coordination among organizational partners. The relationships among TCP team members from these multiple organizations, as observed by the research team, appear to be effective. It is not clear, however, whether TCP coordinates effectively with agencies that have the resources to provide support services to TCP participants and their families. TCP does not maintain lists of available resources and does not track referrals for services, but the CFCC program manager keeps a list of providers for consultation purposes and a new manual of available resources is currently being created.

There are some areas in which a lack of documentation or communication appears to be unrelated to the need for implementation flexibility. The TCP Toolkit offers little documentation or guidance to schools regarding the school selection process, qualifications of the mentor coordinator and volunteers, and the consent and information sharing process among team members. Team member respondents reported that communication between school-based and non-school based team members is sometimes difficult. Parents and guardians also expressed some confusion about program processes; some did not know that a signed permission slip was

required for participation, some reported that they thought the program is mandatory, and others did not know whether their children had mentors or whether their children had received sanctions and/or incentives.

One area in which TCP may need to focus is in referring families to resources that can address the underlying causes of truancy. The researchers did not find a description of the procedures used to identify the needs of family members. The referral processes, services provided, service providers used, and follow-up processes are not documented. Interviews revealed that only half of the parents/guardians who identified the factors leading to their children's truancy were referred to services to address these factors. The program would benefit from additional documentation of participants' needs, referrals to appropriate resources, and follow-up on the outcome of these referrals.

The parent/guardian and student participants surveyed generally reported that they were satisfied with their interactions with program personnel and procedures. When asked what they liked best about the program, the common themes within the parent/guardian responses were motivation, support, and hope. The incentives and sanctions utilized by the program were generally viewed as appropriate and/or effective by parents/guardians.

Satisfaction with TCP among schools is demonstrated by multi-year participation by 6 of the 14 Baltimore City schools that have been involved with the program, as well as the high rate of reapplication for the program among participating schools. Four of the schools participating during 2008-2009 had been involved for multiple years, including one school that had been involved for three years.

The use of the word "Court" in the TCP title creates possible confusion regarding the program's relationship to the Judiciary. Although judges were involved in planning and implementing TCP, it is a school-based rather than court-based intervention. CFCC suggests that the stature of a judge in the community supports his/her role as a problem-solver and supporter of community safety; however the public, and even TCP participants, may be misled into believing that the program can leverage judicial authority over truancy.

## **Outcomes assessment**

The evaluation team examined the effect of TCP on attendance; academic performance, as measured by Maryland School Assessment (MSA) test scores; and student behavior, as

measured by suspensions and arrests. The outcome analyses considered only elementary school and middle school students, the age groups targeted by TCP.

Statistical analysis of the outcomes of fall 2008 TCP participants and a comparison group of BCPSS students who had not participated in TCP found that participation in TCP did not significantly impact attendance. Graduation from TCP within one or two semesters of participation did lead to an improvement in attendance, however. When compared to non-participants and non-graduates, TCP graduates were absent on average five fewer days in 2008-2009. Data from CFCC for spring 2009 participants showed that attendance improved for TCP graduates, but did not improve for participants who did not graduate. Data on non-participants were not available for comparison with the spring 2009 TCP group.

Neither participation in TCP nor graduation from TCP had a statistically significant impact on MSA reading or math scores. TCP participants and graduates, and the comparison group of non-participants all experienced slight, but statistically insignificant, increases in the numbers of suspensions in 2008-2009. Smaller percentages of TCP participants and TCP graduates were referred to DJS between the fall of 2008 and August 2010 than had been referred prior to the fall of 2008. In contrast, the percentage of comparison group students referred to DJS increased between the two periods. The number of students referred was too small, however, to test for statistical significance.

The numbers of TCP participants at each school were too small to allow detailed analysis of attendance, academic, and behavioral results across schools. The finding that TCP graduation is associated with improvements in attendance suggests that the differences in graduation rates across the schools would be reflected by differences in attendance results across schools as well.

The process evaluation revealed that both the characteristics of participants and the intervention itself differed from school to school. Any differences in outcomes may be due to differences in participant characteristics or in how TCP is practiced. Further study would be required to sort out these effects.

In summary, graduation from TCP was associated with improved attendance. Approximately half of 2008-2009 TCP participants graduated from the program after one or two semesters of participation. Thus, the program can be described as effective for about half the participants. Graduation from TCP appears to be the key to achieving improved attendance as

well as some behavioral benefits, but analysis of participant characteristics provided limited insight into factors affecting whether a participant graduated. Further study may lead to a better understanding of the participant characteristics and program ingredients that enable participants to succeed within and outside TCP.

Overall, the evaluation team found TCP to be an evolving program that adheres to a collaborative approach suggested in the literature. The program has been well-received by team members and participating parents/guardians, and students. Program policies and procedures and associated documentation have been under development as the program has evolved, and there are still some issues that need to be clarified.

## Introduction

A growing body of literature has demonstrated the relationship between truancy and a number of negative social and behavioral outcomes including increased involvement in juvenile and adult criminal behavior. In response to the demonstrated link between truancy and undesirable social outcomes, in recent decades a wide variety of truancy/school attendance interventions have been introduced throughout the United States. Among these interventions are programs designed to directly or indirectly involve courts and judges in responding to truancy. To date there has been very little empirical evaluation of such truancy reduction intervention programs.

This report is part of a series of reports intended to bridge that gap through evaluations of a spectrum of truancy interventions in Maryland. The first report in the series was a process evaluation of the Truancy Reduction Pilot Program (TRPP), a court-based truancy reduction intervention in the juvenile courts of the First Judicial Circuit of Maryland. This second report in the series is a process and outcome evaluation of the school-based Baltimore City Truancy Court Program (TCP). The third report evaluates the processes and outcomes of Baltimore Students: Mediation about Truancy Reduction (B-SMART), a mediation program that works with students, parents, and schools to improve communication and address factors that may be contributing to student truancy. Each program's impact on students' academic performance and attendance, and court-involvement where appropriate, are evaluated in the outcome evaluations.

As a court-based program, TRPP is operated by the Maryland Judiciary, but TCP is operated by the Center for Families, Children, and the Courts at the University of Baltimore School of Law, and B-SMART is operated by the Center for Dispute Resolution at the University of Maryland School of Law. The results from these three program evaluations will be used to inform the future role of the Maryland Judiciary in truancy intervention. Due to the relationship among the evaluations and their shared objective, they draw heavily from the same literature. The Judiciary's 2008 TRPP evaluation report to the Maryland General Assembly included a review of relevant literature and this report will frequently cite sources presented in that published report.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Daining, C., Bryant, V., & Crumpton, C.D. (2008). *An evaluation of the Truancy Reduction Pilot Program of the First Judicial Circuit of Maryland*. Annapolis, MD: Maryland Judiciary, Administrative Office of the Courts.

The evaluation of these three programs is a collaborative effort of the Maryland Judiciary Research Consortium (MJRC). MJRC is an inter-organizational policy and program analysis effort designed to make the State's court system more efficient and effective in responding to citizen needs; it comprises the University of Maryland Institute for Governmental Service and Research (IGSR), the University of Maryland School of Social Work, the University of Maryland School of Law, Morgan State University, Coppin State University, the University of Baltimore Schaefer Center for Public Policy, University of Baltimore School of Law, University of Maryland-Baltimore County, Salisbury University and Bowie State University. The Maryland Judiciary, Administrative Office of the Courts has partnered with the University of Maryland School of Social Work to evaluate TRPP and B-SMART, and with IGSR to evaluate TCP. IGSR has consulted with its consortium partners to ensure consistent methodology in its evaluation study, including this report.

### **TCP Evaluation Overview**

This report comprises both process and outcome evaluations of TCP. A process evaluation typically involves documenting how a program is operating and comparing actual operations to what was intended when the program was designed. Thus, a process evaluation examines the following: a program's goals and objectives; the organizations and individuals involved in a program's operation and the resources they contribute (directly or indirectly); number and characteristics of program participants and how these compare to the intended target population; types and level of services and activities delivered by the program compared to the planned intervention; reasons for deviations from the original design; and perceptions of individuals who deliver the program and individuals to whom the program is delivered regarding program strengths, weaknesses, successes, and failures. A process evaluation may provide program managers and policy makers with insights that can be used to improve operations and also serves as the foundation for an evaluation of the program's effectiveness. The process evaluation often helps to clarify the program's goals and objectives and make explicit the program's expected outcomes; it may also reveal contextual factors that may affect a program's success.

An outcome evaluation examines the effectiveness of the program in accomplishing its goals and objectives. When program outcomes are evaluated, any deviations from what was

expected might be explained by the contextual factors and/or by differences between the program's design and actual implementation revealed in the process evaluation. This evaluation aims to answer the following questions about TCP, based on Rossi, Lipsey and Freeman (2004, p.172-174):

- How many students have been served by TCP?
- What is the intended target population for TCP? Are the students who participate in TCP the intended target population of the program?
- Are there members of the target population who are not served by TCP? Are certain subgroups of the target population underrepresented among TCP participants?
- Are the families "within the target population aware" that TCP exists?
- Do the students participating within TCP receive the "proper amount, type and quality of services?"
- Are necessary program functions being performed adequately?
- Is staffing sufficient in numbers and competencies for the functions that must be performed in TCP?
- Is TCP well organized? Do TCP staff members work well together?
- Do the program activities of TCP conform well to the written policies of the program?
- Does TCP coordinate effectively with the other programs and agencies with which it must interact?
- Are resources, facilities, and funding adequate to support important program functions in TCP?
- Are resources used effectively and efficiently in TCP?
- Is performance at some program sites or locales significantly better or poorer than at others?
- Are TCP participants satisfied with their interactions with program personnel and procedures?
- Are TCP participants satisfied with the services they receive?
- Do TCP participants engage in appropriate follow-up behavior after service?

## Methodology

### Process Evaluation

The TCP process evaluation focuses on the implementation of TCP in six Baltimore City Schools in the 2008-2009 academic year (Highlandtown Elementary and Middle, Barclay Elementary and Middle, William Lemmel Middle, Patterson High, Walter P. Carter Elementary, and Steuart Hill Academic Academy). In doing so, it evaluates the implementation of the program in these schools, identifies productive and less productive strategies and provides preliminary outcomes for students served by the program.

The methods used to gather data for the evaluation included the following:

- 1) Semi-structured interviews with senior staff at the Baltimore City Public School System (BCPSS) and senior staff at the Center for Families, Children and the Courts (CFCC) at the University of Baltimore School of Law.
- 2) Semi-structured interviews with members of the TCP team. A member of the IGSR research team conducted telephone interviews with 16 team members (seven school-based and nine non-school-based). The seven school-based team members who were interviewed included three school administrators, one social worker, one guidance counselor, one educator, and one other school-based team member. Five of the six TCP schools were represented by these interviewees. The nine non-school-based team members included three judges, five law student fellows, and the TCP coordinator. The interviews solicited views about the TCP organization and processes and operational strengths and weaknesses of the program (See Appendix A, *Baltimore City Team Member Questionnaire*);
- 3) Semi-structured interviews with participating students and their parents or guardians. Members of the IGSR research team conducted telephone interviews with 12 students and 17 parents or guardians, who were among the participants in the spring of 2009 TCP sessions. The students surveyed represented five of the six schools, and the parents/guardians surveyed represented all six schools participating in TCP during the 2008-2009 academic year. These interviews covered participants' experiences with the program (see Appendix B, *Baltimore City Student Questionnaire*, and Appendix C, *Baltimore City Parent/Guardian Questionnaire*);

- 4) Observations of TCP sessions. The researchers observed one TCP session at each school during the study period.
- 5) Administrative data from the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE). Demographic data such as gender, race/ethnicity and socioeconomic status for Baltimore City Schools participating in TCP were obtained from MSDE Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) report cards (<http://mdreportcard.org>); and
- 6) Archival data review. Researchers gathered and reviewed program planning and implementation reports, the Baltimore City Public School Student Attendance Policy/Procedures Handbook, the TCP program manual and Tool Kit (Babb, Danziger, Moran, Schmike, & Green, 2008), and newspaper articles.

The researchers treated the Toolkit as the TCP implementation plan and sought to confirm from other sources how the actual program operations compared to the objectives, policies, and procedures presented in the Toolkit.

The questionnaires used for the structured interviews were developed based on a literature review of truancy reduction practices conducted by Daining in 2007 in conjunction with staff members from the Ruth H. Young Center for Families and Children at the University of Maryland School of Social Work. An effort was made to be consistent with the semi-structured interviews conducted by the Ruth H. Young Center for the evaluation of the TRPP program so that results of the two evaluations could be compared more easily. Follow-up conversations with key stakeholders from the University of Baltimore and Baltimore City Public School System were conducted to clarify findings.

The sample of 12 students and 17 parents represents 13.3% of the 90 students and 22.9% of the 74 parents/guardians participating in TCP during the spring of 2009. IGSR researchers attempted to contact all the parents/guardians and students who had participated in TCP during the spring of 2009. Extensive efforts were made to reach parents/guardians both by telephone and in person, but with limited success. In lists provided by the schools and CFCC, 12 out of 74 participant addresses were incorrect or out of date, and 20 out of 74 participant telephones were disconnected. In at least three instances, parent/guardian information from the school was inaccurate or out of date. Among parents/guardians who were reached, many would not consent to be interviewed and/or to have their child interviewed. Researchers did not attempt to contact

students or parents/guardians who did not participate in TCP to examine how well-known the program is to that group, as this was beyond the scope of the current study.

The program materials and structure evaluated are those that existed during the 2008-2009 academic year. TCP has continued to develop and refine its processes and program materials. For instance, since the start of the process evaluation, CFCC has implemented a revised program manual and added a mentoring manual and specific mentoring curriculum. The present evaluation is based on the original version of the program manual and should be considered an “implementation” analysis. The “Findings” section of the report incorporates and acknowledges some of the key changes CFCC has made to the program and the manual.

### **Outcome Evaluation**

The outcome evaluation examined the impact of TCP participation on student attendance, academic performance, and behavior for students who participated in TCP during the 2008-2009 academic year using data obtained from BCPSS and from the Maryland Department of Juvenile Services (DJS). Student scores on Maryland School Assessment (MSA) tests were used to measure academic performance, and suspensions and referrals to DJS were used to measure behavior. To the extent possible, the research team compared results for TCP participants to results of a similar group of students selected by BCPSS who did not participate in TCP. This approach enables the researchers to separate the effects of TCP from some other potential non-program factors. The research team conducted the following analyses:

- Total absences, MSA scores, and suspensions during the 2008-2009 academic year, as reported by BCPSS, were examined for fall 2008 TCP participants and graduates and a comparison group to determine whether TCP had an effect on attendance, academic performance, and in-school behavior.
- Absences and tardies during the 10 weeks immediately prior to and during participation in TCP, as recorded by CFCC, were examined for spring 2009 TCP participants and graduates to determine whether attendance for this group improved during participation in TCP.
- Referrals to DJS during and after the 2008-2009 academic year were examined for fall 2008 TCP participants and graduates and a comparison group to determine whether TCP had an effect on students’ behavior in the community.

## **Problem Statement**

### **Definition of Truancy**

Maryland law compels school attendance by children ages 5 through 15 and provides that a parent or guardian who fails to see that his/her child attends school is guilty of a misdemeanor "...unless the child is otherwise receiving regular, thorough instruction during the school year in the studies usually taught in the public schools to children of the same age" (Maryland Code Edu. Article §7-301). The same statute also permits specified school officials to excuse a child for a lawful absence (Maryland Code Edu. Article §7-301).

The Code of Maryland Regulations (Md. Regs. Code tit. 13A §08.01.03) states that public school students are considered lawfully absent from school only under the following conditions:

- Death in the immediate family. The local school system shall determine what relationships constitute the immediate family;
- Illness of the student. The principal or a pupil personnel worker shall require a physician's certificate from the parent or guardians of a student reported continuously absent for illness;
- Court summons;
- Hazardous weather conditions. Hazardous weather conditions shall be interpreted to mean weather conditions which would endanger the health or safety of the student when in transit to and from school;
- Work approved or sponsored by the school, the local school system, or the State Department of Education, accepted by the local superintendent of schools or the school principal, or their designees as reason for excusing the students;
- Observance of a religious holiday;
- State emergency;
- Suspension;
- Lack of authorized transportation. This does not include students denied authorized transportation for disciplinary reasons;

- Other emergency or set of circumstances which, in the judgment of the superintendent or designee, constitutes a good and sufficient cause for absence from school.

The Regulations provide further that an absence, including absence for any portion of the day, for any reason other than those cited as lawful are presumed to be unlawful and may constitute truancy. Local school systems may add specified criteria for unlawful absences to local board-approved attendance policies (Md. Regs. Code tit. 13A §08.01.04). The regulations define habitual truancy as unlawful absence in excess of 20% of school days within any marking period, semester, or year, although local school systems may define habitual truancy more stringently (e.g., absence in excess of 15% of school days) (Md. Regs. Code tit. 13A §08.01.04).

Finally, the Code of Maryland Regulations (Md. Regs. Code tit. 13A §08.01.05) requires each local school system to develop a policy that specifies rules, procedures, penalties, and an appeals process regarding student attendance and requires early intervention and progressive penalties to address attendance problems.

Under the policies of the Baltimore City Public School System, a student is considered to be habitually truant if the student is unlawfully absent in excess of 15% of the school days within a marking period, semester, or school year (T. Williams, personal communication, February, 2010). Based on a 180-day school year, an absence rate of 15% represents 27 missed school days.

### **School Absences in Maryland and Baltimore City**

In 2005, 28.5% of Baltimore's public school students were lawfully and unlawfully absent more than 20 days compared to a 13.4% of public school students across the State (MSDE, 2005), and in 2009, the number of students in Baltimore's public schools missing more than 20 days was 12% higher than the rate across Maryland (MSDE, 2009a). Table 1 compares the percentage of students, by grade level, who have missed more than 20 days of school (11.1% of the 180-day academic year) in 2009 in Baltimore City to those in Maryland as a whole, as reported in the 2009 Maryland Report Card.

**Table 1: Comparison of Absence Rates in Maryland and Baltimore City, 2008-2009**

<b>Grade Level</b>	<b>Maryland</b>	<b>Baltimore City</b>
Grades 1-5	5.9%	11.3%
Grades 6-8	9.9%	18.6%
Grades 9-12	18.4%	42.0%

Source: 2009 Maryland Report Card

The University of Baltimore Center for Families, Children and the Courts established the Truancy Roundtable to discuss the challenges of truancy in Baltimore. A recent Roundtable report highlights the challenges of addressing high rates of truancy in Baltimore:

Although the figures for the state indicated a substantial truancy problem, in Baltimore truancy was clearly a crisis situation, underscored by the demonstrable connection between chronic truancy and a host of social, psychological and economic problems (CFCC 2008, p. 2).

### **Causes and Correlates of Truancy**

The causes of truancy are multilayered and highly correlated; a child's decision to not attend school is influenced by a number of personal and environmental factors. A study by Balfanz, Herzog, and Mac Iver (2007) of sixth graders in high poverty, predominantly minority schools in Philadelphia found that low attendance is often accompanied by misbehavior and low grades in math and English, which can ultimately lead to low rates of graduation. Although the specific factors vary across children, truancy is typically caused by factors from four major levels of analysis: the individual, the family, the school, and the neighborhood and community (Baker, Sigmon & Nugent, 2001; Daining, 2007; Epstein & Sheldon, 2002; McCluskey, Bynum & Patchin, 2004).

At the individual level, student's behavior and misbehavior and academic achievement are key factors contributing to chronic truancy. Academic failure negatively affects a child's engagement and contributes to misbehavior, which sets a child apart from the school community. These factors correlate in a cycle that leads to further disengagement, truancy and academic failure (Balfanz et al., 2007; Daining, 2007; McCluskey et al., 2004; Strickland, 1998). Family life can also play a significant role in children's truancy. A disorganized or dysfunctional home

life leads to high levels of family stress, which can cause a child to not attend school (Daining, 2007; Teasley, 2004). Additionally, Balfanz and Byrnes (as cited in Balfanz et al., 2007) found that parental involvement has a significant effect on students' attendance in school. At the school level, children are affected by fear of school violence and the disengagement of themselves, other students, teachers, and administrators (Baker et al., 2001; Colorado Foundation for Families and Children [CFFC], 2002; Daining, 2007; Garry, 1996). At the community and neighborhood level, although race has not been found to be a high predictor of truancy (Balfanz et al., 2007), poverty (indicated by the percentage of students receiving free or reduced lunch) has been found to be associated with higher rates of absenteeism (Baker et al., 2001; Daining, 2007; Epstein & Sheldon, 2001; McCray, 2006; National Center for School Engagement [NCSE], 2006).

### **Consequences of Truancy**

Several research studies have demonstrated a link between truancy and school completion. In 2002, the Colorado Foundation for Families and Children (CFFC), now named The Partnership for Families and Children, examined the relationship between chronic truancy and persistence in school. The CFFC study found that 70% of suspended youth were chronically truant in the six months before suspension and 80% of dropouts were chronically truant. Similarly, students in Philadelphia who attended school less than 70% of the time in ninth grade had a greater than 75% chance of dropping out (Neild, Balfanz, & Herzog, 2007).

Research shows that truancy during middle school, in particular, predicts high dropout levels. One study found that a majority of students, in an unidentified northeastern city, who later dropped out showed significant indicators for dropping out as early as the sixth grade (Balfanz & Boccanfuso, 2007). Students with a sixth grade attendance rate below 90% had an on-time graduation rate of only 18 to 26%. In high-poverty urban schools, sixth graders who miss 20% or more of the school year drop out before high school graduation. In Baltimore's high poverty neighborhoods, the percentage of students who miss more than a month of school jumped from 15% in the elementary grades to 55% in the middle grades (Balfanz et al., 2007). Disengagement from school coupled with the high probability of suspension or expulsion and academic failure due to extended absences results in a high probability that a child will drop out of school prior to graduation.

The consequences of chronic truancy last long after a child completes or leaves school, and can negatively impact his or her life trajectory. In a study of low-income African American young people from Baltimore City, students who did not graduate from high school were less likely to be employed and had lower incomes than those who did complete high school. These differences were noted among adults at ages 19-20 and ages 28-29, indicating long-term implications of high school non-completion (Leventhal, Graber, & Brooks-Gunn, 2001).

In addition to poor academic experiences, D'Angelo, Weinberger, and Feldman (as cited in Sheverbush, Smith & DeGruson, 2000) found that chronically truant children participate in risky behavior such as drug and alcohol consumption, early pregnancy, criminal behavior, and increased incidence of depression and suicidal ideation. Indeed, once students who go on to receive their general equivalency degree are excluded from analysis, research shows that "failure to graduate from high school is associated with a tripling of likelihood of being imprisoned" (Haney et al., 2005, p. 45).

Schools, communities and taxpayers also suffer negative consequences to society as a result of high rates of truancy. School funding is based on attendance, and low rates of attendance result in reduced funding to individual schools. When truants do attend school, they require additional funds to pay for extra attention for counseling, handling disciplinary referrals, and monitoring (NCSE, 2005). Truants also require additional taxpayer funds for the law enforcement personnel to track down and process truants, and public assistance for dropouts who are underemployed or unemployed (Byer & Kuhn 2003; Daining, 2007; McCray, 2006). It has been estimated that each person who drops out of school costs society over \$200,000 during his/her lifetime (NCSE, 2005).

### **Promising Programmatic Elements**

Truants need services that address scholastic difficulties, assist with internalizing and externalizing behaviors, and mitigate dysfunctional family factors (CFFC, 2002). Multi-pronged approaches and reforms that address both attendance issues and course failures concurrently are shown to be more effective in keeping children on the path to graduation (Balfanz et al., 2007). Balfanz and colleagues suggest that truancy early warning systems and interventions are easier for schools to implement if they do not require special data efforts including: collection, entry, manipulation or analysis (Balfanz et al., 2007).

In 2007, the Center for Families, Children, and the Courts (CFCC) hosted two roundtable discussions on truancy, and brought together a variety of stakeholders who demonstrated an interest in school attendance. The roundtable included representatives from eleven Baltimore City and State of Maryland agencies (including the Maryland Judiciary), numerous community groups and foundations, and representatives from BCPSS. A recurring theme of the roundtable discussions was that truancy is a community problem, and as such, all sectors of the community should be involved in developing, implementing and supporting truancy interventions.

According to CFCC, since truancy is “not the exclusive problem of school systems or of juvenile justice, the development of a successful program requires collaboration within the community” (CFCC, 2002, p. 9). The U.S. Department of Education (1996) identified five key components of school-community collaborations to address the problem of truancy:

- Family involvement;
- Incentives for parents such as parenting skills education and formal sanctions;
- Student sanctions (zero tolerance policy);
- Development of truancy prevention strategies in school such as mentoring, tutoring, and drug prevention; and
- Local law enforcement involvement in reducing truancy.

The National Dropout Prevention Center/Network (Reimer & Dimock, 2005) has also published guidelines for successful truancy reduction programs:

- Interagency collaboration;
- Comprehensive response addressing individual needs of young people and families;
- Incentives intended to encourage attendance and sanctions to hold students accountable for their behavior;
- Provision of services in a supportive environment; and
- Thorough program outcome evaluation.

Balfanz et al. (2007) have designed a model termed Talent Development Middle Grades (TDMG) to help re-engage students who are disengaged, or in the beginning stages of doing so. TDMG offers comprehensive school reform with the goal of re-engaging children in school through extensive teacher training and support, instructional programs in core academic subjects, and extra academic help. TDMG’s success in reducing poor attendance rates demonstrates the importance of addressing truancy through a variety of means within the school system.

Evaluation of this model has shown that 9% of middle grade students attending TDMG schools had poor attendance compared to 15% of middle grade students at control schools (Balfanz et al., 2007). Even though the model has been shown to improve attendance, Balfanz et al. acknowledge that additional interventions focusing on attendance must be integrated in order to achieve full re-engagement. Indeed, although TDMG addresses a variety of school-based supports and services, it was not designed to address other contextual factors such as family involvement.

Citing a common set of effective strategies identified in the school engagement literature, Balfanz et al. developed a three-stage approach focused on student attendance, behavior, and course failures. Stage one entails comprehensive school-wide reform designed to address 75% of poor attendance. Through these reform steps, schools must constantly recognize, model, and promote good attendance; respond consistently to the first absence; develop simple data collection and analysis tools for teachers to track deviation from the graduation path more quickly; and finally create attendance teams made of school personnel and occasionally parents that meet regularly to look at the collected data and find solutions.

Stage two individually targets students with poor attendance by measuring students' emotional and cognitive engagement in school and gaining a better understanding as to why individual students are disengaging. This stage is expected to address the 15 to 20% of students with low attendance who need additional support. Typically, a specific adult, frequently one of the student's teachers, is assigned to act as a mentor, build a closer relationship, and check in with the student when he or she misses a day of school to ask the reason for nonattendance.

Stage three addresses the needs of the 5 to 10% of students with low attendance who need more clinical support. In stage three, intensive effort is taken to re-engage the student through the use of clinical specialists such as counselors or social workers.

In a policy brief written for the National Middle School Association, Balfanz (nd) lays out a list of important considerations that should be taken when developing early warning and intervention systems to address attendance, behavior, and course performance.

- Focus on effective intervention, not just identification;
- Recognize and build on student strengths;
- Provide time, training, and support to teachers for implementing early warning and intervention systems;

- Match resources to student needs but practice intervention discipline;
- Evaluate the effectiveness of interventions; and
- Teachers and administrators get started with the data currently available in their schools.

The following responses and programs demonstrate that, as incidences of truancy escalate and become chronic, additional resources beyond school interventions need to be identified.

Land (2003) identifies community responses that involve social services to address needs of families, and law enforcement and court systems to enforce state compulsory attendance laws when other interventions are unsuccessful. Nationally, several programs have been developed that reflect this intensive approach to focusing on needs of students and families (see for example, McCluskey et al., 2004; Mueller et al., 2006; Richtman, 2007; Van Ry & Garcia, 2006).

In 1998, the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), in collaboration with the U.S. Department of Education, Safe and Drug-Free Schools program, initiated a truancy reduction grant program called the Truancy Reduction Demonstration Program (TRDP). Despite diverse target populations and geographical areas represented by the eight TRDPs that emerged from this effort, several common themes characterized these programs:

- Value of diversity;
- Emphasis on involving families of youth;
- Treating youth with respect; and
- Collaboration among community partners.

CFFC evaluated the seven demonstration programs (one site pulled out of the program at the end of the first year) for OJJDP; the evaluation had two purposes: “determining whether the programs reduce truancy, and describing the role and processes of the community-based collaborative driving the local programs” (Baker et al., 2001). The 2006 study found that at four of the sites, “more [students] improved in their overall academic achievement compared to those who did not change or whose grades worsened,” but the improvement in attendance was difficult to ascertain because most sites did not report longitudinal data on the students. Of the sites that did report updated data, Honolulu and Jacksonville, FL were the most successful; in Honolulu unexcused absences decreased from an average of 23 days to 4.1 days and in Jacksonville,

unexcused absences decreased from an average of 9 days to 3.3 days. The evaluation notes that these two schools' target population was elementary students (NCSE, 2006).

CFFC subsequently conducted an additional evaluation on the impact of police involvement and case management services at the Gulfton Truancy Reduction Demonstration Project in Houston, Texas. That evaluation found that visits by a police officer to the home to discuss truancy with habitually truant students has a short-term improvement on attendance, but that case management had little to no effect on attendance, achievement, or engagement (CFFC, 2006).

Researchers at the University of Missouri evaluated the outcomes of students participating in Truancy Reduction Demonstration Programs (TRDP) at four middle schools in Springfield, Missouri. These programs targeted students whose attendance was less than 90% and faced any number of other personal and academic difficulties and challenges. The TRDP intervention at these four schools successfully increased attendance for those students with severe truancy during the semester of participation and for at least one semester after completion of the program. TRDP only moderately increased attendance for students with moderate truancy and had no impact on the attendance of students with mild truancy. Additionally, attendance increased for only the semester that moderately and mildly truant students participated in the intervention; the following semester, participants' attendance levels dropped back to that of the baseline semester (Hendricks, Sale, Evans, McKinley, & Carter, 2010).

Another model truancy intervention program involves collaboration between the school and court systems in Jefferson County, Kentucky. In 1997, the Honorable Joan L. Byer, a judge in Louisville, Kentucky, brought together the Jefferson County Family Courts and the Jefferson County Public Schools to create the Jefferson Truancy Court Diversion Project (TCDP). Middle school students who have 15-25 absences are eligible for the program, and are solicited into the voluntary 12-week program through home visits by a social worker and a school representative. This "judicially driven" team uses immediate intervention to address students' individual reasons for truancy. The program is "strength-based" and emphasizes students' successes rather than failures, no matter how small. Parents are expected to attend the weekly sessions as a sign of support for their children, and the team tries to help parents when aid is needed ([www.abanet.org/subabuse/literacy.shtml](http://www.abanet.org/subabuse/literacy.shtml)). A 2001 process and outcome evaluation of the TCDP program found that the program was operating as it had intended, the stakeholders were satisfied

with the program, and the participating students were absent fewer days during participation than they were during a similar period the prior year (Munoz, 2001).

In 2008, the Washington State Institute for Public Policy conducted a meta-analysis of evaluations conducted on 22 evidence-based truancy reduction and dropout prevention programs implemented across the country as part of a larger study of school- and court-based truancy interventions in Washington. The researchers selected evaluations for the meta-analysis based on a number of qualifications; the program had to serve middle or high school students, and the evaluation had to include a comparison group with similar characteristics, be well-designed and implemented, and measure school attendance, high school graduation, or dropout status (Klima, Miller, & Nunlist, 2009). The researchers found three types of programs that increased school attendance: alternative educational programs that take place within a traditional school, behavioral programs, and mentoring.

Alternative educational programs offer individualized attention, smaller class size, and different instructional methods for general classes and allow students to join their classmates for elective classes. Behavioral programs “target students’ school behaviors by helping them analyze and problem-solve negative behaviors, and/or by establishing a system of contingencies for desirable and undesirable behaviors” (Klima et al., 2009, p. 6). Mentoring programs offer positive role models to students, offer academic assistance, connect students to services, and act as a liaison between the student and the school system. The study found that mentoring programs that use paid mentors are more effective than those that use volunteer mentors. Behavioral programs had the greatest positive impact on attendance rates, followed by mentoring and alternative educational programs.

As Daining (2007) noted, truancy has gained increasing national attention over the past several decades as it has become apparent that school absence is the precursor for dropping out. The literature demonstrates that truancy is affected by intersecting risk factors, and that chronic truancy results in equally complex and interconnected consequences for young people, families, schools, communities, and society. The collaboration of organizations, agencies, and community resources has led to the implementation of some promising strategies across the country, but they need further evaluation to understand what components of the programs are most successful. Rigorous evaluation of prevention and intervention efforts will help policymakers and private foundations target funding to the most effective practices.

## Contextual Analysis

Baltimore City represents the core of a large metropolitan area with demographic characteristics that distinguishes it from the rest of Maryland. Table 2 displays demographic information for Baltimore City and the state of Maryland. Baltimore City has a far lower median household income and per capita income than the Maryland state average (\$40,313 versus \$70,545 and \$22,885 versus \$34,508 respectively). The population of Baltimore City is predominantly African American (63.1%), although the population of Maryland is predominantly Caucasian (61.2%) (US Bureau of the Census, 2008).

**Table 2: Demographic Data for the State of Maryland and Baltimore City, 2008**

Dimension	Maryland	Baltimore City
Population Estimate	5,633,597	636,919
Median Household Income	\$70,545	\$40,313
Per Capita Income	\$34,508	\$22,885
Race of General Population		
Caucasian	61.2%	31.9%
African American	28.9%	63.1%
Asian	5.1%	1.9%
American Indian or Alaska Native	0.3%	0.3%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0.0%	0.0%
Two or More Races	2.4%	1.8%
Ethnicity of General Population		
Hispanic or Latino	6.6%	2.6%
Not Hispanic or Latino	93.4%	97.4%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2008 American Community Survey

Typical of other post-industrial American cities that have experienced the disappearance of high-paying blue-collar jobs, a diminished tax base and other social stresses, Baltimore City exhibits high unemployment, poor public health statistics, and high levels of crime. The comparison between Baltimore City and the rest of Maryland in terms of employment and public

health indicators as represented in Tables 3 and 4 provides evidence of the stress on the social fabric of Baltimore City. The challenges that Baltimore City faces likely created the context within which problems such as truancy emerge. According to former Baltimore City Health Commissioner, Dr. Joshua Sharfstein, truancy might best be viewed as one of Baltimore City's many public health challenges (Personal communication, 2009).

**Table 3: Public Health Indicators in the State of Maryland and Baltimore City**

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Maryland</b>	<b>Baltimore City</b>
Infant Mortality Rate, 2007(per 1000 live births)	8.0	11.3
Percentage of births of low birth weight (<2500 g), 2007	9.1%	12.8%
Percentage of Preterm births (<37 weeks gestation), 2007	10.9%	13.7%
Percentage of births where mother received late prenatal care (3rd trimester), 2007	4.7%	6.3%
Rate of births to mother that reported smoking (per 1000 births), 2006	67.9	103.4
Rate of babies born to mothers that reported consuming alcohol during pregnancy (per 1,000 births), 2006	5.8	8.7
Elevated Lead: Percentage of children age 0-72 months with blood lead levels of 10 mg/dL or higher, 2007	0.8%	3.5%
Percentage of Children ages 19-35 months with up-to-date immunizations, 2006	78.3%	72.2%
Percentage of children age 5-15 with a disability, 2007	6.2%	8.5%
Rate of deaths per 100,000 children age 1-14, 2006	17.9	30.2
Rate of deaths attributed to asthma (per 100,000 people), 2006	1.0	1.4
Rate of deaths attributed to Diabetes (per 100,000 people),2006	21.9	36.0
Rate of deaths attributed to SIDS (per 100,000 people),2006	0.9	2.0
Percentage of all births which were born to teens age 19 and under, 2007	8.9%	17.6%

Source: Baltimore City Data Collaborative Report, 2009

**Table 4: Baltimore City and Maryland Crime and Employment Statistics**

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Maryland</b>	<b>Baltimore City</b>
Rate of violent and property crimes per 100,000 residents, 2007	4,073	6,363
Rate of homicides, persons 10-19, per 100,000 persons, 2007	10.6	51.6
Juvenile arrest rate (per 10,000 persons age 10 to 17), 2009	697	1,030
Juvenile intake cases, FY 2009	48,506	7,887
Aggravated and simple assault	9,931	1,703
Narcotics possession and distribution	7,211	2,793
Percentage of 8 <sup>th</sup> graders reporting marijuana use in the last 30 days, 2007	4.6%	7.7%
Out-of-Home Placement Entry Rate (per 1,000 children), 2008	9.0	10.6
Percentage of children under 18 yrs in poverty, 2007	10.5%	28.2%
Percentage of total labor force that is unemployed, 2008	4.4%	6.7%
Percentage of all served in shelters who were under 18 yrs old, 2007	27%	16%
Percentage of families with children under 18 yrs old that are single-parent families, 2007	34.2%	63.9%

Sources: Maryland DJS, 2009; Baltimore City Data Collaborative Report, 2009; and Maryland State Police, *Uniform Crime Report*, 2010

Table 5 compares key demographics of the Baltimore City public schools to those of the public schools in the state of Maryland. Baltimore City public schools, like the City as a whole, are predominantly African American (88.4%) whereas Maryland public schools are, on average, predominantly Caucasian (46.2%). Baltimore City has a higher dropout rate than the state average (6.2% compared to 2.8%). In Baltimore City, attendance-related suspensions are more likely to be due to missing classes, and less likely to be due to tardiness or truancy than is the case statewide (MSDE, 2009c).

**Table 5: Demographics of the Public School Students in the State of Maryland and Baltimore City**

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Maryland</b>	<b>Baltimore City</b>
Number of students enrolled in public school during 2008/2009 school year <sup>2</sup>	843,861	82,266
Race/ethnicity of 2008/2009 student population <sup>3</sup>		
Caucasian	46.2%	7.8%
African American	38.0%	88.4%
Hispanic or Latino	9.5%	2.8%
Asian or Pacific Islander	5.9%	0.7%
American Indian or Alaska Native	0.4%	0.3%
2008/2009 <b>Dropout Rate</b> for 9 <sup>th</sup> through 12 <sup>th</sup> grades <sup>4</sup>	2.8% (n=7,920)	6.2% (n=1,640)
Percentage of students who were <b>habitually truant</b> in 2007/2008 <sup>5</sup>	2.33%	9.26%
Percentage of attendance-related suspensions (in-school and out-of-school combined) due to <b>class cutting</b> in 2007/2008 <sup>6</sup>	55.5% (n=9,173)	92.4% (n=377)
Percentage of attendance-related suspensions (in-school and out-of-school combined) due to <b>tardiness</b> in 2007/2008 <sup>7</sup>	30.7% (n=5,081)	0.2% (n=1)
Percentage of attendance-related suspensions (in-school and out-of-school combined) due to <b>truancy</b> in 2007/2008 <sup>8</sup>	13.7% (n=2,270)	7.4% (n=30)
Mobility Rate in 2008/2009 <sup>9</sup>	9.2% (elementary), 8.5% (middle), 11% (high)	15.5% (elementary), 16.1% (middle), 21.4% (high)

Source: MSDE, 2009b

### **Baltimore City Public School Truancy Policy**

BCPSS policy states that school officials are required to contact truant students and their parents or guardians to reengage the students in school. The level of contact made with students and parents increases with the number of unexcused absences. The reengagement process begins

<sup>2</sup> MSDE, 2009a.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> An habitual truant is a student who was “in membership in a school for 91 or more days; and was unlawfully absent for 20% or more of the days in membership”. MSDE, 2009b.

<sup>6</sup> MSDE, 2009c.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> MSDE, 2009a.

with a meeting between the teacher and the student, followed by a phone call to the parent or guardian by either the teacher or the attendance monitor. Next, the principal mails a letter to the child's home to request a conference to discuss reasons for the absences. Once a student has been absent 6 to 10 days, the student's school sends home a letter requesting an informal hearing between the parent/guardian and the teacher, attendance officer or other staff member. During the informal hearing, an attendance agreement is prepared between all concerned parties. Depending upon the underlying problems thought to be causing the student's truancy, the student and his/her family may be referred to school and/or community-based programs such as the Chronic Health Impaired Program (CHIP), the University of Baltimore School of Law's Truancy Court Program, the University of Maryland School of Law's Baltimore Students: Mediation About Reducing Truancy (B-SMART), mentoring programs, alternative school programs, General Educational Development programs, or other human services programs such as mental health services available in the community (BCPSS, 2008; T. Williams, personal communication, February, 2010).

At this point, if the school's efforts do not yield re-engagement, BCPSS policy states that the student and his or her parents or guardians are to be referred to the Office of Attendance and Truancy (OAT) located at the BCPSS Administrative Headquarters. Once a student is referred to OAT, the re-engagement process is a collaborative effort between the school and OAT. Upon continued absence, phone calls and home visits are initiated by both the school and the OAT to remind parents and guardians about the conditions agreed upon in the attendance agreement.

Once a student is absent 16 or more days, the parent or guardian and the student are required to attend a formal hearing at the BCPSS Administrative Headquarters. The formal hearing serves as both a warning to the parents of their child's poor attendance and its consequences, and as an opportunity to provide information on available community services. The student's attendance is followed up after two weeks by OAT at which point, if additional days are missed without a valid excuse, a "Statement of Charges" is filed by the school system with the State's Attorney (BCPSS, 2008). During the 2008-2009 Academic Year, 375 cases were filed with the State's Attorney's Office; of these cases, 213 came from attendance hearing cases. The remaining 162 cases were filed prior to a scheduled attendance hearing because the needs of the student or family had to be addressed sooner than the earliest hearing date (T. Williams, personal communication, February, 2010 & September, 2010). Once charges are filed with the

State Attorney's Office, cases may be dismissed if the student reaches the age of 16 or if the judge determines that there is insufficient evidence against the family. The State's Attorney's Office files charges against the parent in the Baltimore City District Court; a judge may place the parent/guardian on a STET and monitor the student's subsequent attendance, or the parent can be found guilty of a misdemeanor and fined up to \$50 per day of unlawful absence or imprisonment not to exceed 10 days, or both (Md. Code Edu. Article, §7-301).

### **Truancy Interventions in Baltimore City**

In response to Baltimore City's high truancy rate, BCPSS vice principals and teachers have collaborated to make a concerted effort to re-engage truant students. This effort has involved adhering more closely to the BCPSS policy. BCPSS school leaders have sought other ways to address the problem. In May, 2000 BCPSS partnered with the American Bar Association's (ABA) national Standing Committee on Substance Abuse, which encouraged the use of pre-court diversion and early intervention services for youth alleged to have committed status offenses. In light of their recurrent interactions with truant children while sitting on the bench in juvenile drug court and family court, Baltimore City's judges and masters have also chosen to immerse themselves in the City's truancy reduction efforts. They recognize the potential value of court involvement in addressing truancy before it becomes chronic.

### **ABA Truancy Project**

Prior to its involvement with Baltimore City's truancy problem, the ABA received funding from the Scripps-Howard Foundation to create the "Literacy, Truancy, and Family Courts" initiative. The ABA's Standing Committee on Substance Abuse was inspired by Judge Byer's TCDP in Louisville, Kentucky, and sought funding to replicate the program in other cities. The ABA has since assisted courts in the establishment of truancy/literacy programs in the following locations: Phoenix, Arizona; Kansas City, Missouri; and Burke, Caldwell and Catawba Counties in North Carolina.

In 2001, as part of this initiative, the ABA helped to establish the first truancy project in Baltimore City, with Judge Byer lending assistance in choosing a school for the program. In coordination with BCPSS, ABA operated the program for one year with funding from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and Scripps-Howard Foundation. When the Robert Wood Johnson

funding expired, the Family League of Baltimore stepped in to fund the initiative, but by 2003 the program lost its funding altogether. Subsequently, the Baltimore City program was forced to close. As of the end of 2006, the Scripps-Howard Foundation was no longer able to provide funding, and the national ABA initiative has closed.

## **B-TAC**

Another program in Baltimore City designed to address the city's high truancy rate was the Baltimore Truancy Assessment Center (B-TAC). Established in East Baltimore in 2003, B-TAC was designed to be a comprehensive approach to address the increasing number of children hanging out on street corners during school hours. This group of truant children was reported to be responsible for 60% of crime committed during the day (Informational Hearing – Baltimore Truancy Assessment Center, 2007).<sup>10</sup> The Center has been described as:

“[A]n interagency collaboration that delivers a combination of services to address issues under the purview of the Department of Social Services, the Social Security Administration, Office of Employment Development, the Baltimore Police Department, the Baltimore City Public School Offices of School Police and Pupil Guidance, the Department of Juvenile Services, and the Housing Authority of Baltimore City” (Informational Hearing, 2007, p. 1). The B-TAC *Statistical Report for School Year 2004 – 2005* reported: “1,873 youths were picked up on the streets of Baltimore City for daytime curfew truancy violations. Of these, 1,035 students went through B-TAC counseling and referral services. Although the number of youths apprehended nearly doubled for the previous school year, 35%, or 366, of the youths who received services improved their attendance and began attending school more regularly. In the following school year, 1,879 youths were picked up by B-TAC staff for daytime curfew violations. Of these, 1,664 were taken to the Center for process while 215 were taken back to school by Baltimore Police” (Informational Hearing, 2007, pp. 2-3).

Due to 2008 Baltimore City budget cuts, B-TAC lost funding and was forced to close (Neufield, 2008).

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<sup>10</sup> B-TAC developed plans for truant students who were apprehended by B-TAC officers for violating the Baltimore City curfew law that prohibits children up to the age of 16 from being on the street during the hours between 9 p.m. and 2:30 a.m. (Prohibited Conduct of Minors – Daytime Curfew, 1976/83).

## **CFCC Truancy Court Program**

In 2004, the Center for Families, Children and the Courts (CFCC) at the University of Baltimore School of Law drew on experiences with previous truancy initiatives to develop the Truancy Court Program (TCP), the focus of this report. TCP is a voluntary, 10-week, in-school intervention program for “soft truants,” those students who have a minimum of five and maximum of 20 unexcused absences/tardies within the previous two marking periods.

CFCC received a \$48,000 grant from The Charles Crane Family Foundation to start the program (Crane Foundation 990 Form, 2004). In 2005, TCP was implemented in five Baltimore City Public Schools; the initial five schools were selected because each fed into a single high school, Patterson High, which had participated in the earlier ABA program. This approach allowed for students to be linked with community resources and receive ongoing support from TCP as they progressed to high school. Two of the schools in the initial cohort closed, however, and another school failed to furnish CFCC staff with data and student participants (Loh, 2004; Neufield, 2007). In academic year 2006-2007, TCP changed its method of selecting schools to a formal application process. Over a three-year period, the AOC provided funding to CFCC in the amount of \$510,807 for TCP program operations, expansion into an additional school, development of program materials (including the “Toolkit”), and hiring of a part-time mentor coordinator. The program continued to operate in six Baltimore City Public Schools until 2009-2010 when it expanded to eight public schools in Baltimore City with the help of a federal stimulus fund grant (Jacobs, 2009).

## **B-SMART**

In 2006, the University of Maryland School of Law’s Center for Dispute Resolution (C-DRUM) established Baltimore Students: Mediation About Reducing Truancy (B-SMART) at three Baltimore City schools. This truancy reduction effort is an early intervention mediation program that targets students with a pattern of five or more unexcused absences and/ or instances of tardiness. B-SMART is a voluntary program that includes participation of the student, parent/guardian, and teacher. A B-SMART mediator works with participating students, parents, and schools to identify factors that may be contributing to the student’s truancy, and works to

improve communication among the involved parties. The mediator works with the parties to develop strategies that address the contributing factors identified by the student and parent.

### **DJS Spotlight on Schools and the Baltimore Truancy Collaborative**

In 2008, BCPSS and DJS announced the formation of a joint venture in Baltimore City to address the truancy problem. The venture, called the Truancy Collaborative, allows BCPSS to share attendance data directly with DJS. The Collaborative expanded the DJS Spotlight on Schools (SOS) program, an initiative that put DJS case managers on-site in high schools and middle schools across Maryland. SOS counselors observe and address attendance problems and behavioral issues for children supervised by DJS. SOS also helps the families of children experiencing problems at their schools. One of the SOS schools, Patterson High, also became involved in TCP (Maryland Department of Juvenile Services, 2008).

### **Open Society Institute - Baltimore and the Student Attendance Workgroup (SAWG)**

The Open Society Institute (OSI), an international private foundation, established a field office in Baltimore in 1998. The mission of the OSI-Baltimore office was to address three urban problems: untreated drug addiction, high incarceration rates, and obstacles to youth achievement (Open Society Institute, 2009).

OSI-Baltimore, in partnership with the City of Baltimore and the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), created the Student Attendance Workgroup (SAWG) in 2008 (CFCC, 2008). The SAWG brings together stakeholders from the school system, city government, and the community at-large for monthly meetings to discuss the major issues surrounding chronic absence in Baltimore City and to make recommendations to the school system on how to best address absences (Cheng, 2009). Representatives of the Maryland Judiciary and CFCC/TCP regularly attend meetings of SAWG.

## **Program Overview**

### **Truancy Court Program Planning**

Planning for TCP was led by Barbara Babb, Associate Professor and Director of CFCC and Gloria Danziger, Senior Fellow at CFCC and was supported by an extensive Advisory Committee that included representatives from the public education system, police department, Maryland Judiciary, city and state agencies, local service providers, council members, the Office of the Public Defender, the Office of the State's Attorney including then Baltimore City State's Attorney Patricia Jessamy, and Deputy Mayor Jean Hitchcock. The Honorable David Young, Judge, Baltimore City Circuit Court, and Mark Friedenthal, Esq., Baltimore City Office of Public Defender, Juvenile Division, also participated in the planning of TCP. Judge Young and Mr. Friedenthal had served as judges for the ABA Truancy Project in Baltimore. Representatives from BCPSS and DJS were also part of the planning group. During a two-month planning process, members of the planning team met regularly to discuss program policies and procedures including program length, admission and graduation criteria, and key program components (incentives and sanctions, mentor program, parental involvement etc.).

TCP has been operational in BCPSS since the spring of 2005 under the auspices of CFCC. TCP funding has come from the Charles Crane Family Foundation, the Maryland Judiciary, Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC), the Wright Family Foundation, Annie E. Casey Direct Services Grant Program, the Ober Kaler law firm, and most recently, the Krieger Fund and the federal government. The program is designed as a voluntary, 10-week, in-school intervention for students who have a minimum of five and maximum of 20 unexcused absences/tardies within the previous two marking periods. The TCP approach is embodied in the following description of the program contained in a 2008 CFCC document:

[TCP is] an early intervention, therapeutic, and non-adversarial approach to truancy. It targets students who are 'soft' truants – students who have from five to twenty unexcused absences/tardies – in the belief that this group still has academic, social, and emotional connections to the school (CFCC, 2008, p. 1).

The TCP team consists of a volunteer "judge" who contributes his/her time, a team of school representatives that may include the principal, vice principal, guidance counselor,

attendance officer, school social worker and/or teacher; a University of Baltimore mentor; a University of Baltimore law student; and CFCC staff and faculty from the law school. According to TCP program materials, the TCP judge's authority is a key component to this intervention model (Babb, Danziger, Moran, Schmike, & Green, 2008). TCP provides each student participant and his/her family with the following activities and services (Babb et al., 2008; University of Baltimore School of Law, Center for Families Children and the Courts [CFCC], 2009):

- Individual problem-solving session with a TCP judge and other team members
- Character-building classes and mentoring;
- Mentors and tutors;
- Referral to a mediation clinic operated by supervised University of Baltimore School of Law clinical law students;
- Incentives and/or rewards;
- Referral to social work and other wraparound/support services through a partnership with the Baltimore City Public School System;
- "Family Fun Nights"; and
- Graduations to reward students who demonstrate at least a 75% increase in attendance, better classroom behavior, and improved grades, with gifts, graduation certificates, and a reception by the First Lady of Maryland.

More recently, CFCC Student Fellows have begun offering all parents and guardians at Baltimore City schools workshops throughout the semester. Each session has its own focus and one of these workshops focuses on school attendance policy and truancy, including what counts as an excused absence (e.g. submitting a doctor's note for a child's illness).

Table 6 presents the Baltimore City public schools that participated in the Truancy Court Program between the spring of 2005 and the spring of 2009, and the semesters in which they participated. Approximately 567 students participated in TCP during that period, with 44 students participating during more than one session.

**Table 6: Schools Participating in TCP and Number of Student Participants by Semester, 2005-2009**

School Name	Number of Students Participating in TCP								
	Spring 2005	Fall 2005	Spring 2006	Fall 2006	Spring 2007	Fall 2007	Spring 2008	Fall 2008	Spring 2009
Barclay Elementary and Middle					18	14	9	11	12
Calverton Elementary and Middle						11	12		
Canton Middle	9	11				10	14		
Elmer Henderson Elementary	17	11	14						
Guilford Elementary and Middle				15	22				
Highlandtown Elementary and Middle			15	6	21	5	14	9	16
Holabird Elementary	18	7	14	12	4				
Patterson High							12	14	21
Pimlico Middle				12	9				
Southeast Middle		18							
Stuart Hill Academic Academy								20	13
Walter P. Carter Elementary and Middle								10	12
Waverly Elementary and Middle						10	18		
William Lemmel Middle						10	12	9	16
Totals	44	47	43	45	74	60	91	73	90

Source: TCP Administrative Records

## Organizational Perspective

As mentioned above, TCP is a collaborative effort involving a number of organizations. Table 7 lists the participating organizations and the resources and services that each organization contributes to TCP.

**Table 7: Summary of resources and services provided by source organizations to Baltimore City TCP**

Organization	Resources/Services Provided
University of Baltimore School of Law, Center for Families, Children and the Courts	Recruits and selects schools; recruits judges, law student fellows, and volunteer tutors/mentors; trains judges, law student fellows and school-based team members; solicits funding; provides paid program manager and mentor coordinator; Senior Fellows provide program leadership and oversee program development and implementation
Maryland Judiciary	Provides grant funding and volunteer judges
Baltimore City Public School System	Assists in selection of participating schools
Individual Baltimore City public schools	Applies for participation and identifies eligible students; recruits participants, obtains parental and student consent; sets up sessions, provides progress reports and attendance data to the TCP team; provides team members from existing paid staff and meeting space in the school; follows up with families with resource connections
Charles Crane Family Foundation	Provides funding
Wright Family Foundation	Provides funding
Annie E. Casey Direct Services Grant Program	Provides funding
Ober Kaler law firm	Provides funding
Maryland Department of Juvenile Services	Interacts with TCP at Patterson High School as part of Truancy Collaborative and Spotlight on Schools programs; provides paid case manager at Patterson High School
Federal government	Provides funding through earmark appropriation

Source: TCP administrative records and TCP team member interviews

## Process Evaluation Results

### Truancy Intervention at the Schools Prior to TCP

The researchers sought to document how participating schools handled truancy prior to the implementation of TCP and the level of awareness of school truancy policies by school-based TCP team members. A series of questions regarding the school’s approach to truancy prior to TCP was asked exclusively to the seven school-based respondents. Over half of school-based respondents (n=5), including two of the three administrators surveyed, affirmed that their school had a procedure for addressing truancy before TCP was implemented in their schools. One of the administrators surveyed said that his/her school did not have a procedure in place for addressing truancy, whereas another respondent indicated that he/she did not know (see Table 8).

**Table 8: School-based Team Members’ Perceptions of Procedures for Addressing Truancy prior to TCP**

Title	Procedure Present for Truancy Policy Enforcement before TCP?			
	Yes	No	Don’t Know	Total
School Administrators	2	1	0	3
Other School-Based Personnel	3	0	1	4
Total	5	1	1	7

Source: TCP team member interviews

Four of seven respondents, including one of three administrators surveyed, indicated that the school staff was aware of the school’s truancy policies and procedures before TCP was implemented. Three other respondents, including two out of the three administrators, indicated that staff was not aware of the school’s policies (see Table 9).

**Table 9: School-based Team Members Perceptions of Personnel Awareness of Truancy Policies prior to TCP**

Title	Personnel Aware of Truancy Policies before TCP?		
	Yes	No	Total
School Administrators	1	2	3
Other School-Based Personnel	3	1	4
Total	4	3	7

Source: TCP team member interviews

Five of seven respondents, including two of the three administrators, indicated that truancy policies at the school were uniformly enforced prior to TCP being implemented. Two respondents, including one of the administrators, indicated that there was not uniform enforcement of truancy policies (see Table 10).

**Table 10: School-based Team Member Perceptions of Enforcement of Truancy Policies prior to TCP**

Title	Uniform Enforcement of Truancy Policies before TCP?		
	Yes	No	Total
School Administrators	2	1	3
Other School-Based Personnel	3	1	4
Total	5	2	7

Source: TCP team member interviews

One respondent, a school administrator, indicated that out-of-school suspension had been used as a disciplinary action against truant students. Four respondents, including two of the three administrators, reported that out-of-school suspension had not been used to discipline truant students. The remaining two respondents did not know whether out-of-school suspension was used to discipline truant students (see Table 11).

**Table 11: School-based Team Member Perceptions of Use of Out-of-School Suspension for Truancy prior to TCP**

Title	Out of School Suspension Used for Truancy before TCP?			
	Yes	No	Don't Know	Total
School Administrators	1	2	0	3
Other School-Based Personnel	0	2	2	4
Total	1	4	2	7

Source: TCP team member interviews

Two respondents indicated that their schools had networks of resources available for addressing truancy, whereas two respondents reported that to their knowledge no such networks were available, and three respondents did not know. These responses are summarized in Table 12.

**Table 12: School-based Team Member Perceptions of Existence of Resource Network at School Prior to TCP Implementation**

Title	School Had Resource Network before TCP?			
	Yes	No	Don't Know	Total
School Administrators	1	2	0	3
Other School-Based Personnel	1	0	3	4
Total	2	2	3	7

Source: TCP team member interviews

School personnel were also asked to describe how BCPSS dealt with truant students before TCP, to which respondents gave a range of answers. One respondent indicated that truant students were referred to formal court, whereas two other respondents reported that they were referred to BCPSS Administrative Offices. Two respondents reported having either an

attendance monitor or committee to track absences and refer truant students to the BCPSS Office of Attendance and Truancy (OAT). One respondent indicated that there was a truancy project at the school prior to the University of Baltimore's program; however, this project was discontinued due to funding problems. Three respondents mentioned that parents or guardians were contacted by a school representative by telephone, letters, conference, and/or home visits. One respondent stated that prior to TCP, the school gave students incentives for improving attendance. Two school respondents reported that the BCPSS standard procedure for dealing with truant students was followed by their school. Responses from BCPSS school level staff indicate that prior to TCP establishment, BCPSS truancy response policies and procedures were inconsistently applied at the school level and/or school level staff perceptions of them were inconsistent.

### **Planning for TCP**

All team member respondents were asked about their roles in planning for TCP. Three of the 16 respondents indicated that they consulted with the planning group to develop best methods to intervene with truant students. Two of these respondents were non-school-based respondents. All three respondents indicated that they consulted with the planning group because of their experience in working with the student population. One respondent indicated that his/her role with the planning group was that of an advisor because of his/her experience in working on the previous BPCSS truancy project. Another respondent indicated his/her role was to provide feedback on effective methods that would increase attendance and decrease truancy.

### **Source Organizations within TCP**

In an organizationally complex intervention such as TCP, a source organization is an organization that makes noteworthy resource commitments to a given collaborative program, such as the TCP initiative (Crumpton, 2008). The source organizations that contributed to the overall planning of TCP and the operation of TCP include: (1) the University of Baltimore School of Law, Center for Families, Children and the Courts; (2) the Baltimore City Public School System (BCPSS); (3) the Maryland Judiciary, Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC); and (4) the organizations as listed in Table 7 above that provide funding.

### **Role of CFCC in TCP**

CFCC created TCP and has played a major role in its planning and ongoing development. CFCC staff and faculty provide program leadership and administrative oversight for the TCP program. CFCC recruits and selects the schools that participate in TCP each year. CFCC provides a full-time program manager, a full-time mentor coordinator, and law student fellows for TCP sessions. In addition, CFCC trains TCP team members and recruits volunteer “judges”, mentors, tutors, and the volunteer students and other members of the University of Baltimore community (Babb et al., 2008; G. Danziger & B. Babb, personal communication, July 6, 2010).

### **Role of the Court System in TCP**

The Maryland Judiciary has provided financial support to the Truancy Court Program since 2007. In 2007, the AOC awarded a grant of approximately \$170,000 for the implementation of the program in six schools and for the development and publication of a resource guide (the “TCP Toolkit”), which details the operations of TCP for schools wishing to implement the program. CFCC also used a portion of the grant to hire a full-time mentor coordinator for the TCP program (University of Baltimore School of Law, 2007). The AOC also provided grants to TCP in 2008 and 2009, which, in combination with funding from other external sources helped CFCC to expand TCP to an additional school.

In addition to providing funding for TCP, the Maryland Judiciary is involved with TCP through the participation of volunteer “judges”, who lead the weekly TCP sessions. Each volunteer “judge” is assigned a specific school, which the “judge” visits one morning per week for a session that typically lasts between 1.5 and 2 hours. Judges are also invited to attend related activities such as the “Family Fun Nights” and court field trips (Babb et al., 2008). During the 2008-2009 school year, six volunteers served as judges in TCP; these volunteers were the Honorable Judge David Young, the Honorable Judge Catherine O’Malley, the Honorable Judge Miriam Hutchins, the Honorable Judge Norman Johnson, Master Joyce Mitchell, and Mark Friedenthal, Esq. Of the six TCP “judges”, three are active judges in the Maryland Judiciary; one is a retired judge, one is a retired master, and the other is a public defender who specializes in juvenile cases.

## **Role of the School System in TCP**

BCPSS participates in both school and student selection and provides building space and staff for TCP sessions. According to the TCP Toolkit, the BCPSS Office of Attendance and Truancy (OAT) collaborates with CFCC staff during the school application phase to help select schools for TCP (Babb et al., 2008). Dr. Tanya Williams, Lead Staff of OAT, is present to describe the TCP program to administrators at the TCP principals' workshop held each summer. Additionally, OAT provides CFCC staff with school-level data, including truancy rates, for each school applying for TCP. The Director of OAT also participated in the selection of TCP schools along with CFCC staff (G. Danziger, personal communication, January 28, 2010).

## **Roles of Individual Schools in TCP**

Principals and/or vice-principals who are interested in having their schools participate in TCP attend a summer workshop presented by CFCC. School representatives then submit applications in which they identify individuals who will serve as members of the TCP team. The TCP Toolkit (Babb et al., 2008, pp. 2-3) suggests that the team includes the following members:

- A principal, assistant principal or other administrator with decision making authority;
- A school social worker who is familiar with community services and has the ability to access these services; and
- An attendance monitor, teacher, or counselor who is familiar with each TCP student's social network, teachers and, if possible, parents/caregivers

The Toolkit indicates that TCP team members are responsible for selecting and recruiting TCP participants, attending TCP sessions, and maintaining participant files. The 2009 version of the Toolkit describes the specific roles of individual school-based team members and states that the teachers of the participants are responsible for completing weekly reports that detail the student's progress with academics, attendance, and behavior (Babb et al., 2009). During five of the six TCP sessions observed by the researchers, TCP team members had both the attendance data and progress reports for the student participants. The exception was a TCP session at Walter P. Carter Elementary and Middle held immediately after the Spring break and the Maryland State Assessments. At this session, the team members only had attendance data to review because no graded assignments were given and thus there were no data available for the progress reports.

## **TCP Procedures**

### **Procedural Overview: School Selection to Student Graduation**

The TCP Toolkit provides a suggested framework for schools to follow in establishing and operating their TCP sessions. It also acknowledges, however, that each school has different needs and available resources. The TCP Toolkit provides details, such as the timeline of events in establishing a program, CFCC's recommendations for the selection of TCP team members, and the criteria for student selection (Babb et al., 2008). Data collected by the analysts in surveys, session observations, and personal interviews with key stakeholders were compared with the process descriptions in the Toolkit. The results of this comparison are represented in a subsequent section of this report. See Figure 1 for a graphic depiction of the process, and Figure 2 for a timeline of the full process.

### **The TCP Process**

Each school holds two 10-week TCP sessions each school year with a separate group of students in each session. Participation is voluntary on the part of the student and his/her parents or guardian. At each session, the presiding "judge" reviews each child's file, which consists of data concerning attendance and school performance compiled by the school, speaks privately with the child and his/her parents/guardian about the student's attendance, and asks questions about any possible difficulties encountered during the week. Each child is rewarded with a small gift weekly for improved attendance. Upon successful program completion, the student is invited to a "graduation" from the program. The student is monitored for the rest of the academic year to ensure that any "relapse" is remedied immediately. Students who continue to be truant after graduation may repeat the 10-week program the next semester if it is offered at their schools (Babb et al., 2008).

### ***Principal Workshops and application process***

Each summer, CFCC hosts a workshop for all Baltimore City elementary and middle school administrators who are interested in bringing the TCP program to their schools. The workshop provides school leaders with an overview and operational details of TCP. The workshop also includes panel discussions of related issues, such as mentoring, working with

volunteers, and collecting data as part of TCP. Each participant receives a TCP application form and is invited to submit the application and information regarding the school's proposed TCP team, resources, and commitment to the program (Babb et al., 2008).

After attending the workshop, representatives of each school interested in implementing TCP submits an application to CFCC with the following information (see Appendix D for *Application Form for Truancy Court Program*):

- TCP Contact Person;
- TCP Attendance Monitor;
- TCP Team Members;
- Location of weekly TCP meetings;
- Parent Liaison information;
- Information about adjunct tutoring programs in the school and TCP students' eligibility for inclusion in them as well as other tutoring assistance available;
- School attendance rate during the two preceding academic years; and
- A copy of the school's current policy/procedure to address absenteeism and steps for informing parents of the policy.

The completed applications are reviewed by CFCC staff and the BCPSS Office of Attendance and Truancy to select TCP schools for the upcoming academic year. In addition to a school's attendance rate, the selection team considers the resources available at the school as well as the involvement and commitment of the principal and other school personnel to TCP (G. Danziger, personal communication, January 28, 2010). The recently revised application form attaches points to some of the questions on the application. For example, a copy of the current attendance policy at a school is worth five points, an explanation of how parents are informed about the policy is worth 10 points, and a narrative section describing how students would be identified and recruited is worth 20 points.

Generally, a combination of schools familiar with and new to TCP is selected; past AOC funding allows for the selection of six schools each year and federal funding allows for the selection of two schools each year. There are no specific limits as to how many returning schools CFCC will select in any given year, and CFCC does not limit the number of years a school may participate in TCP, however its goal is to choose as many new schools as possible in a given year (G. Danziger, personal communication, January 28, 2010). The application process for

participating TCP schools does not differ from that of new schools (Babb et al., 2008). If a school wishes to continue in TCP, school administrators must reapply the following summer.

***Non- school-based team member recruitment (CFCC team members)***

Prior to the academic year, CFCC recruits the non-school-based TCP team members, specifically the volunteer “judges”, mentors and tutors, and enrolls the University of Baltimore Law School students in CFCC’s Student Fellows Program, for which law students can earn academic credit. According to the TCP Toolkit, CFCC enrolls law students eight weeks prior to the start of TCP and recruits judges seven weeks prior to the start of TCP. CFCC assigns one Student Fellow and one TCP “judge” to each participating school annually.

The individuals who volunteer to serve as judges for TCP are not necessarily judicial officers. TCP program materials do not specify criteria for these “judges” or state whether volunteers must have experience with juvenile matters, but sitting or retired judges and attorneys make up most of the volunteer TCP “judges”. CFCC does not have a formal arrangement with the Judiciary to recruit “judges,” and most volunteers learn about the program through their colleagues. Several years ago, CFCC originally introduced the program to judges at a bench meeting and subsequently, the Honorable Marcella A. Holland, Administrative Judge, Circuit Court for Baltimore City, sent a letter to retired judges to introduce the program. Since then, many judicial officers have chosen to volunteer and have promoted the program through word-of-mouth among their colleagues. CFCC recruits volunteer tutors on an ongoing basis from the University of Baltimore community (Babb et al., 2008).

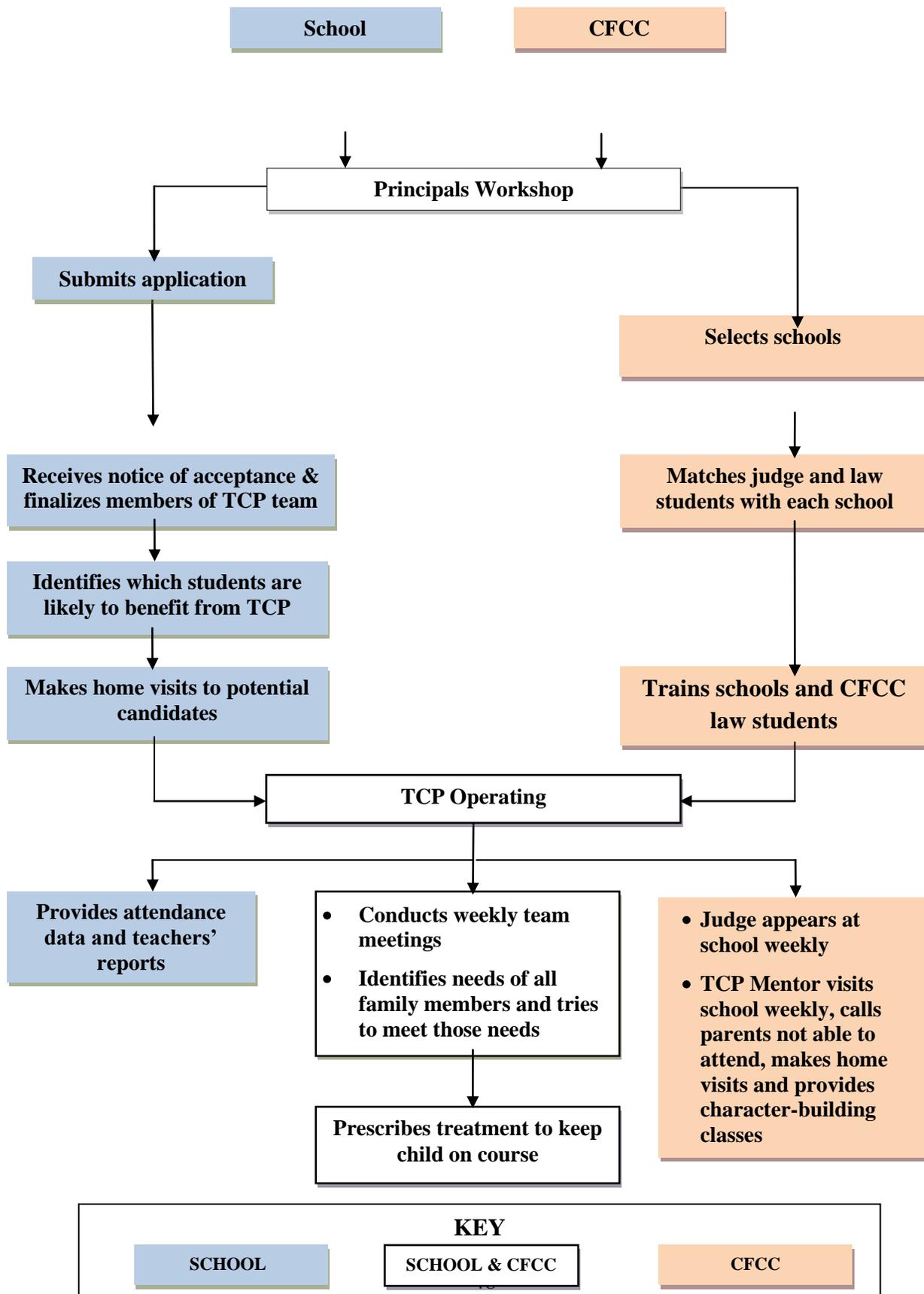
***School-based team member recruitment (BCPSS team members)***

Schools selected for TCP participation are encouraged to adhere to the TCP Toolkit team member selection criteria. The Toolkit suggests that the teams contain the following essential members: an administrator, a school social worker with knowledge of the community services, and an attendance monitor, teacher, or counselor who is aware of the students’ social network and family (Babb et al., 2008).

***TCP team composition: school-based members***

Table 13 shows the composition of each school-based team based on team member interviews, TCP administrative records, and observations by researchers. All six schools had at least one administrator on the team, and five out of six schools had a social worker on the team. Three of the schools had a guidance counselor on the team, and five schools had a teacher on the team. Five schools had other school staff on the team; the “other” category included attendance officers (at three schools), additional administrators (at two schools), a DJS caseworker (at one school), and psychologists (at one school).

**Figure 1: Truancy Court Program Process**



**Figure 2: Timeline of TCP Operations**

<b>8 weeks prior to start of TCP</b>	<p><b>School:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Selection of students</li> </ul>
<b>7 weeks prior to start of TCP</b>	<p><b>CFCC:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recruitment of judge</li> </ul>
<b>5 weeks prior to start of TCP</b>	<p><b>School and CFCC</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Team meeting</li> </ul>
<b>4 weeks prior to start of TCP</b>	<p><b>School:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Selection of team members</li> <li>• Identification of room</li> </ul>
<b>2-3 weeks prior to start of TCP</b>	<p><b>School:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Letter to parents/students</li> </ul>
<b>1-2 weeks prior to start of TCP</b>	<p><b>School:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Completion of folders: attendance data, teacher evaluation form, permission slip, copies of letters sent home</li> <li>• Follow up phone calls: confirm receipt of letter, confirm contact information, and explain program/review data</li> </ul> <p><b>CFCC:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training school teams</li> </ul>
<b>Day before TCP meeting</b>	<p><b>School:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collection of weekly forms: weekly reports, attendance forms, results of action items</li> </ul>
<b>Ongoing</b>	<p><b>CFCC:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recruitment of volunteers</li> <li>• <i>CFCC Student Fellow</i>: Giving incentives/gifts</li> <li>• <i>CFCC Student Fellow</i>: maintenance of student files: take notes at each TCP session, photocopy notes for copy kept at school, prepare judge for each session, and email notes to team contact/judge</li> <li>• <i>Mentor Coordinator</i>: contacting mentors</li> </ul> <p><b>School:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contacting tutors/volunteers</li> </ul> <p><b>School and CFCC:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluation</li> <li>• Providing resource contacts to students and parents/guardians</li> </ul>
<b>10 weeks after start of TCP</b>	<p><b>CFCC</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Graduation</li> </ul>

**Table 13: School Personnel Participating in TCP, 2008-2009**

<b>TCP School</b>	<b>School Administrator</b>	<b>Guidance Counselor</b>	<b>Teacher</b>	<b>Social Worker</b>	<b>Other School-Based Team Member</b>
Barclay Elementary and Middle	X	X	X	X	X*
Highlandtown Elementary and Middle	X*	X	X	X	X
Patterson High	X	X*		X	X
Steuart Hill Academic Academy	X*		X		X
Walter P. Carter Elementary and Middle	X*		X	X	
William Lemmel Middle	X		X	X	X

Source: TCP team member interviews, TCP administrative records, and researchers' observations

\*Note: Asterisk identifies school contact to CFCC

## **Roles and Responsibilities of TCP Team Members**

### **TCP School-Based Team Members**

The TCP Toolkit lays out the specific duties of the TCP School Contact Person, particularly within the application materials, but does not specify who should serve in this role, and the necessary qualifications. Although the guide provides a list of specific duties of the school-based team as a whole, it does not elaborate who should be doing many of the tasks, leaving selection to the individual schools. In general, TCP schools are responsible for selecting the school-based team, selecting the students, inviting the student participants to come to TCP (via letters home and follow-up phone calls), and identifying the location for TCP sessions (Babb et al., 2008; G. Danziger, personal communication, January 28, 2010). CFCC faculty and staff consider any school staff member who knows the students well to be an ideal inclusion to the TCP team, regardless of the staff member's title; having a school administrator on the team can be especially beneficial in addressing administrative issues such as missing teacher reports. (G. Danziger, personal communication, January 28, 2010).

## **Duties of the Individual School-Based Team Members**

The TCP School Contact Person serves as the liaison among the CFCC, the TCP school-based team and the school. The Contact Person is responsible for ensuring that student folders are created and that essential paperwork is compiled within the folders (e.g., that signed permission slips and intake forms are collected for all participants prior to the first session, that attendance data and weekly report cards are collected for each subsequent session). The TCP School Contact attends all TCP sessions.

The School Administrator, either a principal or assistant principal, is encouraged to be on the school-based team, because of his/her authority to make decisions at the school. As a team member, the administrator is expected to attend TCP sessions. Administrators may gather the TCP Weekly Reports, as well as provide attendance data and/or disciplinary reports for inclusion in TCP folders. Administrators may furnish data to the TCP program manager for any internal program evaluations undertaken by CFCC staff. The Toolkit does not explicitly mandate the administrator's attendance at all sessions. CFCC encourages the involvement of administrators in the program and at the weekly sessions, and considers engagement of school staff at all levels as an important criterion for TCP participation (G. Danziger, personal communication, January 28, 2010).

The school social worker uses his/her familiarity with community-based resources to access services for the family and to expedite service delivery. The social worker participates in initial home visits to prospective participants and may help to determine which students could benefit from participating in TCP. As a team member, he/she is expected to attend TCP sessions.

The attendance monitor, as someone who is familiar with each student's parent/caregivers and social networks, is an important team member. In addition to the administrator, the monitor may gather the TCP Weekly Reports, as well as provide attendance data and/or disciplinary reports for inclusion in TCP folders. The Attendance Monitor may furnish data for TCP program evaluation with the assistance of CFCC staff. CFCC recommends Attendance Monitors participate in home visits to prospective participants. As a team member, he/she is expected to attend TCP sessions.

Teachers play an important role in the program, either as team members and/or as providers of participant data to the team. As team members, teachers attend weekly TCP sessions and bring knowledge of students' parent/caregivers and social networks to the team. Other

teachers not on the school-based TCP team complete Weekly Reports on students who are participating in the program. Reports include academic preparation, attendance, and behavioral data on students and are completed in advance of the weekly session (See Appendix E, *CFCC Truancy Court Weekly Report*). The TCP team may request that a teacher attend part of a session as needed to discuss a student's progress.

A school counselor is expected to bring knowledge of the students' parent/caregivers and social network to TCP sessions. The counselor may gather the TCP Weekly Reports, as well as provide attendance data and/or disciplinary reports for inclusion in students' TCP folders. Counselors may furnish attendance data to the program manager for the internal program evaluation. The school counselor participates in the home visits to prospective participants.

### **Non-School Based Team Members**

The non-school-based TCP team includes a judge, a University of Baltimore second or third year law student enrolled in CFCC's Student Fellows Program, a mentor coordinator, a program manager, and a CFCC supervisor. Some of those positions are members of the team at multiple schools, such as the mentor coordinator, program manager, and CFCC supervisor.

- The TCP judge leads TCP sessions and the discussion among the team, student, and parents, and provides information on referrals.
- The CFCC Student Fellow prepares TCP session notes and distributes them to the team members after each session.
- The mentor coordinator helps plan the TCP mentoring component; links parents and families to necessary services with the primary contacts in each school; participates in weekly court sessions; leads character building classes, monitors participants' progress through weekly visits to participating schools, and makes weekly calls to each student's parents or guardian.
- The program manager's role is not described in the Toolkit, but a job description provided by CFCC describes the role of the program manager as recruiting TCP judges, providing administrative and substantive support to TCP sessions, and coordinating service referrals. Additionally, the program manager tracks incentives, administers pre- and post-participation surveys to the middle school students, and coordinates TCP

activities such as field trips and “Family Fun Nights” (G. Danziger, personal communication, January 28, 2010 & July 6, 2010).

## **TCP Training**

CFCC staff members state that they provide three types of training to TCP team members (G. Danziger, personal communication, July 6, 2010). First, they provide group training at the University of Baltimore before the school year begins. Next, they offer school-team training with all the team members at each individual school. Finally, the staff meets with the school-based team at the beginning of the weekly meetings to discuss and review student folders.

Eleven of the TCP team members interviewed (n=16) indicated that they received training for their roles in TCP prior to participating in a session. Ten respondents indicated they attended training offered by CFCC. One team member, who was involved in the earlier BCPSS Truancy Project sponsored by the ABA and the Scripps-Howard Foundation, received training for his/her role through that program. The group that indicated it received training included four school-based team members and seven non-school based members.

Four of the seven school-based team members who stated they received training did so prior to working on-site at TCP (see Table 14). The school-based team members who indicated that they received training for their roles in TCP included two out of three school administrators, the teacher and the other school-based team member. All four reported that CFCC provided them with the training. The school-based team members who indicated they had not received training included one administrator, the social worker, and the guidance counselor.

**Table 14: Training of School-Based Team Members for Role in TCP**

Title (Number)	Received Training for TCP		
	Yes	No	Totals
School Administrator (n=3)	2	1	3
Social Worker (n=1)	0	1	1
Educator (n=1)	1	0	1
Guidance Counselor (n=1)	0	1	1
Other School-Based Team Member (n=1)	1	0	1
Totals	4	3	7

Source: TCP team member interviews

Of the non-school-based team members, one of the three TCP judges and the TCP Coordinator indicated that they received training for their roles prior to TCP from the University of Baltimore. All five law school students who were surveyed received training as part of a class at the University of Baltimore School of Law. The School of Law course reviewed the role of the law student in TCP sessions and the concept of therapeutic jurisprudence<sup>11</sup> (see Table 15).

**Table 15: Training of Non-School-Based Team Members for Role in TCP**

Title (Number)	Received Training for TCP		
	Yes	No	Totals
TCP Judge	1	2	3
Student Fellow	5	0	5
TCP Coordinator	1	0	1
Totals	7	2	9

Source: TCP Team member interviews

Table 16 shows the number of team member respondents who reported being trained for their roles by TCP location. All of the respondents at two TCP sites (Highlandtown Elementary

<sup>11</sup> “Therapeutic Jurisprudence concentrates on the law’s impact on emotional life and psychological well-being. It is a perspective that regards the law (rules of law, legal procedures, and roles of legal actors) itself as a social force that often produces therapeutic or anti-therapeutic consequences. It does not suggest that therapeutic concerns are more important than other consequences or factors, but it does suggest that the law’s role as a potential therapeutic agent should be recognized and systematically studied” (International Network on Therapeutic Jurisprudence, <http://www.law.arizona.edu/depts/upr-intj/>).

and Middle and William Lemmel Middle) indicated they had received training for their roles; two out of three respondents at Barclay and one out of two respondents at Steuart Hill Academic Academy indicated that they had received training for their roles. Neither respondent at Patterson High reported being trained for his/her role within TCP.

**Table 16: Team Member Training by TCP Location**

TCP Location	Training for Role in TCP		
	Yes	No	Totals
Barclay Elementary and Middle	2	1	3
Highlandtown Elementary and Middle	5	0	5
Patterson High	0	2	2
Steuart Hill Academic Academy	1	1	2
Walter P. Carter Elementary and Middle	1	1	2
William Lemmel Middle	1	0	1
Totals	10	5	15

Source: TCP Team member interviews (excludes TCP coordinator)

When asked whether the training offered to them was relevant to their roles in the program, team member respondents provided a range of answers that were generally positive. Respondents indicated that the training provided: 1) comprehensive overview of TCP; 2) description of the partners' roles; 3) detailed explanation of the TCP manual including the supporting paper work and forms used in sessions; 4) strategies for engaging parents in sessions; 5) review of staff-interaction; 6) guide to troubleshooting issues and problems; and 7) an overview of common behavioral issues among truant students.

Although most respondents agreed that the training was detailed, organized and prepared them for their respective roles in TCP, three respondents indicated that certain aspects of TCP sessions, such as working in a school setting and with the diverse team members, could not be modeled in a class. One school-based respondent reported that, although the training is geared toward new members of the TCP team, attending the training is a positive experience because it provides a forum for all TCP representatives to share experiences and ideas.

School-based respondents indicated two areas of concern regarding the program: 1) they did not have a clear understanding of the connection between TCP and the BCPSS Office of

Attendance and Truancy; and 2) that different personalities of TCP judges and BCPSS administrators may impact the success of the program.

## **Student Recruitment**

### **Selection of Potential Participants**

Each participating school identifies its prospective students prior to formulation of the school-based team; the student selection team is typically made up of the principal, the school contact, and the school social worker. The TCP Toolkit states that schools select students who have between 5 and 20 unexcused absences or tardies in the two previous marking periods; CFCC uses the term “soft truant” to describe these students. The Toolkit recommends that students who: 1) suffer from a mental illness; 2) have a parent/guardian who suffers from a mental illness; or 3) have an insurmountable language barrier, should not be selected for TCP participation. The reason for these exclusions is that such students require resources that are beyond what TCP is able to offer participants and their families (G. Danziger, personal communication, January 28, 2010).

According to the Toolkit, students who are currently involved in the juvenile justice system are ineligible for the program (Babb et al., 2008). With the advent of the Baltimore Truancy Collaborative, however, TCP expanded in 2008 to include schools participating in the DJS “Spotlight on Schools” program; thus, the application packet now contains language that reflects this change (CFCC, 2009; DJS, 2008). In the “Guide for the Schools” section of the Toolkit, schools are advised to use the “student selection rubric” (the attendance criteria listed above) in addition to the attendance records (Babb et al., 2008). Ultimately, CFCC faculty and staff accept the decisions of the school teams, as the school personnel are considered to be the people who best know the student and their families (G. Danziger, personal communication, January 28, 2010).

### **Role of Family History in the Selection of Participants**

According to the Toolkit, student, sibling, and parent/guardian history is not reviewed prior to acceptance into the program. According to 12 of the 16 team member respondents, however, sibling attendance histories are reviewed before a student is accepted for participation.

CFCC staff has observed that siblings of students referred for TCP are often participating in the program themselves, since the underlying causes of truancy in one student will often affect all siblings in the family; however sibling histories are only reviewed after the permission form is signed (G. Danziger, personal communication, January 28, 2010). Thirteen of the 16 team member respondents surveyed indicated that parent or guardian criminal histories are not reviewed prior to admission to TCP; the remaining three respondents did not know.

### **Communication with and Recruitment of Potential Participants**

To complete the student selection process, according to the Toolkit, school staff mails letters to the homes of the students inviting them to participate in the program. The school mails these letters two to three weeks before TCP sessions start (See Appendix F, *Invitation Letter*). The school team is instructed to place follow-up phone calls to the parents/guardians the week after sending out recruitment letters.

The survey responses corroborate information in the Toolkit. All team member respondents (n=16) indicated that parents were notified about TCP primarily by letters sent home. Thirteen of the 17 parent/guardian respondents confirmed that they were first notified about their children’s referral to TCP by letter. Supplemental contacts were reported by five team member and four parent respondents. When asked to list the other forms of contact with families, four of the five team members included telephone calls in their responses; one indicated that this additional contact was through a school presentation to parents and/or an announcement in the school bulletin; and one indicated that it was through home visits. The four parents indicated that supplemental contact was either by telephone (n=3) or by in-person meeting with teacher (n=1). Table 17 presents the total number of attempts to contact parents or guardians for recruitment as reported by the team members.

**Table 17: Number of Recruitment Contacts Made to Parents or Guardians**

<b>Respondent</b>	<b>Letter only</b>	<b>Letter and Phone Call</b>	<b>In-person meeting</b>	<b>Total</b>
Team members	11	5	0	16
Parents/guardians	13	3	1	17

Source: Parent/guardian Interviews

## **The Role of Home Visits in the TCP Process**

To recruit prospective students and their families, CFCC recommends that a school social worker, attendance monitor, and/or counselor conduct a home visit prior to the start of the session. The purposes of the home visit are to (1) reinforce the voluntary nature of TCP; (2) offer assistance to the family; (3) to emphasize that TCP is an alternative to a referral to court to address truancy; and (4) observe the home of the prospective student to assess which family members might be supportive of the program and which might be uncooperative. The CFCC TCP program manager had been responsible for entering student and family information collected during the home visits into the TRAIN database.<sup>12</sup> Data entry into TRAIN was discontinued after its first year of use however because the database was not found to be time-effective or useful by CFCC staff (G. Danziger, personal communication, January 28, 2010).

As indicated in the recruitment section above, only 1 of the 16 team members indicated that home visits were part of the initial recruitment of students into TCP. Nevertheless, team member respondents indicated that home visits were a component of the program. When the 16 team members were asked, “Who makes home visits?” the respondents gave a variety of responses; the majority of respondents included either the TCP mentor (n=8) or the school social worker (n=7) in their lists of who makes home visits. Other school staff members indicated by respondents as making home visits include the following:

- TCP mentor (8);
- School social worker (7);
- School guidance counselor (4);
- School administrator (3);
- Attendance monitor (2);
- Community liaison or coordinator (2);
- Probation officer (1);
- Psychologist (1);

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<sup>12</sup> TRAIN (Truancy Reduction Application Interface) is a secure, web-based database provided by the National Center for Student Engagement that allows program staff to track the progress of children receiving school attendance services. It is referenced in the Toolkit in the “Data” section as the source of data on ethnicity, country of origin, gender, grade, income, and household composition. According to the National Center for School Engagement website, <http://www.schoolengagement.org/index.cfm/TRAIN>, TRAIN reports can also include information on students' school attachment, achievement, and attendance, their demographics, mental and physical health, family and peer relationships, and a detailed service history.

- Service provider (1);
- School personnel (1).

One team member respondent reported that 80% of home visits were made by the school (either the social worker/counselor) and 20% by the mentor (TCP).

When asked who has responsibility for home visits, most team member respondents (n=11) indicated that both the TCP team and the school were to make the visits. Responses varied notably among TCP team members, as indicated in Table 18.

**Table 18: Who Makes Home Visits, by TCP Location**

Location	TCP Only	School	Both	Don't Know	Total
Barclay Elementary and Middle	0	2	1	0	3
Highlandtown Elementary and Middle	1	1	2	1	5
Patterson High	0	1	0	1	2
Steuart Hill Academic Academy	1	0	1	0	2
Walter P. Carter Elementary and Middle	1	0	0	1	2
William Lemmel Middle	0	0	1	0	1

Source: TCP team member interviews (excludes TCP coordinator)

### **Program Information Given to Respondents**

The majority of team member respondents (n=13) indicated that TCP did not give parents a handbook; three respondents did not know whether or not there was a parent handbook. This evaluation has since prompted CFCC to direct its Student Fellows to develop a Parent Handbook and Resource Guide for families with truancy needs (G. Danziger, personal communication, July 6, 2010).

Fourteen of the 17 parent/guardian respondents felt they were provided with sufficient information to help them make an informed decision about participation in the program. The three remaining respondents reported the information was not detailed enough for them to make an informed decision. Four of the 17 parent/guardian respondents indicated that the school principal provided them with program information; five indicated a teacher; seven reported the guidance counselor; and one stated TCP staff members. Table 19 presents which team member

provided the parent/guardian with program information. Since the 2009-2010 school year, parents and children have been provided with a TCP brochure, and CFCC has held an orientation session for parents (G. Danziger, personal communication, July 6, 2010).

**Table 19: TCP Team Member who Typically Provided Parent/Guardian with Information about the Program**

<b>Team Member</b>	<b>Number</b>
Principal	4
Teacher	5
Guidance Counselor	7
TCP Staff	1
Total	17

Source: Parent/guardian Interviews

Ten of the 17 parent/guardian respondents indicated that they received written information about the program. Five parent/guardian respondents indicated that the written information either came from school or was given to them at their child’s school. Three respondents indicated that the information came from the guidance counselor. One respondent could not identify the source of the information. One respondent said the material came “from the people that work with the program.” Seven of the 12 student respondents received written information about the program, whereas five indicated that they did not. Three of the seven student respondents who received written information indicated that the information they received informed them that they would be participating in the program. One student respondent indicated that the information described the length of the program; another student respondent indicated that the information described why he/she were referred to TCP; and another student respondent indicated that the information described the purposes of the program. Two student respondents indicated that they did not know what was in the information, either because they did not read it or did not remember.

## **Participant Awareness of Truancy Prior to TCP Involvement**

Nine of the 12 student respondents reported that they were unaware of the number of absences that they had prior to TCP referral; only three said they were aware of the number of absences. Eight student respondents indicated that they were aware that court action could be taken for excessive unexcused absence. One-half of those students learned about the possibility of court action from the school or a school staff member. Two respondents learned from a family member; one from the mother, the other from a cousin. One learned from a previous court referral due to the respondent missing over 100 days of school during a previous academic year. One respondent did not know.

Five of the 12 student respondents identified specific reasons for their unexcused absences. Two students reported getting up late as a reason for their attendance problems. One student indicated that he/she would go to school but did not swipe in and thus got marked absent. One student reported lack of a clean uniform or bus pass as the issue. One student indicated that he/she skipped school to avoid getting into fights and being suspended from school.

### **Awareness of Program's Voluntary Nature**

Team members were asked a series of questions designed to assess their awareness of the voluntary nature of the program. When asked, "What happens if student wants to participate, but the parent or guardian does not?" all 16 respondents indicated that students are not allowed to participate without parental permission. Two of the 16 respondents stated that a representative from the TCP team would try to engage the parent or guardian in the process by contacting them by telephone. Three respondents indicated that they had not encountered this situation.

Team member respondents were asked, "What if the parent or guardian wants to participate but the student does not?" One respondent said that the program was voluntary, and any child who did not want to participate would not be in the program. Three others responded that since the program was voluntary, team members were limited as to the extent to which they could enforce attendance at TCP sessions for a resistant student. Five respondents mentioned that TCP team members would work with the family and try to persuade the student to participate in the program. Three respondents mentioned that the parent would have to compel the student to

attend or attend with the student. Two respondents mentioned that the parent might come alone to the sessions. Two respondents had not experienced this situation.

Team member respondents were asked, “What happens when a parent and student agree to participate but change their minds later?” Eleven of the 16 respondents agreed that since TCP is a voluntary program, there is little that TCP could do to compel families who changed their minds later to return to TCP. Four respondents indicated that someone from the TCP team would talk with the parent and/or student to try to convince them to continue with the program. Three respondents indicated that if the child’s attendance was poor after dropping out of TCP, the student and parent or guardian are referred to either BCPSS OAT or to court. Respondents were also asked, “Is an attendance contract signed by the parents or students?” Eleven respondents indicated an “attendance contract” was not signed, whereas three respondents indicated that an “attendance contract” was signed by the parent/guardian and the student, although CFCC states that an “attendance contract” is not part of the program (G. Danziger, personal communication, July 6, 2010).

Parent/guardian respondents (n=17) were asked whether the program was voluntary for their children. Eight parents/guardians indicated that the program was voluntary, whereas nine indicated that the program was not voluntary. When asked if the program should be voluntary or mandatory, a majority of parent/guardian respondents (n=10) said that TCP should be mandatory, whereas four indicated the program should continue to be voluntary (see Table 20).

**Table 20: Parent/Guardian Perceptions of the Voluntary Nature of TCP**

<b>Question</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No Response</b>	<b>Total</b>
Is Program Voluntary for You?	8	9	0	17
Should Program be Mandatory?	10	4	3	17

Source: Parent/guardian Interviews

### **Record Keeping and Tracking for TCP Non-Participants**

The selection of student participants is the responsibility of school personnel. CFCC does not specify whether schools should maintain records on students who decline the invitation to participate in TCP; what records are kept is at the discretion of each school. CFCC maintains records of TCP Session participants, however it does not keep records of those who were invited

but did not participate in TCP. Of the six schools participating in TCP during the 2008-2009 academic year, only one school was able to offer the research team a list of all invited students (Babb et al., 2008).

The student population of Baltimore City exhibits more mobility than that of the state of Maryland; greater mobility makes tracking students challenging. In FY 2009, 15.5% of all elementary students, 16.1% of all middle school, and 21.4% of all high school students in the city transferred schools at least once (MSDE, 2009a). By comparison, in FY 2009, the mobility rates for students statewide were 9.2% for elementary school students, 8.5% for middle school students, and 11% for high school. During session observations, the research team noted that TCP team members took time with students to confirm their contact information and update it if needed.

### **Profile of Participants during Academic Year 2008-2009**

The researchers sought to describe the group of TCP participants in terms of demographics, school experience (in terms of both academics and disciplinary actions), and involvement with the juvenile justice system. As shown earlier in Table 6, during the fall of 2008, 73 students participated in TCP at the six Baltimore City schools included in the program that semester. During the spring of 2009, 89 students participated at these schools. The spring 2009 group included 13 students who had participated in the fall.<sup>13</sup> Thus, the number of unique students participating during the 2008-2009 academic year was 149 (73 students in the fall and 76 new students in the spring).

In order to obtain demographic and academic information for this group of students, the researchers had to supply BCPSS with pupil identification numbers (PINs). CFCC was able to provide the researchers with PINs for 142 participants, which represented more than 95.3% of the 149 participants during academic year 2008-2009.<sup>14</sup>

The following discussion of participant demographics, school experience, and involvement in the juvenile justice system is based on data obtained from BCPSS and DJS for

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<sup>13</sup> There were three repeat participants at Barclay Elementary/Middle School, three at Highlandtown Elementary/Middle School, and seven at Steuart Hill Academy.

<sup>14</sup> As shown in Table 21, three of the seven missing PINs were for students at Steuart Hill Academy. Nonetheless, the 23 Steuart Hill students for whom the researchers were able to obtain PINs represent a respectable 88.5% of the TCP participants at that school.

the 142 TCP participants for whom PINs were available. This group included 68 students who participated in TCP for the first time in the fall of 2008 and 75 students who participated in TCP for the first time in the spring of 2009.<sup>15</sup>

**Table 21: Availability of Pupil Identification Numbers (PINs) for 2008-2009 TCP Participants**

School	Number of TCP Participants					
	Fall 2008		Spring 2009		Fall 2008 – Spring 2009	
	Total*	With PINs	New	With PINs	Unique	With PINs
Barclay Elementary and Middle	11	11	9	9	20	20
Highlandtown Elementary and Middle	9	9	13	12	22	21
Patterson High	14	14	20	19	34	33
Steuart Hill Academy	20	17	6	6	26	23
Walter P. Carter Elementary	10	10	12	12	22	22
William Lemmel Middle	9	7	16	16	25	23
All TCP Participants	73	68	76	74	149	142

\* Note: All fall 2008 participants were new, with the exception of one participant at William Lemmel Middle School who had participated in TCP previously.

### Demographic Characteristics

The demographics of TCP participants during 2008-2009 roughly mirror the demographic makeup of the Baltimore City Public Schools. As shown in Table 22, compared to the general population of students enrolled in Baltimore City Public Schools, a slightly smaller percentage of TCP participants was African American (85.9%) and smaller percentages were Caucasian (4.9%) or Asian (0.7%) during the 2008-2009 academic year. On the other hand, participation in TCP by Hispanic students (8.5%) was greater than their representation in the

<sup>15</sup> Only one of the 73 students that participated in the fall of 2008 had participated previously in TCP. That student's PIN was not available. Consequently, all of the fall 2008 participants described in the remainder of this report were participating in TCP for the first time.

general BCPSS student population. This result is not surprising given that both Highlandtown Elementary and Middle School and Patterson High School serve areas of Baltimore with sizeable Hispanic populations.

**Table 22: Distribution of TCP Participants and Baltimore City Public School Students by Race (2008-2009 Academic Year)**

School	Number of Students	Race/Ethnicity				
		Caucasian	African American	Hispanic	Asian	Other
Barclay Elementary and Middle	20	0%	95.0%	0%	5.0%	0%
Highlandtown Elementary and Middle	21	4.8%	76.2%	19.0%	0%	0%
Patterson High	33	9.1%	66.7%	24.2%	0%	0%
Steuart Hill Academy	23	13.0%	87.0%	0%	0%	0%
Walter P. Carter Elementary	22	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%
William Lemmel Middle	23	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%
All TCP Participants	142	4.9%	85.9%	8.5%	0.7%	0%
Baltimore City Public Schools	82,266	7.8%	88.4%	2.8%	0.7%	2.1%

The gender makeup of TCP participants during the 2008-2009 academic year was roughly 50% male and 50% female, with five of the six schools enrolling between 35% and 60% of each gender in TCP. (see Table 23.) The exception was William Lemmel Middle School, which had a much higher percentage of males (78.3%) than females (21.7%) enrolled in TCP. Students' ages ranged from 5 to 16, with a mean age of 11 across the six participating schools. The largest group (41.5%) of TCP students was in middle school; 7.0% of participants were kindergartners. Although Patterson High School began participating in TCP only in 2008, Patterson enrolled the most students in TCP (33) during 2008-2009, while the other schools each enrolled 20 to 25 students during the year.

All of the schools participating in TCP during the 2008-2009 academic year, with the exception of Patterson High School, received Title I funds, indicating that their student populations were largely from low income families. Among the 2008-2009 TCP participants, almost 90% had a household income low enough to qualify the student for participation in the Free and Reduced Price Lunch program.

**Table 23: TCP Participants by Gender and Age (2008-2009 Academic Year)**

School	Number of Students	Gender		Mean Age
		Male	Female	
Barclay Elementary and Middle	20	40.0%	60.0%	10
Highlandtown Elementary and Middle	21	52.4%	47.6%	9
Patterson High	33	42.4%	57.6%	14
Steuart Hill Academy	23	56.5%	43.5%	9
Walter P. Carter Elementary	22	36.4%	63.6%	10
William Lemmel Middle	23	78.3%	21.7%	13
All TCP Participants	142	50.7%	49.3%	11

Almost 20% of the TCP participants were classified as Special Education students (see Table 24), with the largest number (n=8) and percentage (34.8%) at Steuart Hill Academy. Only 2.9% of the TCP participants were identified as having limited English proficiency, all of these at Highlandtown Elementary and Middle School and Patterson High School, which had the highest percentages of Hispanic participants in TCP.

Although the overall level of mobility among TCP participants (17.6%) was similar to the averages for Baltimore City students (15.5% for elementary students, 16.1% for middle school students, and 21.4% for high school students), the variation among the TCP schools was noteworthy. The 4.3% mobility level of Steuart Hill TCP participants was less than a third of the average level for Baltimore City elementary/middle school students; the 9.1% mobility level of Patterson TCP participants was less than half the average level for Baltimore City high school students. On the other hand, at Walter P. Carter Elementary School, 36.4% of TCP participants were mobile, a level more than double the citywide average for elementary school students.

**Table 24: Special Needs Characteristics of TCP Participants (2008-2009 Academic Year)**

School	Number of Students	Special Education	Limited English Proficiency	Mobile Students
Barclay Elementary and Middle	20	25.0%	0%	20.0%
Highlandtown Elementary and Middle	21	9.5%	9.5%	19.0%
Patterson High	33	18.2%	6.3%	9.1%
Steuart Hill Academy	23	34.8%	0%	4.3%
Walter P. Carter Elementary	22	22.7%	0%	36.4%
William Lemmel Middle	23	8.7%	0%	21.7%
All TCP Participants	142	19.7%	2.9%	17.6%

### **Attendance and Academic History**

TCP protocol states that students who have between 5 and 20 unexcused absences or tardies during the prior two grading periods can be considered for admittance into the program.

Data maintained centrally by BCPSS does not however, distinguish between excused and unexcused absences, and absences are compiled annually by BCPSS, rather than by grading period. More precise data maintained by TCP for the 2008-2009 participants were incomplete. As a result, this study looks at total absences for TCP participants during full academic years, rather than only unexcused absences during individual grading periods or semesters.

The researchers believe that considering all absences, rather than only unexcused absences, is not a serious limitation of the study because a high number of total absences is likely to correlate with a high number of unexcused absences. A measure of total absences was determined to be a reasonable proxy for unexcused absences because this also indicates other family issues (e.g., health problems, caring for siblings). Additionally, attendance is strongly linked to school engagement and academic success; a student who is not present for any reason (excused or not) is not able to participate in, or benefit from, the academic process.

The fact that attendance data are unavailable for periods shorter than an academic year presents another challenge for the analysis. The 2007-2008 academic year represents a time period that is one to one and a half years prior to students' participation in TCP. For some of the TCP participants included in the study, the 2008-2009 academic year is divided between participation and post-participation, while for other TCP participants, the 2008-2009 academic year is divided between pre-participation and participation. A group of 13 TCP participants was involved in TCP throughout the 2008-2009 academic year.

Data on total absences during the 2007-2008 academic year were available for 133 of the 142 TCP participants profiled. (Of the nine participants for whom 2007-2008 data were not available, five were in kindergarten during 2007-2008 and four had transferred in from a Maryland school outside the BCPSS.) As shown in Table 25, nearly half of the participants had 20 total absences or fewer during the academic year prior to their TCP participation. A substantial portion of the group (14.3%) had more than 40 total absences. The median number of days absent was 22. These data on total absences for an entire academic year seem consistent with the guideline of 5 to 20 unexcused absences during the previous two marking periods, given that two marking periods is equivalent to half an academic year.

**Table 25: Absences during 2007-2008 Academic Year for 2008-2009 TCP Participants**

<b>Number of Total Absences</b>	<b>Number of Students*</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Cumulative Percentage</b>
0-10	25	18.8%	18.8%
11-20	38	28.6%	47.4%
21-30	31	23.3%	70.7%
31-40	20	15.0%	85.7%
More than 40	19	14.3%	100.0%

\*Data on absences were missing for 10 of the 142 students.

The academic standing of TCP participants was measured using course grades in English/liberal arts, math and science. Many students were enrolled in multiple classes in each subject area during the year, so course grades were averaged by subject area to measure subject achievement. Course grades are not recorded at the city level for students below 6<sup>th</sup> grades, and the records for most of the 66 TCP participants in 6<sup>th</sup> grade and above have at least one subject area or semester of missing data.

Table 26 shows the range of course grades, average grades, and the standard deviation of grades by subject area and semester for TCP participants during the academic year prior to their participation in the program. Median scores were similar to the mean scores displayed in the table. While mean scores were low overall, and generally close to the failing point, the high maximum scores suggest that some students were excelling academically in one or more subject areas. Only a few students received such high grades, as evidenced by a standard deviation of only 9 to 11 points for each subject area.

**Table 26: Course Grades during 2007-2008 Academic Year for 2008-2009 TCP Participants**

<b>Subject Area</b>	<b>Semester</b>	<b>Number of Students</b>	<b>Minimum Score</b>	<b>Maximum Score</b>	<b>Mean Score</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>
Math	Fall 2007	61	50	95	65.82	10.62
	Spring 2008	65	50	91	66.03	9.99
English	Fall 2007	60	50	93	67.47	10.88
	Spring 2008	64	50	90	67.58	10.15
Science	Fall 2007	55	50	94	64.22	10.72
	Spring 2008	57	50	91	63.82	9.78

### **Suspension History**

A history of school suspension and involvement in the juvenile justice system can suggest serious behavioral issues in a student that promote, or are a symptom of, school disengagement and truancy. Of the 142 participants profiled, 21 (15%) were suspended during the academic year prior to their participation in TCP.<sup>16</sup>

Table 27 displays the number of students who received suspensions, the total number of suspensions, and the total number of days suspended for TCP participants during the 2007-2008 academic year. On average, the 21 students with suspensions during that year were suspended 2.1 times for 4.4 days each time. Patterson High School and William Lemmel Middle School had the highest incidence of suspension, followed closely by Highlandtown Elementary and Middle School. William Lemmel Middle School led the total number of days suspended. Although the average number of days per suspension ranged from two to three at the other five schools, the average number of days per suspension was 8.5 at William Lemmel.

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<sup>16</sup> During the 2008-2009 academic year, 26 of the 2008-2009 TCP participants were suspended a total of 39 times.

**Table 27: Suspensions during 2007-2008 Academic Year for 2008-2009 TCP Participants**

School	Number of Participants	Number of Participants Receiving Suspensions	Total Number of Suspensions	Total Number of Days Suspended
Barclay Elementary and Middle	20	1	1	2
Highlandtown Elementary and Middle	21	3	10	24
Patterson High	33	8	15	40
Steuart Hill Academy	23	1	1	2
Walter P. Carter Elementary	22	2	3	6
William Lemmel Middle	23	6	14	119
All TCP Participants	142	21	44	193

**DJS Involvement**

Referrals to DJS are an indication of a student’s involvement in the juvenile justice system.<sup>17</sup> The evaluation team found that nine of the 2008-2009 TCP participants had been referred to DJS prior to the student’s first participation in TCP. Table 28 shows the number of students referred and the number of referrals that occurred prior to TCP by school. Of the 16 total referrals prior to students’ participation in TCP, 13 were for misdemeanors and three were for felonies. Only one referral resulted in a delinquency finding. Of the remaining 15 referrals, 12 were dropped before the intake officer authorized the State’s Attorney to file a formal petition with the court, two were not adjudicated or were dismissed, and one was put on the stet docket.

Prior to the inclusion of Patterson High School in TCP, program policy as articulated in the Toolkit precluded participation in TCP by students currently involved with DJS. The nature of Patterson’s participation, however, is part of the Spotlight on Schools initiative that places a DJS case worker in schools with a large DJS-involved population. The TCP application has since been updated to state that DJS-involved students are ineligible unless the school is part of the Spotlight on Schools program. From the data provided to the evaluation team by DJS, it was not

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<sup>17</sup> Juveniles who are arrested are not always referred to DJS for intake. Some are diverted to community programs, and charges are never filed with DJS. As a result, the referral data provided by DJS does not capture all juvenile arrests.

possible to determine whether the six students not at Patterson who had been referred to DJS prior to their participation in TCP were currently involved with DJS at the time of their selection to participate in TCP.

**Table 28: DJS Involvement Prior to TCP Participation by 2008-2009 TCP Participants**

School	Number of Students Referred	Number of Referrals
Barclay Elementary and Middle	1	1
Highlandtown Elementary and Middle	0	0
Patterson High	3	7
Steuart Hill Academy	2	2
Walter P. Carter Elementary	1	3
William Lemmel Middle	2	3
All TCP Participants	9	16

## TCP Operations

### TCP Session Logistics

#### *Session size*

The TCP Toolkit suggests each school admit a maximum of 15 to 20 students per semester with an ideal group size of 10 to 15 students (Babb et al., 2008). Table 29 shows the number of sessions between 2005 and 2009 that adhered to this stated goal based on a review of TCP administrative records. According to records that were available for 39 of the 44 10-week sessions, 30 enrolled between 10 and 20 students, as recommended by the Toolkit. Nine sessions had enrollment that fell outside of the range recommended by the Toolkit; seven of the nine had less than the optimal range and two of the nine had more students than the Toolkit recommended. According to CFCC program officials, recruitment and need for the program may differ among the participating schools, resulting in variations in the session sizes. Some TCP schools had difficulty recruiting enough students to get to the level of 15-20 participants in the program. According to interviews with TCP staff members, a factor which may contribute to recruitment differences is the degree of involvement of school administrators in TCP. When

principals are strongly committed to the program, the schools are more likely to recruit a sufficient number of students. Other schools, especially those schools with strong administrator involvement and strong need for the program, have had more students than the suggested number because of a greater ease in participant recruitment (G. Danziger, personal communication, January 28, 2010).

**Table 29: Number of Participants in TCP per Session, 2005-2009**

<b>Number of Participants</b>	<b>Number of Semester Sessions</b>
<10	7
10-20	30
>20	2

Source: TCP administrative records

***Session space***

Each TCP school must provide a designated physical space for its TCP sessions. School administrators have to indicate a proposed space for the sessions in their TCP application and confirm the space by the start of the school year. The TCP Toolkit suggests that sessions are to be held at the school in a designated classroom; the classroom should be large enough such that no other participant can hear what is discussed in another participant’s meeting (Babb et al., 2008). The application form suggests that sessions should be held in a library (CFCC, 2009). Of the six TCP sites visited by the research team during the spring of 2009, four used libraries/media centers for sessions, one used a small office for the sessions, and two utilized classrooms.

***Team member preparation for weekly sessions***

The Student Fellow takes notes during each TCP session, and following the session, disseminates the notes to the TCP judge and other team members for review. Prior to each TCP session, the TCP judge and the CFCC Student Fellow review attendance data and teachers’ reports provided by the school. The TCP judge also reviews notes from the previous week’s session. The TCP judge also discusses the attendance records and teacher’s report with the child. During the session, the TCP judge is expected to discuss negative reports with students, set goals

for the upcoming week, acknowledge accomplishments, and incorporate character building lessons into discussions with parents and students (Babb et al., 2008).

According to the program guidance, sessions should start around 8 am and last for one and a half to two hours (Babb et al., 2008). The Toolkit suggests that the team spend about 5-10 minutes with each student, thus minimizing the amount of time a participant misses from his or her school day (Babb et al., 2008). Of the six sessions observed by the research team, three started at 8:00 a.m., one at 8:15 a.m., and two at 8:30 a.m. The session length ranged from 1 hour to 2 ½ hours, with the longer sessions having more students. Team members spent an average of 5 to 10 minutes with each participant. Team members tended to spend less time with younger participants and more time with older participants (e.g., elementary school aged and middle school aged, respectively). The majority of TCP participants were seen individually by the team. Siblings were most often seen together at each TCP site visited. At one site, Highlandtown Elementary and Middle School, the TCP team saw the kindergarteners together as one group.

#### *Post-session wrap-up and activities between sessions*

The mentor visits each TCP school weekly, during which time he reviews the students' attendance and behavior reports. The mentor also calls parents or guardians who are unable to attend the session to provide them with an update on their child's progress. The school team is responsible for collecting weekly progress reports from teachers and the attendance data for each student for subsequent sessions (Babb et al., 2008).

According to the Toolkit, there are weekly meetings or discussions between CFCC and school personnel to evaluate classroom changes that could facilitate a student's progress. TCP staff and faculty meet regularly to discuss next steps, challenges, logistics, timelines, and program development (Babb et al., 2008). The five law school respondents indicated that they attended weekly meetings with the senior fellow, other law student fellows, the mentor coordinator and the program manager; in these sessions, the CFCC team reviewed particular cases requiring attention.

When asked to indicate the most common form of communication among team members, nine respondents indicated email, whereas five respondents indicated in-person contact. The majority of school-based (four out of seven) and non-school-based team members (five out of nine) indicated that email was the most common form of contact (see Table 30).

**Table 30: Most Common Form of Communication among Team Members**

<b>Team Member Affiliation</b>	<b>Email</b>	<b>In Person</b>	<b>No Response</b>	<b>Total</b>
School-based	4	2	1	7
Non-School-based	5	3	1	9
Total	9	5	2	16

Source: TCP team member interviews

Six team member respondents indicated that there were barriers to communication among team members; five of the six were non-school-based respondents as shown in Table 31. The six team members who stated that there were barriers indicated that these barriers included the busy schedules of the team members (n=3), missed emails (n=2), missing contact information for a team member (n=2), and difficulty reaching school staff during the school day (n=1).

Of the seven team members who indicated that there were no barriers to communication among team members, five were school-based team members (see Table 31). The seven team members who said there were no barriers emphasized the good rapport among team members. Three indicated that communicating outside of sessions was challenging, but they indicated that they could reach team members when necessary. One person reported that when there was a problem, he/she immediately discussed it with the program administrator.

**Table 31: Barriers to Communication among Team Members**

<b>Team Member Affiliation</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No Response</b>	<b>Total</b>
School-based	1	5	1	7
Non-school-based	5	2	2	9
Total	6	7	3	16

Source: TCP team member interviews

### **Confidentiality Procedures in TCP**

In order for a student to participate in TCP, the child's parent/guardian must sign a permission form that allows confidential information such as student academic records to be shared among TCP team members (see Appendix G for *Truancy Court Program Permission*

*Slip/Consent Form* and Appendix H for *Truancy Court Program Intake Form*). CFCC also asks the school team members to have parents/guardians complete an intake form for each student. School team members create folders for each participant that include the permission and intake forms along with attendance and behavioral data, teacher assessments, and other relevant information (Babb et al., 2008). The Toolkit does not cover confidentiality policies, specify which team members should be granted access to confidential information, nor the information to which the team members should have access. Additionally, the permission form that parents sign does not state if the granted permission expires at a particular point in the future. CFCC officials confirmed that the confidentiality form expires at the end of the academic term. According to CFCC staff, the consent form applies to all of the information shared during a TCP session, including the attendance records, progress reports, and anything said by the student and caregiver to the team. The only exceptions are reports of abuse, neglect, or other danger to self/others, which must be reported to law enforcement agencies (G. Danziger, personal communication, January 28, 2010).

Eleven of the 17 parent/guardian respondents indicated that they understood that private/confidential information would be shared among team members and the effect that signing the consent form would have on their children's participation in the program. Ten of the respondents who signed indicated that they did so because they wanted to help their children (the eleventh did not provide a reason). Not all of the respondents fully understood the purpose of the consent form; of the nine parent/guardian respondents who signed the consent form, only three replied that they understood everything on the form. Four responded that they understood almost everything, one understood some, and one understood nothing about the form.

When team member respondents were asked whether the school and consent process allowed them to share confidential information, seven of the 16 respondents indicated that consent procedures allow them to share student confidential information. Five of the 16 respondents reported that there was no sharing of confidential information, whereas four respondents indicated that they did not know how confidential information was shared.

The seven respondents who stated that consent procedures allow them to share confidential information were then asked to choose from a list of team members those with whom they can share confidential information. All seven identified the TCP judge, four respondents reported the teachers, six indicated the student fellow, six indicated school

representatives, four indicated the mentor, five indicated the TCP liaison, two stated CFCC staff, and three indicated that they could share with others, including school social workers, mental health professionals, probation officers, school health clinic staff, and teachers.

Respondents were asked to describe the types of student confidentiality protections used by TCP members: six respondents did not know, four respondents indicated that the signed parental permission slips were used as confidentiality protection. Table 32 presents team member responses to questions regarding who is allowed to share confidential information with TCP team members.

**Table 32: Team Members with whom Confidential Information May Be Shared**

<b>Team Member</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
TCP Judge	7
Teacher	4
UB Law Student Fellow	6
School Representative	6
TCP Mentor	4
TCP Liaison	5
CFCC Staff Person	2
Other	3

Source: TCP team member interviews

### **Parent/Guardian Participation during TCP Sessions**

According to the TCP Toolkit, parents/guardians are considered a part of the TCP team and invited to participate in all sessions and associated activities (Babb et al., 2008). In signing the permission slip, parents/guardians agree to attend the first TCP meeting and a minimum of two sessions during the 10-week program. In order to assess the extent of parent/guardian participation in sessions, team member respondents were asked who accompanied students to TCP sessions. Most respondents (n=11) reported that students were usually accompanied by neither parent; four respondents reported that students were most likely to be accompanied by the mother only, and the remaining respondent gave no response. Research team observations of TCP sessions were consistent with the team member reports.

Parents/guardians attended at three of the six sessions observed by the research team. Although the sites visited early in the semester by the research team had stronger parent

participation than those sites visited later in the term, according to the TCP program manager and the senior fellow, the patterns of parental participation during TCP may vary considerably from school to school. (see Table 33). Additionally, TCP staff recognizes that the work schedules of caregivers may interfere with their ability to visit some sessions, and may hold conference calls with parents/guardians to accommodate their schedules. Further, the mentor’s weekly call with each parent or guardian communicates weekly updates of students’ progress (G. Danziger, A. Green, & Dalton, L. personal communication, February, 2010).

**Table 33: Caregiver in Attendance by School and Date of Site Visit to TCP Session**

<b>TCP Site</b>	<b>Number of Caregivers/Total # Students Attending that Day</b>	<b>Date of Site Visit</b>
Barclay Elementary and Middle	0/6	4/23/09
Highlandtown Elementary and Middle	3/15	2/20/09
Patterson High	0/4	4/28/09
Steuart Hill Academic Academy	3/12	2/23/09
Walter P. Carter Elementary and Middle	1/6	4/15/09
William Lemmel Middle	0/5	4/29/09

Source: Researchers’ observations

Most parent/guardian respondents indicated that the level of commitment expected of them by the TCP judge, attendance officer, teacher, principal, and guidance counselor was just right, whereas a few respondents said that not enough was expected of them. None of the respondents felt that any of the team members had expected too great of a commitment from them. Table 34 presents information regarding level of commitment expectations of parents/guardians.

**Table 34: Perceptions of Level of Commitment Expected of Parents/Guardians by TCP Team Members**

Number	Response			
	Not Enough	Just Right	Too Much	Total
TCP Judge	3	14	0	17
Attendance Officer	2	15	0	17
Teacher	3	14	0	17
Principal	3	14	0	17
Guidance Counselor	1	15	0	16

Source: Parent/guardian interviews

***TCP team solicitation of input from participants***

Team member respondents were asked whether parents or guardians provided input to the TCP process. Nine respondents indicated that parents provided input, five reported that parents did not provide input, whereas two respondents did not know.

***Parent/guardian and student comfort level and understanding***

Parent/guardian respondents (n=17) were asked whether they had enough time to speak and ask questions during TCP sessions. Although most (n=11) parent/guardian respondents felt they had enough time to ask questions, one respondent indicated there was not enough time and four other respondents indicated that they did not know. Those who did feel they had enough time to ask questions in the sessions indicated that TCP team members were very patient and encouraging of the parents/guardians' questions. Table 35 presents parent/guardian responses to whether or not enough time was allowed to ask questions during TCP sessions.

Parent/guardian respondents' (n=17) answers to questions regarding their level of comfort in speaking and asking questions during TCP sessions are varied. Eight reported that they were comfortable speaking, one was not comfortable, and eight respondents indicated that they did not know. The respondent who reported that he/she was not comfortable said that he/she felt more comfortable after other people asked questions in the session.

In an attempt to measure how well parents/guardians understood their experience, they were asked to scale their level of understanding of the program and their level of understanding of conversations with the TCP judge (1=understood nothing; 10=understood everything). Fourteen of the 17 parent/guardian respondents understood everything or almost everything about the program, and 12 understood everything, or almost everything, about their conversations with the TCP judge. A few respondents only partially understood the program (n=3) or their conversations with the judge (n=5).

**Table 35: Perceptions Regarding Participation during TCP Sessions**

<b>Perception</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>	<b>No Response</b>	<b>Total</b>
Had enough time to speak in session	11	1	4	2	17
Was comfortable speaking in session	8	1	8	0	17

Source: Parent/guardian interviews

Most of the students (n=12) surveyed felt they had enough time to participate in TCP sessions and felt comfortable doing so. Ten of the 12 student respondents felt that they had enough time to speak during TCP sessions. Nine of 12 felt comfortable speaking in the sessions. The three respondents who did not feel comfortable speaking indicated that they were nervous (n=1) or did not want to talk (n=1), or did not offer a specific reason (n=1).

Most student respondents (n=12) indicated an understanding of what went on during TCP sessions. Eight student respondents indicated they understood the program in general, 10 respondents understood what the TCP judge said to them, and nine understood what the program manager said to them. Of the three respondents who said that they did not understand the program, one had completed first grade at age 7 and two had completed 9<sup>th</sup> grade at age 14 and 16, respectively. The student who did not understand *the TCP judge* was 14 years old and had just completed the 9<sup>th</sup> grade. Of the two respondents who said they did not understand *the program*, one was 14 years old and had just completed 9<sup>th</sup> grade, whereas the other was 10 years old and had just finished the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. One of the students surveyed indicated that he/she did not understand the program, the TCP judge, or the program manager. One student indicated not understanding the program and the program manager.

## **Incentives and Sanctions**

The TCP Toolkit recommends that students receive incentives when they either follow the plan and/or need encouragement. Incentives include educational supplies, alarm clocks, coupons to local fast food restaurants and more valuable gifts toward the end of students' participation (Babb et al., 2008). Research team members observed that incentives were given by TCP team members at all six sites to students who had shown improvement in their attendance. The types of incentives observed included praise and hand clapping (all six sites), McDonald's coupons (four sites), school supplies (two sites), candy straws (one site), and other gift certificates (one site).

The majority of team member respondents (n=12) indicated that incentives used by TCP were meaningful to the students. Several of these respondents (n=5) also indicated that incentives were tailored to individual student interests or needs such as shadowing days with a mentor in a career field of interest, a bicycle, a stroller or theater tickets. The graduation trip to the Governor's mansion was reported as an incentive by three respondents.

Parent/guardian respondents were asked questions about incentives. Eleven parent/guardian respondents indicated that their children had received rewards or incentives during TCP participation, two respondents said their children did not receive rewards or incentives, three said they did not know and one gave no response. Of the 11 respondents who indicated that their children received incentives, all thought the rewards or incentives were appropriate. Ten of the 11 respondents thought that the incentives were effective in improving their children's attendance and one respondent reported that there was no effect from the incentive.

Student respondents were also asked questions about incentives. Nine of the 12 student respondents indicated that they received rewards for TCP attendance. Three of the nine respondents who received rewards reported that it made them feel good, three reported it made them happy and/or excited, one felt proud of self, and that it made him/her want to keep coming to school on time and maintaining good behavior. Two student respondents indicated that the incentives made them feel that they could come to school regularly and on-time and five respondents replied it made them feel good.

The TCP Toolkit suggests that sanctions should be given when a student is not following the prescribed plan. Sanctions include having the child attend extra TCP sessions, participate in a

school service, or write a brief essay on a topic such as why the student was truant (Babb et al., 2008). TCP does not include punitive sanctions, such as those found in formal courts, due to the therapeutic philosophy of CFCC. Rather, TCP primarily operates through incentives to reward positive student behavior (G. Danziger, personal communication, January 28, 2010). The research team did not observe any sanctions given during any of the observed sessions.

Team member respondents had varied responses when asked about the use of sanctions; five respondents said that sanctions were not used at all. Of the 11 who indicated that TCP used sanctions, three said that the sanction was the loss of an incentive (e.g. not graduating from TCP, not going on a TCP-sponsored trip). Two respondents indicated that sanctions included referring students to OAT or to court. One respondent said that the sanction might involve having the student write an essay. One respondent said that the team might enlist a parent's cooperation to enforce a sanction such as an earlier bedtime or reduced television privileges at home. One respondent said that sanctions are directed at the parent/guardian rather than the child. One respondent said that the sanction might involve withholding grades. When asked whose responsibility it was to impose sanctions, most team member respondents (n=9) indicated that this was the duty of both the TCP team and the school. No respondents indicated that sanctions were solely the responsibility of the schools (see Table 36).

According to CFCC Senior Fellow, Gloria Danziger, the variation in the responses of TCP team members reflects the differences in how an individual defines the term sanction. Team members who responded that sanctions were not used in TCP are speaking of formal, punitive sanctions. The team members who mention specific interventions such as referral to BCPSS Headquarters are school administrators who make this referral according to the school system's attendance policies. TCP works with caregivers to enforce an earlier bedtime or reduce late-night television viewing as part of the process of identifying strategies that help a student reduce tardiness and/or unexcused absences. Although incentives are given to encourage school attendance, they are not purposefully withheld to punish truancy (G. Danziger, personal communication, January 28, 2010).

**Table 36: Team Member Perceptions of Responsibility to Impose Sanctions**

TCP Location	Responsibility to Impose Sanctions				
	TCP Only	School Only	Both	Neither	Total
Barclay Elementary and Middle	0	0	2	1	3
Highlandtown Elementary and Middle	0	2	1	2	5
Patterson High	0	1	0	1	2
Steuart Hill Academic Academy	0	0	2	0	2
Walter P. Carter Elementary and Middle	0	0	2	0	2
William Lemmel Middle	0	0	1	0	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>15</b>

Source: TCP team member interviews (excludes the TCP Coordinator)

Five of the 17 parent/guardian respondents had knowledge of their children receiving sanctions and felt that the sanctions were appropriate for the negative behavior displayed. Seven parents/guardians indicated their children had not received sanctions, four did not know whether or not their children received sanctions, and one respondent had no response.

Only three student respondents said that they received sanctions during TCP participation: one reported feeling bored with the sanction, one reported feeling nervous by the sanction, and one reported the sanction felt just like homework.

### **TCP Mentor Program**

As students wait to appear before the TCP judge and TCP team for their weekly progress updates, they attend a mentoring program, referred to as the character building class (CBC). TCP has a full-time paid mentor coordinator who leads the program at five of the schools and one part-time mentor at the remaining school. A mentoring manual in the Toolkit instructs mentors on mentoring skills and techniques and how to address difficult situations, and it outlines the specifics of the CBC. The main component of the program design/curriculum involves group mentor sessions that teach students to make positive decisions. Through role play and other activities, students learn to think critically, learn the benefits of education, and the life skills deemed necessary to grow and move forward in a positive manner. Individual mentor sessions

are also offered to students throughout their participation in TCP. The TCP 10-week CBC overview is as follows (Babb et al., 2008):

- Session 1: Introduction. Introductions are made and students are made aware of what is expected of them in the program.
- Session 2: Setting Goals. The mentor asks students about their career and school choices and helps participants make choices on how to get there.
- Session 3: Listening Skills. The session covers how to listen, how to give others eye contact, and what is good body language. Participants practice the skills in role play.
- Session 4: Respect and Stretching the Comfort Zone. Mentor discusses social skills, asking for help and self-control with participants.
- Session 5: Friends. The session covers how to choose friends wisely. Participants engage in role play and writing exercises on the topic.
- Session 6: Positive Self-Talk. This session covers how students can become self-motivated by reviewing success stories and examples.
- Session 7: Improving Self-Esteem. This session involves participants completing a self-evaluation as well as a lecture on how to improve how you think about yourself.
- Session 8: Value System. Through lecture and role play, participants explore their value systems and how to use them to make the right choices.
- Session 9: Leadership Skills. Through lecture and role play, participants explore the basics of leadership and how leaders behave in school.
- Session 10: Taking a Balanced Approach to Life. This session is about setting priorities and maintaining a focus on goals.

All team members (n=16) were asked an open-ended question about what were the goals of the TCP mentoring program. Each respondent included at least two goals for TCP mentoring in their responses; several common themes emerged from the responses. Three respondents noted that mentoring was focused on character development. Three respondents indicated that the goal of the mentoring program was to improve school performance and attendance. Three respondents said that the purpose of mentoring was to improve the participants' self-esteem. Three respondents indicated that a goal of the mentoring program was to provide someone with whom the student could talk and share feelings. Three respondents indicated that the mentoring

program addresses goal setting for participants. These responses were consistent with the thematic descriptions of the sessions given by the Toolkit.

When asked to describe the components of the Mentor Program curriculum, most team members did not know. One of the 16 team member respondents indicated that the 10-week mentoring curriculum was comprised of 10 different topic areas with goals and objectives that students would learn each week. All team member respondents agreed that they observed that when students regularly attend the Mentor Program they are developing strong character development strategies and techniques. The team members also observed the rapport the students had with their mentors and the development of interpersonal relationship skills. CFCC staff were then asked to respond to team members' replies to this question. CFCC staff pointed out that the themes of the CBC curriculum are shared with the school team members during the school training sessions, and that the mentor program curriculum, including all Power Point slides used during the sessions, are made available to the schools upon request (G. Danziger, personal communication, January 28, 2010).

Questioned regarding the effectiveness of TCP mentoring, three team member respondents indicated that the mentoring program needs additional mentors and/or mentors need to spend more time per week with the students. Four respondents indicated that the mentors provide input at team case reviews on student compliance and progress with program requirements which helps the team make informed decisions about the students moving forward in the program. In the words of one team member, "the mentor knew more about students than teachers and administrators. He can bring things to the table we don't know." Five respondents indicated that they did not know if the role of the mentors had an impact on improving student attendance, but it appeared that the students complied with the requirements of the program because the mentors monitored program participation.

Parent/Guardian respondents were also asked about their children's involvement with the TCP mentoring program. Only seven of the 17 parent/guardian respondents stated that they knew a mentor had been assigned to their children. Of these seven respondents, only two indicated that they knew that the mentor helped improve their children's school attendance; one of these two respondents stated that the mentor made a difference because his/her child looked up to and respected the mentor. The remaining five replied that they did not know if the mentor improved their children's attendance.

When asked how often the mentor met with the parent/guardian respondent's child, three of the seven respondents replied once a week, three replied less than once a week, and one was unsure. The seven respondents were asked how often they spoke to mentors: two replied never, three replied two or three times, one had spoken to the mentor 13 times, and one replied that he/she was not sure.

Five of the 12 student respondents reported that they were assigned a TCP mentor. Of these, all five agreed that the mentor helped them improve school attendance. Four of the five respondents indicated that their parents talked with mentors. Of these, two specified the number of times the mentor spoke to their parents (two times for one, three times for the other). The other two said that their parents spoke with the mentors but did not quantify how often.

### **School-Community Collaboration and Coordination**

TCP team members (school-based and non-school-based) may refer students and their families to community-based organizations to address substance abuse, mental health disorders, parenting classes, anger management, and/or transportation issues. Notification of a student's need for a service may appear in the notes that Student Fellows take each week, it may arise during a weekly meeting of the TCP team members, and frequently, a school may learn about a student's service need from TCP, and make a referral for a student or parent/guardian outside the context of the program. If a parent/guardian attends a subsequent TCP session after a referral is made, the "judge" will follow up with the parent/guardian at that time. Table 37 presents information regarding TCP referrals to community-services. The 16 team member respondents were asked to choose from a list of service referrals made for families. Ten respondents indicated that TCP refers families to mental health services; nine indicated parenting classes; seven specified anger management classes; and four indicated substance abuse treatment.

TCP team members were also asked whether, in their experience, TCP referred families to other services and/or agencies not listed on the questionnaire. Four team members said that TCP referred families to legal aid or other legal services. Four team members indicated that TCP has referred families to social services. Three team members mentioned that TCP has referred families to housing services. One team member stated that TCP has referred families to mediation services through the University of Baltimore Family Mediation Clinic.

School-based and non-school based team member respondents exhibit different levels of awareness of services to which TCP refers participants (see Table 37). Generally, non-school-based TCP team members were more likely to be aware that TCP referred participants to the services indicated in the Toolkit. Non-school-based team members more frequently indicated that TCP made referrals for substance abuse, physical health problems, and anger management. The school-based and non-school-based team members demonstrated no difference in their awareness of referrals to mental health services.

**Table 37: Team Member Perceptions of Referrals to Community-Based Services**

Referral Type	Title							
	School-Based Personnel				Non-School-Based Personnel			
	Yes	No	Don't Know	Total	Yes	No	Don't Know	Total
Substance Abuse Treatment Program	0	2	4	7	4	2	3	9
Mental Health Services	5	2	0	7	5	2	2	9
Physical Health Services	2	3	2	7	4	3	2	9
Parenting Classes	2	2	3	7	7	2	0	9
Anger Management	2	2	3	7	5	3	1	9
Transportation Services	3	3	1	7	7	2	0	9

Source: TCP team member interviews

Table 38 represents responses to questions regarding TCP's coordination with community-based organizations. Over half of the team members surveyed said that TCP develops, manages, and maintains interactions with community-based organizations such as Johns Hopkins Hospital, BCPSS school-based health clinics, Howard University School of Social Work, University of Baltimore Law School Family Mediation Clinic, and Boys in the Hood Mentor Program. Team members also noted that TCP maintains interactions with agencies such as the Maryland Department of Juvenile Services - Family Resource Center, Juvenile and Family Court, and BCPSS Administrative Headquarters.

Eleven of the 16 respondents reported no coordination problems with service providers. Four respondents felt there are coordination problems, and one respondent did not know.

When the results were cross-tabulated by TCP location, the most common response at all school sites was that many respondents were unsure whether there was a protocol for service referrals. The majority of respondents at all sites indicated that there were not service referral coordination problems.

**Table 38: Team Member Perceptions of Coordination of TCP with Community-based Organizations**

Coordination Activities	Does TCP perform these activities?				
	Yes	No	Don't Know	No Response	Total
Develop, manage, and maintain interactions with other agencies	10	2	2	2	16
Provide a protocol for referring families to services	2	4	9	1	16
Provide an information packet listing services	1	11	4	0	16

Source: TCP team member interviews

### **TCP Participants' Experiences with Service Providers**

#### *Reasons for absences among participant respondents*

Parent/Guardian respondents (n=17) were asked to identify causes of their children's unexcused absences and/or tardiness from a list of factors commonly cited within the literature regarding school attendance problems. Table 39 presents the commonly cited factors and the responses obtained from the survey participants. The majority of the parent/guardian respondents (n=15) did not attribute their children's absences to any of the factors provided by the interviewer. Two respondents identified bullying and harassment as factors that contributed to their children's truancy. Six respondents said that other factors contributed to their children's truancy; of these respondents, three specified transportation problems, two cited illness, and one reported distractions along the route the student used to walk to school.

Students (n=12) were also asked why they had missed school prior to entering TCP. Students most commonly identified health-related reasons for their school absences: seven respondents indicated that they themselves had health issues and one indicated that the absences were due to the illnesses of other family members. Four of the seven respondents with personal health issues

specified medical appointments as the reason for absences. Four of the seven specifically indicated having an illness; one of these respondents reported being hospitalized for pneumonia.

**Table 39: Parent/Guardian Perceptions of Factors that Contributed to Participants' Unexcused Absences**

<b>Contributing Factor</b>	<b>Parents/Guardians Citing this Factor</b>
Bullying and harassment	2
Boredom at school	0
Disconnected to teachers	0
Disconnected to peers	0
Low grades or frustration in learning	0
Student's alcohol or drug use	0
Student's employment	0
Family member's employment	0
Family responsibilities	0
Other:	
Transportation	3
Illness	2
Distractions en route	1

Source: Parent/guardian interviews

***Service effectiveness as rated by participants***

Parents/guardians were asked to assess the effectiveness of services that they received while participating in TCP. Four parents/guardians of the eight who identified a cause for their child's truancy indicated that they had been referred to services by the TCP team. One parent/guardian respondent said that TCP referred his/her child to individual counseling and mentoring to address bullying and harassment; according to the parent, the student utilized the services and found them to be very helpful.

Two of the parents who cited transportation issues as a contributing factor to their children's truancy said that TCP referred them to services. One respondent said that TCP gave him/her a bus schedule and helped the family with time management. Another respondent said that BCPSS gave bus tickets to his/her child because the respondent could not afford to purchase them.

Three of the four parent/guardian respondents who had received services reported that TCP arranged to help them and/or their child access and receive those services. One of the three

parents/guardians who said TCP helped to arrange the services said that a TCP team member followed up with the respondent to gauge the helpfulness of the services; this respondent reported that he/she felt comfortable telling the team member whether the services were helpful. The other two respondents did not answer the question as to whether the services were helpful.

Student respondents (n=12) were asked if they received services from TCP to help with their school attendance. Five of the 12 said yes, of which students interviewed mentioned character building class (n=1) or specific strategies learned in TCP like staying out of the hall (n=1), swiping in early when coming to school (n=1), catching the bus when family members were ill (n=1) or keeping a journal with TCP assignments (n=1). Seven of the student respondents either said that they did not receive services (n=4) or that they did not know whether they had received services (n=3).

### **Activities Sponsored by TCP**

Each participating school agrees to hold a “Family Fun Night.” The “Family Fun Night” is held after hours at the school; the purpose of this activity is for families to view the school as supportive. It gives them opportunities to gather for evenings of fun that include students competing in games with their parents, teachers and TCP team members for prizes. At each event, pizza and soft drinks are served.

When asked whether or not TCP had events aimed at increasing participants’ connectedness to the school, 11 team members reported that TCP sponsors events to improve connectedness, four team member respondents reported that TCP had no events designed to improve school connectedness, and one did not know.

Three of the research team’s six visits to TCP sessions occurred close to the date of the scheduled TCP “Family Fun Night;” with two of the three visits occurring before the event (Highlandtown Elementary and Middle and Steuart Hill Academic Academy) and one occurring immediately after the event (Walter P. Carter Elementary and Middle). The researchers observed that the program manager distributed fliers to all students in attendance at TCP sessions; the team members encouraged the students to send the fliers home to their parent/guardian.

## **Graduation**

### ***Graduation criteria***

The guidance indicates that in order for students to graduate from a TCP session, they must increase their attendance by 75% and successfully meet other requirements as specified by the TCP team. A 75% improvement in attendance specifically refers to a 75% decrease in the number of unexcused absences. The “other criteria,” which are not further elaborated within the Toolkit, include a determination of improved behavioral and/or academic performance based upon a review of the weekly progress reports from the teachers (G. Danziger, personal communication, January 28, 2010). Students who graduate receive a certificate and participate in a graduation ceremony (Babb et al., 2008).

### ***Post-graduation monitoring, follow-up, and re-entry to TCP***

After TCP graduation, each student is to be monitored for the rest of the academic year to ensure that any “relapse” is remedied immediately. Students who continue to be truant after graduation may repeat the 10-week program the next semester if it is offered at their school (Babb et al., 2008). If a student moves to a school not participating in TCP, then that student does not continue to participate in TCP. Eleven out of the 16 team member respondents confirmed familiarity with the post-graduation monitoring by the TCP program.

According to a majority of team member respondents, readmission of TCP graduates and non-graduates is allowed in the program. Of the 16 team member respondents, 15 agreed that graduates could return to TCP, and 14 respondents indicated that non-graduates could participate in subsequent sessions of TCP. When asked to elaborate on their responses and describe how students were re-admitted, three of the 16 respondents indicated that TCP non-graduates were automatically carried over into the next session. Five of the 16 respondents reported that the TCP team would reach out to the students and invite them to participate.

### ***Graduation results***

The researchers examined the graduation results for the 142 TCP students for whom demographic, school experience, and DJS involvement were profiled earlier in this report. Overall, roughly half (51.4%) of the 2008-2009 TCP participants graduated from the program

during the 2008-2009 academic year. There was variation in graduation rates among the schools, however. Only 27.3% of participants from Patterson High School graduated, while more than 82% of participants from Steuart Hill Academy graduated. The differences in graduation rates among schools were found to be statistically significant. (See Appendix I for detailed results of statistical testing.)

Of the 68 participants from the fall 2008 group, 31 participants (45.6%) graduated from TCP in the fall. CFCC policy states that students who fail to graduate from TCP after one semester are automatically enrolled in the subsequent semester, but only 13 of the 37 fall 2008 participants who failed to graduate participated in the spring of 2009. Nine of the 13 fall 2008 participants (69.2%) who repeated TCP in the spring 2009 graduated. In addition 33 of the 75 new participants in the spring 2009 (44.0%) graduated from TCP in the spring. Since this study covers only the time period through the end of academic year 2008-2009, it is unknown whether students who failed to graduate at the end of the spring 2009 session participated in a subsequent session for a second or third time, and whether they eventually graduated. See Table 40 for the number of graduates at each TCP participating school.

**Table 40: Graduation of 2008-2009 TCP Participants by School**

<b>School</b>	<b>Number of Participants</b>	<b>Number Graduating after 1 or 2 Semesters in TCP<sup>18</sup></b>	<b>Graduation Rate</b>
Barclay Elementary and Middle	20	16	80.0%
Highlandtown Elementary and Middle	21	10	47.6%
Patterson High	33	9	27.3%
Steuart Hill Academy	23	19	82.6%
Walter P. Carter Elementary	22	8	36.4%
William Lemmel Middle	23	11	47.8%
All TCP Participants	109	64	58.7%

The racial distribution of students who graduated from TCP after one or two semesters of TCP participation is similar to the distribution of participants as a whole (see Table 41). African American and Asian participants were slightly more likely to graduate from TCP than Caucasian and Hispanic participants, but the differences were not statistically significant.

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<sup>18</sup> One of the 33 spring 2009 graduates had participated in TCP for three semesters and is not counted as a graduate for purposes of this analysis.

**Table 41: Distribution of TCP Graduates by Race (2008-2010 Academic Year)**

School	Number of Graduates	Race/Ethnicity			
		Caucasian	African American	Hispanic	Asian
Barclay Elementary and Middle	16	0%	93.8%	0%	6.3%
Highlandtown Elementary and Middle	10	0%	70.0%	30.0%	0%
Patterson High	9	11.1%	66.7%	22.2%	0%
Steuart Hill Academy	19	10.5%	89.5%	0%	0%
Walter P. Carter Elementary	8	0%	100%	0%	0%
William Lemmel Middle	11	0%	100%	0%	0%
All TCP Graduates	73	4.1%	87.7%	6.8%	1.4%

Females graduated from TCP at a higher rate than males, but the difference was not statistically significant. The mean age of graduates was 11 years, the same as the mean age of participants (see Table 42). Students whose addresses changed made up 17.6% of the 2008-2009 participants, but only 9.6% of the graduates. This result suggests that mobility may be a factor that deters success.

**Table 42: TCP Graduates by Gender and Age (2008-2009 Academic Year)**

School	Number of Students	Gender		Mean Age
		Male	Female	
Barclay Elementary and Middle	16	31.3%	68.8%	11
Highlandtown Elementary and Middle	10	50.0%	50.0%	10
Patterson High	9	22.2%	77.8%	14
Steuart Hill Academy	19	63.2%	36.8%	9
Walter P. Carter Elementary	8	37.5%	62.5%	11
William Lemmel Middle	11	72.7%	27.3%	13
All TCP Graduates	73	47.2%	52.8%	11

***Factors affecting graduation from TCP***

Many factors may impact whether or not a student graduates from TCP. These factors include age, gender, race, socioeconomic status, differences in implementation at each school, criminal history, parental engagement, presence of illness or other stressors in a student's life, academic and attendance history, engagement of staff and faculty at each school, and the presence of learning disabilities or other challenges such as limited English proficiency. Neighborhood and community factors may also play a role.

Using data provided by BCPSS and DJS, the evaluation team was able to test some of the factors that may contribute to graduation from TCP. In particular, the evaluation team tested the impact of the following variables:

- gender
- race
- age during TCP participation
- grade level during TCP participation (elementary, middle or high school)

- absences during academic year 2007-2008
- suspensions during academic year 2007-2008
- whether the student was promoted to the next grade at the end of academic year 2007-2008
- subject area proficiency (levels are defined by scores on MSA math and reading tests: Basic, Proficient and Advanced)
- mid-year student mobility one or more times between 2007 and 2009
- special education status
- participation in the Free and Reduced Price Lunch program
- whether or not a spring 2009 student participated in TCP previously, during the fall of 2008 or earlier
- whether or not the student was referred to DJS prior to participation in TCP

Researchers found that elementary school status was highly correlated with age, so the model does not include a variable signifying elementary school status. Limited English proficiency was not included in the model because too few students have been identified as having limited English proficiency. Course grades could not be included in this model because there were too few students with complete data.

Separate analyses were conducted for the fall 2008 and spring 2009 participants. The model did not identify any variables as having a statistically significant effect on whether fall 2008 participants graduated from TCP after one or two semesters. For the spring 2009 group, the only variable found to have a statistically significant effect on graduation from TCP was the number of suspensions during the 2007-2008 academic year, with a higher number of suspensions associated with a reduced likelihood of TCP graduation. (See Appendix J for the full results of these models.)

CFCC representatives noted that TCP was designed for elementary and middle school students, Patterson and Frederick Douglass are the only high schools that have ever participated in TCP. The program at Patterson and Frederick Douglass differs from the program at the elementary and middle schools in that Patterson and Frederick Douglass High School participants may have current DJS involvement. In regard to the present study, there was a concern that the data for Patterson students was skewing the overall results (Frederick Douglass High School was not a participating school during this study period). To alleviate this concern,

researchers repeated the analysis with high school students excluded. For the kindergarten, elementary and middle school students who participated in TCP during the fall of 2008 or the spring of 2009, none of the variables had a statistically significant effect on whether participants graduated from TCP after one or two semesters. Thus, it appears that the significance of prior year suspensions for spring 2009 participants was associated with Patterson High School. (See Appendix K for the full results of these models.)

### **Participant Satisfaction with TCP**

Fourteen of the 17 parent/guardian respondents were very satisfied with the program's ability to improve their children's attendance; two respondents were not satisfied and one respondent did not know the impact the program has had on his/her child's attendance. Eleven of the 17 parent/guardian respondents rated their experience with TCP as supporting their children and making positive impacts on the children's relationship with the school. Three respondents explained their experience was enhanced by the program's involvement of, and respect for, the parents/guardians. Of the three parent/guardian respondents who stated that their experience with TCP was more challenging than expected, two were unable to attend meetings and the third stated that his/her busy work schedule made enforcing school attendance challenging.

When asked what they liked *best* about the program, the parent/guardian respondents listed a variety of reasons, but the common themes were motivation, support, and hope. Two student respondents indicated that what they liked *best* about TCP were the gift coupons or party at the end of the program. One student mentioned the character building class as the favored aspect of TCP. Four respondents reported that they liked that the program helped them to either improve their attendance or be told about their attendance. One student respondent indicated that he liked the program because his or her parents are not getting in trouble. One student liked talking to the TCP team.

When asked what they liked least about the program, 11 parent/guardian respondents replied nothing and two did not know. Similarly, student respondents viewed TCP favorably when asked the same question. Eight respondents indicated that there was nothing about TCP that they liked least, and two other respondents said that they did not know whether there was anything that they liked least about TCP. One respondent said that his/her least favorite part of TCP was when he/she appeared before the TCP team to express his/her feelings in front of

everybody. Another respondent indicated that he/she disliked having to come to TCP sessions so often.

Finally, when asked one thing they would change about the program, 11 parent/guardian respondents said they would not change anything and one did not know. The following three suggestions were made by individual respondents: 1) the program should be offered in middle schools; 2) the number of missed absences should increase before a referral to TCP is made; and 3) the sessions should be held at night rather than during the day. Half of the student respondents indicated that they would not change anything about TCP. Three student respondents indicated that they would change the time of sessions because they were too early. Three other student respondents did not know what they would change about TCP.

As noted earlier, in response to a question about the voluntary nature of TCP, 10 of the 17 parent/guardian respondents indicated that the program should become mandatory; four replied it should remain voluntary and three did not have an opinion either way.

## **Outcome Evaluation Results**

The outcome evaluation examined the impact of TCP participation on student attendance, academic performance, and behavior. These three types of outcomes were investigated based in part on the graduation criteria CFCC has set for the program and in part on the truancy literature. CFCC determines whether students are eligible for graduation from TCP based on attendance during the 10-week program, with consideration for changes in classroom behavior as reported by teachers. Additionally, researchers chose to evaluate the impact of TCP on academic performance and behavior because, as the literature above shows, there are links between truancy and increased frequency of suspension, expulsion and risky behavior such as delinquency. Student scores on MSA tests were used to measure academic performance, and suspensions and referrals to DJS were used to measure behavior. When possible, the research team compared results for TCP participants to results of a similar group of students who did not participate in TCP. This approach enabled the researchers to separate the effects of TCP from other factors. The outcome analyses focus on elementary and middle school students since these are the grade levels for which TCP was designed. The research team conducted the following analyses:

- Total absences, the change in MSA scores from 2007-2008 to 2008-2009, and suspensions during the 2008-2009 academic year, as reported by BCPSS, were examined for fall 2008 TCP participants and graduates and a comparison group to determine whether TCP had an effect on attendance, academic performance, and in-school behavior.
- Absences and tardies during the 10 weeks prior to and during participation in TCP, as recorded by CFCC, were examined for spring 2009 TCP participants and graduates to determine whether attendance for this group improved during participation in TCP.
- Referrals to DJS during and after the 2008-2009 academic year were examined for fall 2008 TCP participants and graduates and a comparison group to determine whether TCP had an effect on students' behavior in the community.

### **Participant and Comparison Group Characteristics**

The analyses in which a comparison group was employed focused on the 54 elementary and middle school students who participated in TCP during the fall of 2008 and for whom PINs were available. The initial comparison group comprised 126 students who attended Baltimore

City public schools in 2008-2009, but who did not participate in TCP. The comparison group was selected by the BCPSS Division of Research, Evaluation, Assessment, and Accountability (DREAA) based on the following criteria provided by the researchers: race/ethnicity, gender, age, grade level, school of attendance, free and reduced price lunch program participation, attendance record and suspension history. The comparison group comprised 102 students, once high school students were removed.

Although DREAA provided a comparison group with a mean number of absences in 2007-2008 similar to the mean for TCP participants, the distribution of absences differed between the two groups (see Appendix L). The comparison group had a median of only 10 absences in 2007-2008, whereas fall 2008 TCP participants had a median of 23 absences in 2007-2008. In order to make the groups more comparable, the research team randomly removed students so that each absence interval (i.e., 0 to 5 absences, 6 to 10 absences, etc.) had equal numbers of TCP participants and comparison group students (see Appendix M). This process required removing 12 students from the participant group and 60 students from the comparison group. The final study group contained 42 TCP participants (of whom, 27 graduated from the program at the end of fall 2008) and 42 non-participants.

Appendix N summarizes demographic characteristics for the revised participant and comparison groups. Most of the characteristics are similar for the two groups, and where it appears that there is a difference between the groups (e.g., special education status and mid-year mobility), the differences are not significant. The only variable on which the groups differ significantly is the percentage of students attending schools that receive Title I funding. While 100% of the TCP participants in the revised group attended Title I schools, only 83.3% of students in the comparison group attended Title I schools. In performing the analyses, the researchers addressed the Title I difference between the groups by statistically weighting the sample.

The researchers also examined the extent to which fall 2008 TCP participants and comparison group students were similar in terms of MSA scores and DJS involvement. These were not characteristics on which the comparison group was selected, but the values for the two groups are quite similar (see Appendix O). A higher percentage of all 2008 participants (7.1%) than non-participants (4.8%) was referred to DJS prior to the 2008-2009 academic year, but the difference is not significant.

Overall, with adjustments made for the unequal representation of Title I schools between participants and non-participants, the researchers believe the non-participants selected randomly from the group provided by DREAA is sufficiently similar to the TCP participants to provide a reasonable basis for comparison.

## **Attendance Outcomes**

### **Fall 2008 Participants**

To test whether participation in TCP has an impact on absences, an Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) multiple regression analysis was run with the number of absences during the 2008-2009 academic year as the dependent variable. The independent variables were race and gender, age in 2008, number of days absent in 2007-2008, TCP participation, student mobility, special education status, participation in the Free and Reduced Price Lunch program, number of suspensions in 2007-2008 and a history of involvement with DJS prior to 2008. Multicollinearity was found between students' level of school in 2008 and their age, so level of school was not included in the model.

This model showed that participation in TCP during the fall of 2008 did not have a statistically significant effect on attendance during the 2008-2009 academic year. The number of absences and the number of suspensions during the previous academic year (2007-2008) had a positive effect on absences during 2008-2009. That is, a higher number of absences and a higher number of suspensions in 2007-2008 were related to a higher number of absences in 2008-2009. (See Appendix P for the full results.)

The researchers constructed a second model in which the TCP participation variable was replaced with a variable indicating whether a student had graduated from TCP at the end of fall 2008. The revised regression showed that students who graduated from TCP had fewer absences than non-participants and non-graduates. Age was also a significant variable; older students had significantly more absences than younger students. The model once again showed that absences in 2008-2009 are related to absences in 2007-2008. The number of absences in the prior year had a stronger effect on absences in 2008-2009 than did graduation from TCP. When compared to non-participants and non-graduates, TCP graduates were absent on average five fewer days in 2008-2009. (See Appendix P for the full results.)

### **Spring 2009 Participants**

The BCPSS attendance data for 2008-2009 could not be used to measure TCP's effects on attendance for the spring 2009 TCP participants because the data, reflecting the entire academic year, aggregate absences prior to and during TCP. For this group, the researchers compared attendance during the 10 weeks prior to TCP to attendance during the 10 weeks of TCP using data obtained from CFCC. These data were available for 51 of the 55 elementary and middle school students who participated in TCP for the first time in spring 2009. Of these spring participants, 24 students (47%) graduated from TCP that semester and 27 students (53%) did not. Because no similar data were available for the comparison group, the researchers could examine pre-TCP attendance compared to during-TCP attendance only for TCP spring 2009 participants.

The mean number of tardies, excused absences and unexcused absences were compared from the 10 weeks prior to participation in TCP to the 10 weeks during participation in TCP to determine whether there is a statistically significant difference between the two periods. Among the elementary and middle school students who participated in TCP during the spring of 2009 (both graduates and non-graduates), there is no statistically significant difference in tardies, excused or unexcused absences between the two time periods. TCP graduates, however, experienced significantly fewer tardies and unexcused absences between the 10 weeks prior to beginning TCP and the 10 weeks during participation (see Appendix Q). On average, TCP graduates experienced 4.7 fewer tardies and 2.6 fewer unexcused absences during TCP than during the 10 weeks prior to the program. Non-graduates did not have similarly positive changes in their attendance during TCP; absences and tardies increased between the 10 weeks prior to TCP and the 10 weeks during TCP participation.

### **Academic Outcomes**

It was not possible to base the analysis of academic performance on course grades because too few students (only 20 in the participant group and 10 in the comparison group) had two full years of data in any subject area. Instead, the researchers examined changes in MSA scores in reading and math between 2007-2008 and 2008-2009. The MSA reading and math tests are administered annually in the spring to students in grades three through eight. There were 25

students in the revised fall 2008 participants and 23 students in the comparison group with two years of MSA scores in math and reading.

To test whether participation in and/or graduation from TCP had an impact on MSA scores, OLS multiple regressions were run with the change in MSA reading and math scores from 2007-2008 to 2008-2009 as dependent variables. These models included the following independent variables: race and gender, age in 2008, TCP participation, student mobility, special education status, participation in the Free and Reduced Price Lunch program, number of suspensions in 2007-2008, and involvement with DJS prior to 2008. Again, level of school was not included in the model because of its high correlation to age in 2008. The researchers also created models of the change in MSA scores in which they replaced the TCP participation variable with a variable for graduation from TCP. (See Appendix J for the full results of these models.)

The models showed that neither TCP participation nor TCP graduation had a statistically significant impact on MSA math or reading scores. None of the other variables had a statistically significant impact on MSA scores (see Appendices R and S for complete results). While the regression analyses do not show TCP participation or graduation to have a statistically significant impact on MSA scores, according to program staff, the weekly report cards that are submitted by teachers indicate positive academic improvement for the TCP participants and graduates.

Subsequent to the data collection performed for this study, the TCP program managers collected information on grades and excused absences from the participating schools for more recent years when data was available. The results of this analysis, which are positive in terms of reduced absenteeism, can be found in Appendix T.

### **Behavioral Outcomes**

Because the numbers of TCP participants and comparison group students who were suspended or referred to DJS were relatively small, it was not possible to use regression analysis to determine the impact of TCP on these behavioral measures. Instead, the researchers compared levels of these indicators for both these groups before and during/after the TCP time frame.

The fall 2008 TCP participant group, the fall 2008 TCP graduate group, and the comparison group all experienced slight increases in the average number of suspensions in the

2008-2009 academic year compared to 2007-2008 (see Table 43). The average length of suspensions for the fall 2008 TCP participants and comparison group decreased. (For TCP graduates, the increase in average length of suspension is merely a reflection of the fact that none of the program graduates had been suspended in 2007-2008.) The differences in the mean number of suspensions and the mean length of suspensions between 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 are not statistically significant for any of the three groups.

**Table 43: Suspensions of TCP Participants and Comparison Group Students**

	Fall 2008 TCP Participants		Fall 2008 TCP Graduates		Comparison Group	
	2007-2008	2008-2009	2007-2008	2008-2009	2007-2008	2008-2009
Mean number of suspensions per student	0.07	0.10	0.00	0.15	0.21	0.26
Mean length of suspensions (days)	3.5	2.3	0.00	2.3	24.0	5.5

Data on DJS referrals provide some evidence that participation in and graduation from TCP are related to improved behavior. Table 44 shows the percentage of students referred to DJS prior to the 2008-2009 academic year and from that point forward through August 2010 for fall 2008 TCP participants, fall 2008 graduates, and the comparison group. Fewer TCP participants were referred to DJS during and after the 2008-2009 academic year than prior to that period, whereas the percentage of the comparison group that was referred increased during that same period. None of the fall 2008 TCP graduates was referred to DJS during or after their participation in the program. Since so few students were referred in 2008-2009, it is not possible to test whether there are statistically significant differences among the number of TCP participants, TCP graduates and comparison group students who were referred.

Pre- and post- tests conducted more recently by TCP program managers document behavior and perception changes such as: increased feelings of connection with and safety in their neighborhoods; parental help with homework; recognition of the importance of attending school every day, on time; and perceptions of their ability to be whatever they want to be when they grow up. (See Appendix T.)

**Table 44: DJS Referrals of TCP Participants, TCP Graduates, and Comparison Group Students**

	Fall 2008 TCP Participants		Fall 2008 TCP Graduates		Comparison Group	
	Prior to 2008-2009	2008-2009 through August 2010	Prior to 2008-2009	2008-2009 through August 2010	Prior to 2008-2009	2008-2009 through August 2010
Percentage of students referred to DJS	7.1%	4.8%	11.1%	0%	4.8%	7.1%

**Summary of Outcomes**

The analyses in the previous sections demonstrate that graduation from TCP within one or two semesters of participation leads to an improvement in attendance. When compared to non-participants and non-graduates, TCP graduates were absent on average five fewer days in 2008-2009. A comparison of the outcomes of fall 2008 TCP participants and the comparison group found that participation in TCP does not have a statistically significant impact on attendance. Data from CFCC for spring 2009 participants showed that attendance significantly improved for TCP graduates, but declined for participants who did not graduate. Neither participation in TCP nor graduation from TCP had a statistically significant impact on MSA math and reading scores.

TCP participants experienced fewer negative behavioral incidences than the comparison group, although the differences were not statistically significant. While all three groups demonstrated an increase in the number of suspensions in 2008-2009, TCP participants and graduates had fewer and shorter suspensions than the comparison group. Students who participated in TCP had far less involvement with DJS during and after 2008-2009 than the comparison group. Further, none of the students who graduated from TCP was involved with DJS during and after 2008-2009, compared to 7.1% of the comparison group.

**Study Limitations**

This evaluation was limited in the number of team members, student participants, and parents/guardians who could be recruited to participate in interviews, and the number of TCP sessions that could reasonably be observed. Researchers were able to observe a session at each

school and collect information on how each program was run, the team members that participated in sessions, and the perceptions of team members at each school on TCP operations.

Complete data on course grades were not available at the time of this assessment. Also, BCPSS compiles attendance data only by academic year and does not distinguish between excused and unexcused absences, and it does not record tardies. Absences (unexcused and excused combined) was used as a proxy for unexcused absences given that this is an indicator of other family issues (e.g. poor health, caring for siblings) and was the only reasonable attendance data available. Appendix T includes program data that has subsequently been provided by TCP program managers that show improved attendance and grades as collected by participating schools. This attendance data includes only unexcused absences and tardies.

It was not possible to conduct separate analyses for individual TCP schools or for students with a delinquency history or students who received special education due to the small number of students who fit into each of those categories. Future analyses should address these limitations and extend the analysis to sub-populations that may be experiencing TCP differently as compared to their classmates.

Thirteen of the 88 spring 2009 participants had previously participated in TCP at least one semester, which may have affected their likelihood of graduating from the program. Since this study does not continue to follow the outcomes of the students beyond the end of the spring 2009, it is not known whether the 2008-2009 participants participated in TCP again or whether they graduated from the program if they did participate again.

As noted above, the comparison group did not mirror the participant group. The main difference was in the number of students attending Title I schools, with the comparison group having a significantly lower number of students in those schools. The researchers attempted to correct for this discrepancy using weightings in the regression analyses. Finally, 23 of the students in the comparison group attended non-TCP schools throughout Baltimore City, which exposed them to different educational and cultural environments than were experienced by the students at the TCP schools.

## Summary and Recommendations

The research team's findings are based on observation of TCP activities; review of program documentation; interviews with program staff, TCP team members, and student participants and their parents/guardians; and analysis of quantitative data on attendance, academic performance, suspensions, and referrals to DJS. Because the qualitative data on student and parent/guardian experiences in TCP were obtained from a small sample of participants, they may not reflect the experiences of other participants. Due to a lack of a data collection system for the program, quantitative data that would allow the researchers to assess rates of attendance at TCP sessions, attendance at ancillary events, and frequency of service referrals were not available at the time of this evaluation.

The findings are presented below as responses to the evaluation questions posed at the beginning of the report.

*How many students have been served by TCP?*

Between the spring semester of 2005 and the spring semester of 2009, TCP served approximately 560 students at 14 schools. With additional funding from a federal stimulus grant, TCP has expanded to include a total of 8 schools in Baltimore City, as well as schools in other jurisdictions (Montgomery County and Anne Arundel County) during the 2009-2010 academic year.

*What is the intended target population for TCP? Are the students who participate in TCP the intended target population of the program?*

Although the intended target population for TCP is the "soft truant" with 5 to 20 unexcused absences and tardies, the criteria for student selection leaves considerable latitude for selecting students to the school personnel. The "Sample Application Form" section of the Toolkit instructs schools to select students based upon their attendance data and the absence of certain factors (e.g., mental illness) that could impede a student's progress in TCP. The rationale is that school personnel are best able to decide which students would benefit from the intervention. TCP may accept students who have missed more than 20 days, if the students will benefit from participation in TCP (Babb et al., 2008, Section 2, p.3). Generally, as long as the underlying

problems behind the student's truancy are not deemed to be beyond the resources of TCP, a student with more absences may be allowed to participate in the program.

The research team did not have complete data with which to confirm whether TCP participants fit the guideline of 5 to 20 absences during the previous two marking periods. Data on total absences during the previous academic year suggest that the guideline is being followed.

*Are there members of the target population who are not served by TCP? Are certain subgroups of the target population underrepresented among TCP participants?*

There are members of the target population that are not served by TCP due to limitations that are both internal and external to the program. First, because of the voluntary nature of the program, members of the target population may opt out of participation if their parents/guardians do not sign the permission form. Only students who have parental permission to participate in TCP will be served by the program. Second, due to budget limitations, TCP operates within a small number of schools within Baltimore City; thus, the program is not able to reach members of the target population at other schools. Furthermore, since criteria for school selection include factors beyond the level of truancy at the school, including the school's commitment of resources to the program, truancy rates at other schools may be higher than at the schools that are accepted into TCP. In order for the program to function as designed, CFCC accepts schools with well-organized and complete applications and indications of commitment to TCP among school staff.

Although TCP operates in a limited number of select schools, the demographics of TCP participants during 2008-2009 roughly mirror the demographic makeup of the Baltimore City Public Schools. Slightly fewer African American students participated in TCP than their representation in the citywide school population during 2008-2009 (86.0% compared to 88.4%), but the proportion of Hispanic students (8.4%) was greater than their representation in the general BCPSS student population (2.8%). This result is not surprising given that two of the six TCP schools serve areas of Baltimore with sizeable Hispanic populations. The proportion of TCP participants eligible for free or reduced cost lunches is at or above the citywide level, indicating that TCP is serving a low income population – a population that experiences higher truancy rates than other socio-economic strata.

*Are families within the target population aware that TCP exists?*

The question could not be assessed by this study, as the research team did not interview non-participants. At a BCPSS formal attendance hearing during the spring of 2009, however, the research team observed that representatives of OAT mentioned TCP to the parents/guardians of truant students in attendance.

*Do students participating within TCP receive the proper amount, type and quality of services?*

The current level of understanding of what constitutes an effective truancy intervention for the target population is limited; there is no clear definition of the proper amount, type and quality of services in the truancy literature. Until a best practice is developed against which to measure truancy programs, process evaluations are best suited to evaluating process factors and adherence to implementation plans. The results of this evaluation support that TCP incorporates many of the recommended elements of truancy reduction and prevention programs, including interagency collaboration, family involvement, use of incentives and sanctions, prevention strategies such as mentoring, and provision of services in a supportive environment.

The TCP design comprises four main types of services: (1) weekly sessions during which the TCP judge and other TCP team members interact with the individual student and, ideally, his or her parent/guardian; (2) Character-Building Curriculum; (3) ancillary TCP activities such as Family Fun Night; and (4) connection of students and their families to resources that may help address the underlying problems leading to unexcused absences by the students.

Based on the research team's observations, the weekly sessions involving TCP judges and other TCP team members generally proceed according to the program design, meeting with each individual student and his/her parent/guardian, if present. The researchers observed that in most cases only the student, not the parent/guardian, attends. (According to CFCC, the TCP mentors have weekly contact by telephone with the parent/guardian.) The research team noted that, during the weekly sessions, students are far more likely to be praised for successes than sanctioned for failures.

The character-building sessions are delivered by a mentor coordinator. CFCC reports that it seeks to recruit mentors who offer a combination of training, experience and other factors that allow them to make effective connections with program participants. A portion of the time students spend in TCP and character-building sessions is in lieu of classroom time. In that the

mentoring/character-building is an essential program component, it can be seen as a reasonable short-term trade off. This argues for the same level of rigor in lesson design and delivery during the character-building sessions as would be expected in the classroom. While the curriculum of the mentoring program has been clarified since the start of the evaluation, it does not appear that the mentoring curriculum was structured around an evidence-based mentoring model.

The TCP process is described in program policies as designed to “identify the needs of all family members and try to meet them” through service referral on an as-needed basis (Babb et al., Section 2, p. 4). While TCP identifies needs and root causes associated with truancy, primary responsibility for service referral and follow-up resides with school authorities.

Seven of the students and two parents/guardians indicated that the students’ truancy had been the effect of illness and/or medical appointments. With the proper documentation, absences of this type are considered excused absences. It is possible that parents/guardians and students are unaware of the documentation requirements, and absences that would normally be marked excused are recorded as unexcused. It is also possible that students who are frequently ill are accumulating additional unexcused absences, resulting in enough absences to be considered truant. TCP seeks to reduce unexcused absence rates by addressing the medical needs of the students and advising both parents/guardians and students about proper documentation.

The outcome evaluation is intended to shed light on whether TCP as a whole is an effective intervention for the population served. It is not possible, however, to determine the effect of the individual service components (e.g., weekly sessions, ancillary activities) of TCP on individual outcomes because of the limits of the program and study design. While the core components are the same, TCP is practiced differently from school to school; this is not identified as a program weakness. In order to determine whether certain program components have more or less influence than others on participant outcomes, the amount and nature of each component provided to each participant would have to be tracked and analyses performed that accounted for variations in the interventions.

*Are necessary program functions being performed adequately?*

Based upon the survey results and observations, a number of TCP functions are being performed adequately. One of these functions is the preparation of school personnel for involvement in TCP through a preliminary workshop and training.

The principal workshop provides a means of recruiting enthusiastic administrators and ensuring they fully understand the commitment required and the latitude that the school has in implementing TCP. This workshop, held prior to the beginning of the academic year, informs interested principals about the level of commitment expected of school staff participating in TCP and reviews TCP operational requirements.

Training is provided to TCP team members and is generally considered to be valuable. Seventy percent of TCP team members surveyed said that they received some level of training regarding the TCP model. Most respondents agreed that the training was detailed, organized and prepared them for their respective roles in TCP.

Some parent/guardian respondents indicated some confusion about program processes. Regarding consent procedures, some parents questioned indicated not knowing that signing a permission slip is required for participation. Some responding parents/guardians indicated they did not know whether their children had mentors or whether their children had received sanctions and/or incentives. This confusion suggests a need for more communication between TCP team members and parents/guardians. (CFCC states that they do not move forward without a parent or guardian's signature on the permission slip, that some parents may not be aware of the Character Building Class, and that some mentors may not refer to themselves as such.)

*Is staffing sufficient in numbers and competencies for the functions that must be performed in TCP?*

The research team received no feedback suggesting that TCP team members were stretched beyond capacity in performing program functions. A function for which the adequacy of staffing levels and competencies is not clear is mentoring. Only one mentor coordinator and one mentor are responsible for leading the Character-Building Curriculum and contacting families weekly at an expanding set of schools. While the roles and responsibilities of the mentor coordinator and mentors have recently been specified, the qualifications and experience have not been clarified.

*Is TCP well organized? Do TCP staff work well together?*

Generally, TCP is a well-organized program and reports from team members support that it functions smoothly. Some evidence that the program is well organized is its expansion since its

inception in 2005, its ability to generate interest from more schools that it can enroll each year, and its success in engaging volunteers and team members across organizational boundaries. The TCP Toolkit is a comprehensive document outlining both the program procedures and duties of team members. TCP operates on established timelines based upon the academic year; these schedules are documented in the Toolkit. CFCC staff offer a principal's workshop for prospective school applicants and training for the selected school team members.

TCP could improve its data collection and tracking and clarify its recruitment process, school and student selection processes, and team member job descriptions. TCP should determine the value of increasing these efforts relative to improved program performance. Information tracking by CFCC program staff has improved since program inception, particularly in regards to attendance monitoring. TCP schools and CFCC maintain lists of eligible students and graduates, but do not maintain lists of students that are invited but decline to participate in TCP. Out of the six schools participating in 2008-2009, only one school offered a list of all invited students to the researchers. In addition, some schools may not have complete lists of participants.

In contacting families for the process evaluation, using lists provided by TCP schools and/or CFCC, the researchers found that 12 out of 74 participant addresses were incorrect, and 20 out of 74 participant telephones were disconnected. In at least three instances, parent/guardian information from the school was inaccurate.

The majority of team member respondents indicated that team members worked together either very well (n= 11) or sufficiently well (n= 2). Over half (n= 9) indicated that conflicts did not arise among team members. CFCC staff meets weekly with the Student Fellows and weekly amongst themselves to review cases, gather feedback on the program, and discuss future development of the program.

Communication between school-based and non-school based team members is sometimes difficult. Respondents rely on emails and indicate that there can be difficulty communicating in a timely manner with school staff and TCP judges who are not always telephone-accessible during the day. The majority of team members surveyed, however, indicated that they could get in touch with team members when necessary.

*Do the program activities of TCP conform well to the written policies of the program? Does TCP function in the same manner at all schools?*

The research team did not find evidence of non-conformity between written policies and actual practices. The team did find, however, that documentation is lacking for many aspects of TCP. To some extent the lack of documentation reflects a desire by program designers that TCP be a flexible model that can be adapted to the context/needs of individual schools. The Toolkit provides limited direction for the following activities, thereby allowing schools the flexibility to respond to their individual school situations:

- Process for recruiting team members;
- Roles of individual school-based team members;
- Criteria for student selection;
- Process for assessing student and family needs and making service referrals;
- Process for students who drop out of TCP; and
- Program “graduation” criteria.

The lack of written policy in the Toolkit may contribute to differences in understanding among TCP team members on the consent process and information-sharing, policies that would not be expected to vary by school.

*Does TCP coordinate effectively with the other programs and agencies with which it must interact?*

TCP is itself a multiagency program requiring CFCC to recruit team members and coordinate activities across organizational boundaries. TCP planners collaborated with judges and a public defender, individual schools, representatives of BCPSS, DJS (specifically in the effective utilization of resources at Patterson High School) and others involved in BCPSS truancy intervention initiatives. Based on the research team’s observations, relationships among TCP team members from these multiple organizations are effective.

It is not clear whether TCP coordinates effectively with agencies with the resources to provide support services to TCP participants and their families. Among parents/guardians interviewed, only half were referred for services that addressed the problems they identified as contributing to their children’s unexcused absences. TCP does not maintain lists of available resources and does not track referrals for services, but according to CFCC, the program manager

maintains a list of providers for consultation purposes, and a new manual of available resources is currently being created. The program would benefit from additional documentation of participant's needs, referrals to appropriate resources, and following up on the outcome of these referrals.

*Are resources, facilities, and funding adequate to support important program functions in TCP?*

As noted earlier, there is little information available on the appropriate amount, type and quality of services that contribute to an effective truancy intervention for a given population. During the 2008-2009 academic year, TCP employed two full-time staff (a mentor coordinator and program manager), faculty, and student fellows. The majority of the team members, however, were volunteers, students, or school system employees. Each participating school provides a space in which to operate the weekly sessions and the character-building classes. It is not clear whether relying on volunteers and existing school system employees is a design feature that contributes to a successful and efficient program or is merely a reflection of resource constraints.

*Are resources used effectively and efficiently in TCP?*

Graduation from TCP was associated with improved attendance and behavior, as measured by suspensions from school and referrals to DJS. Participation in TCP did not appear to result in improved attendance, academic performance, or in-school behavior, although TCP may have led to fewer referrals to DJS among participants. Approximately half of 2008-2009 TCP participants graduated from the program after one or two semesters of participation. Thus, the program can be described as effective for about half the participants.

Graduation from TCP appears to be the key to achieving improved attendance as well as some behavioral benefits, but analysis of participant characteristics provided limited insight into factors affecting whether a participant graduated. For high school students, a participant's history of suspensions in the prior academic year appears to have a significant effect on graduation. Further study may lead to a better understanding of the participant characteristics and program ingredients that enable participants to succeed within and outside TCP.

Ascertaining whether resources are used efficiently is more difficult as there is unlikely to be a baseline for comparison. The outcome evaluation has provided an estimate of the results

TCP can achieve. The efficiency questions to be examined through future research are: Can similar results be obtained with fewer resources? or Can better results be obtained with the same resources?

*Is performance at some program sites or locales significantly better or poorer than at others?*

Roughly half of the 2008-2009 TCP participants graduated from the program after one or two semesters of participation. The graduation rate varied greatly from school to school, however. At the only high school in the program, a little over one-quarter of participants graduated from TCP after one or two semesters, while at the elementary and middle schools, the TCP graduation rate ranged from a little over one-third to more than 80% of participants.

The numbers of TCP participants at each school were too small to allow detailed analysis of attendance, academic, and behavioral results across schools. The finding that TCP graduation is associated with improvements in two of these measures, suggests that the differences in graduation rates would be reflected by differences in attendance and behavioral results across schools as well. The process evaluation revealed that both the characteristics of participants and the intervention itself differed from school to school. Any differences in outcomes may be due to differences in participant characteristics or in how TCP is practiced. Further study would be required to sort out these effects.

*Are TCP participants satisfied with their interactions with program personnel and procedures?*

The parent/guardian and student participants surveyed generally reported that they were satisfied with their interactions with program personnel and procedures. Fourteen of the 17 parent/guardian respondents felt they were provided with sufficient information to help them make informed decisions about participation in the program. The majority of students and parents/guardians surveyed indicated that TCP team members allowed them to have enough time to speak during the sessions. Most of the students and nearly half of the parents/guardians surveyed said they felt comfortable speaking during TCP sessions.

Three parent/guardian respondents explained their experience within TCP was enhanced by the program's involvement of, and respect for, the parents. When asked what they liked best about the program, the common themes within the parent/guardian responses were motivation,

support, and hope. The incentives and sanctions utilized by the program were generally viewed as appropriate and/or effective by parents/guardians.

*Are TCP participants satisfied with the services they receive?*

Overall, respondents viewed the program positively with the majority of the parent/guardian respondents indicating that the program gave motivation, support, and hope. Of the 17 parents/guardians interviewed, 14 said they were very satisfied with the program. In general, student respondents agreed that receiving rewards for attending school lifted their self-esteem and was a key motivating influence for them to attend school regularly. One student mentioned the character building class as the favored aspect of TCP. Four respondents mentioned that they liked that the program helped them to either improve their attendance or be told about their attendance, while another student liked talking to the TCP team.

Satisfaction of the schools with TCP is demonstrated by multi-year participation by 6 of the 14 schools that have been involved with the program, as well as the high rate of reapplication for the program among participating schools (G. Danziger, personal communication, January 28, 2010). Four of the schools participating during 2008-2009 had been involved for multiple years, with one of the schools (Highlandtown Elementary and Middle) involved for three years.

*Do TCP participants engage in appropriate follow-up behavior after service?*

The TCP program follows all participants and graduates who are still at the same school during the following semester; attendance and behavior are tracked, and if a student shows evidence of slipping, he/she may be called before the TCP team to discuss what is happening. If a student needs to return to TCP, he/she may participate again.

Team member interviews revealed that there is an unwritten policy to allow students who did not complete TCP to re-enroll. Ultimately, these students are tracked in accordance with the attendance policies of the individual schools if they did not show improvement in their attendance.

*Other Considerations*

The use of the word “Court” by programs outside the Judiciary (e.g. Truancy Court Program, Teen Courts) creates possible confusion regarding the program’s relationship to the

Judiciary. CFCC suggests that the stature of a judge in the community supports his/her role as a problem-solver and supporter of community safety; however the public, and even TCP participants, may be misled into believing that the program leverages judicial authority over truancy. Although judges were involved in planning and implementing TCP, it is a school-based rather than court-based intervention. Because TCP judges do not have judicial authority in this setting, however, their stature may be diminished. CFCC argue that public trust and confidence in the Judiciary may be enhanced by the association with programs such as this. Another possible objection to the word “Court” in the program title is that non-judges are allowed to serve as TCP judges in TCP. The court-based truancy intervention program operated by the Judiciary, TRPP, does not have the word “Court” in its title although TCP does. The Judiciary should consider the impact of the use of the word “court” by this and other programs.

### *Summary*

Overall, the evaluation team found TCP to be an evolving program that adheres to a collaborative approach suggested in the literature. The program has been well-received by team members and participating parents/guardians, and students. Program policies and procedures and associated documentation have been under development as the program has evolved, and there are still some issues that need to be clarified.

One area in which TCP may need to focus greater attention is in referring families to resources that can address the underlying causes of truancy. The program would benefit from additional documentation of participant’s needs, referrals to appropriate resources and follow-up on the outcome of these referrals.

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## Appendix A: Baltimore City Team Member Questionnaire

- ✓ Read consent statement to interviewee before conducting interview
- ✓ Provide interviewee with contact information for the evaluation project.
- ✓ Ask the respondents all applicable questions.
- ✓ If a question appears to have already been answered by the interviewee in a previous statement, preface the question with a statement such as  
*“You may have answered this question in a previous statement, but I would like to confirm your response.”*
- ✓ Transition between sections of the interview using the scripted language provided as a guide. These transition statements provide the interviewee with a sense of the direction and purpose of each set of questions, facilitating the interview process. The transition language may be found in the text box at the beginning of each section of questions.
- ✓ Remind interviewees that they are always welcome to state that they do not know the answer if they do not in fact know the answer.

Date of Interview: \_\_\_\_\_

## I. Respondent Information

**Interviewer Suggested Script:** *You are always welcome to state that you do not know the answer or do not wish to answer any of the questions. This first series of questions will help us to understand your qualifications, experience, role and level of involvement in TCP.*

1. Please briefly describe your professional background.

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2. Where do you work (Include title and agency affiliation)?

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3. How long have you worked in your current position? \_\_\_\_\_ (months)

4. Do you have a role in the TCP?

Yes    No (If No, Skip to Section II Question 1)

If yes,

- a. With which TCP location(s) are you affiliated? \_\_\_\_\_

- b. Describe your role and responsibilities with TCP:

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- c. how many hours a week would you say you devote to TCP? \_\_\_\_\_ (hours)

d. How many months have you worked with TCP \_\_\_\_\_ (months)?

e. Did you receive any special training for your role with the TCP?

Yes  No

If yes,

i. What type of training? \_\_\_\_\_

ii. Who provided the training? \_\_\_\_\_

iii. Was the training voluntary or mandatory?

Voluntary  Mandatory

iv. How helpful did you find the training?

Very helpful  Somewhat helpful  Not helpful

v. Do you think that the training covered all of the information needed to perform your role within the structure of the TCP?

Yes  No

Explain: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

vi. Did you receive a handbook or guidelines when you began working with TCP?

Yes  No

6. Do you have any other type of specialized training?

Yes  No

If yes, in any of the following areas?

i. Behavioral Modification

ii. Family Crisis Intervention

iii. Mentoring

iv. Mediation

v. Special Education Needs

vi. Learning Disabilities

## II. Reasons for Implementation of the TCP

*Note to Interviewer: Questions 1-7 are for school-based team members  
Non-school employees skip to question 8.*

**Interviewer Suggested Script:** We are interested to know how truancy was handled before the implementation of the TCP, who was involved in planning TCP, how the program goals were established, the process by which your school was selected and how the target population was identified. You are always welcome to state that you do not know the answer or do not wish to answer any of the questions.

1. How did your school deal with truant students before the TCP?  

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2. Was there a procedure for how truancy laws and attendance policies were enforced?  
Yes    No    Don't Know
3. Were all school personnel aware of what the truancy laws and attendance policies were?  
Yes    No    Don't Know
4. Were truancy laws and attendance policies being enforced uniformly before the implementation of the TCP in your school?  
Yes    No    Don't Know
5. Was out of school suspension used as a punishment for truancy prior to the implementation of the TCP?  
Yes    No    Don't Know
6. Did your school have a resource/referral network in place before TCP?  
Yes    No    Don't Know

7. When and how did you first learn about the TCP in BCPSS?

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8. Were you involved in the planning phase of TCP?

Yes     No (If No, Skip to Section III, question 1)

If yes,

a. What was your role (please describe):

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***Note to Interviewer: Ask b only of school-based team members.***

b. What were the planning steps taken to implement the TCP in your school?

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***Note to Interviewer: Ask c only of non-school-based team members.***

c. What were the planning steps taken to implement the TCP?

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9. Who was involved in planning and what were their respective roles?

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10. How long was the planning process overall?

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**Interviewer note: Ask 11 only of school-based team members.**

11. Do you feel that TCP was tailored to fit your school's needs?

Yes    No    Don't Know

Please provide an explanation:

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12. Do you know if any BCPSS parents or students were involved in the planning?

Yes    No    Don't Know

**Interviewer note: Ask 13 only of school-based team members.**

13. Were any parents or students from your school involved in the planning of TCP?

Yes    No    Don't Know

14. Did any of the organizations or agencies identified as being important for planning of the TCP fail to get involved?

Yes    No    Don't Know

**If YES**→

a. Was coordination among these organizations and agencies a problem?

Yes    No    Don't Know

**If NO**→

b. What was the reason for non-involvement?

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c. What do you think could have helped to overcome the problem?

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### III. TCP Policies & Procedures

**Interviewer Suggested Script:** *These next questions will ask about TCP's policies and procedures. You are always welcome to state that you do not know the answer or do not wish to answer any of the questions.*

#### Parental Awareness

1. How are parents informed about the TCP?

- Letters home     Emails to parents     School website  
 Assembly     Posters     News/media programs  
 Other: \_\_\_\_\_     Don't Know

2. Are parents given a handbook or guide explaining the TCP process?

- Yes     No     Don't Know

#### Consent & Confidentiality

1. Does the school and TCP consent process allow you to share confidential information?

No

Yes

a. With which of the following are you permitted to share information?

- Judge  
 Teacher  
 University of Baltimore law student  
 School Representative  
 TCP Mentor  
 TCP Liaison  
 Center for Families, Children & the Courts Staff Person  
 Other: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Don't know

2. What types of confidentiality protections are in place for the information students or their parents or guardians reveal?

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3. How would you compare the process of confidentiality for students participating in the TCP from non-participating students?

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4. Does the TCP develop, manage, and maintain interactions with other agencies?

No

If NO→ a. Were there any specific obstacles that prevented this from happening?

No

Yes

Describe: \_\_\_\_\_

Don't know

Yes

If YES→ b. What were those other agencies? (list):

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Don't know

## Participation

1. Given that TCP is a voluntary program, but parental permission and involvement is required what happens if the...
  - a. student wants to participate and the parent does not?  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - b. student does not want to participate and the parent does?  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - c. both the student and the parent do not want to participate?  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - d. student and parent agree to participate, but change their minds after starting?  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - e. student does not participate, are they referred to a formal court?  
 Yes    No    Don't Know  
If yes, when are they referred to a formal court?  
 Immediately  
 After more absences – How many? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Other:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
 Don't know
2. If a student graduates from TCP, are they allowed to be readmitted if they become truant?  
 Yes  
(Explain) \_\_\_\_\_  
 No  
(Explain) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Don't Know
3. If a student fails TCP, are they allowed to participate again?  
 Yes  
(Explain) \_\_\_\_\_  
 No  
(Explain) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Don't Know

4. Are home visits made?

Yes, for everyone     Yes, for most     Yes, for some

Yes, but rarely     No, not at all     Don't Know

**If YES**→

a. Who makes home visits?

(position) \_\_\_\_\_

b. What are the goals of home visits?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. For admission into the TCP, is the student interviewed?

Yes     No     Don't Know

**If YES**→

a. What types of questions are they asked?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

b. Where are they interviewed?     Home     School

6. Are parents/guardians interviewed?     Yes     No     Don't Know

**If YES**→

a. What types of questions are they asked?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

b. Where are they interviewed?     Home     School

7. Are siblings interviewed?     Yes     No     Don't Know

**If YES**→

a. What types of questions are they asked?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

b. Where are they interviewed?     Home     School

8. Are attendance histories of siblings reviewed?  
Yes   No   Don't Know
9. Are prior contacts with the Department of Social Services (DSS).  
 Department of Juvenile Services (DJS), and/or other agencies reviewed?  
Yes  
**If YES**→  
DJS   DSS   Other, specify: \_\_\_\_\_
- No  
Don't Know
10. Are parent/guardian's criminal histories investigated?  
Yes   No   Don't Know

Parent and Student Involvement & Connectedness with School and the TCP

1. How important is parental school involvement for the success of the student in the TCP?  
Very important   Somewhat important   Unimportant

***Note to Interviewer: Question 2 is for school-based team members only.***

2. What kind of opportunities do parents have to become involved in your school and the TCP?

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3. Do TCP team members ask parents or guardians for advice or input on the TCP?  
Yes   No   Don't Know

4. How important would you say a feeling of connectedness to the school is to the success of the student?  
 Very important     Somewhat important     Unimportant
5. Does TCP have parent or guardian events specifically aimed at increasing connectedness to the school?  
 Yes                       No                       Don't Know

Resources and Referrals

1. Does TCP refer families to any of the following services (check all that apply):
- |                             |                              |                             |                                     |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| a. Substance Abuse          | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> Don't Know |
| b. Mental Health Services   | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> Don't Know |
| c. Physical Health Problems | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> Don't Know |
| d. Parenting Classes        | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> Don't Know |
| e. Anger Management         | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> Don't Know |
| f. Transportation Services  | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> Don't Know |
| g. Other:                   | _____                        |                             |                                     |
2. Is there a TCP protocol for referring families to services?  
 Yes     No     Don't Know  
 a. If yes, what is that protocol?  
 \_\_\_\_\_
3. Is there a TCP information packet or brochure listing services available?  
 Yes     No     Don't Know
4. Who in the TCP is responsible for coordinating and communicating with service providers?  
 (position)\_\_\_\_\_
5. Is coordination and communication with service providers an issue?  
 Yes     No     Don't Know  
 If yes,  
 explain:\_\_\_\_\_

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Incentives and Sanctions

1. Does the TCP use graduated incentives and sanctions?

Yes   No   Don't Know

If yes,

a. What are the types of incentives?

(describe)\_\_\_\_\_

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b. What are the types of sanctions?

(describe)\_\_\_\_\_

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c. Do you think the incentives are meaningful to the students?

Yes   No   Don't Know

d. Do you think the sanctions are meaningful to the students?

Yes   No   Don't Know

e. Do you think the incentives are meaningful to the parents?

Yes   No   Don't Know

f. Do you think the sanctions are meaningful to the parents?

Yes   No   Don't Know

TCP Meetings

1. What is the average number of students in attendance at the TCP meetings? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Is it most common to see a student accompanied by:
 

<input type="checkbox"/> Mother only	<input type="checkbox"/> Both mother and father
<input type="checkbox"/> Father only	<input type="checkbox"/> Neither mother nor father
3. Do the parents and/or students sign any type of attendance contract?
 

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Don't Know
------------------------------	-----------------------------	-------------------------------------
4. During TCP meetings, are students asked for their opinions on what should be done about their truancy problem or are they told what they are going to do?
 

<input type="checkbox"/> Asked Opinion	<input type="checkbox"/> Told What to Do	<input type="checkbox"/> Don't Know
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## V. Mentoring

1. What are the goals and objectives of the mentoring program?  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
2. How does the curriculum address those goals/objectives?  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
3. Do you think that the mentoring curriculum effectively addresses these goals?
 

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
Explain: _____
_____
<input type="checkbox"/> No
Explain: _____
_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Don't Know
4. How does compliance monitoring by the mentor contribute to these goals?  
 \_\_\_\_\_

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## VI. Teamwork

**Interviewer Suggested Script:** *These questions will help us understand how the TCP works as a team and how responsibilities are managed. You are always welcome to state that you do not know the answer or do not wish to answer any of the questions.*

1. Who makes up the team? (positions)

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2. Is your position part of the TCP team?

Yes    No    Don't Know

3. Do you think that the team members are aware of what is expected of them in their respective roles?

Yes    No    Don't Know

4. How clear are the lines of authority and responsibility?

Clear most of the time    Clear more often than unclear  
 Clear half of the time    Unclear more often than clear  
 Unclear most of the time

5. Of the following duties, which are responsibilities of the school and which are responsibilities of the TCP team or the responsibility of both the school and team?

a. Determine eligibility

TCP Team    School    Both

b. Give incentives

TCP Team    School    Both

c. Impose sanctions

TCP Team    School    Both

d. Contact parents

TCP Team    School    Both

e. Make home visits

TCP Team    School    Both

f. Identify needs of family

TCP Team    School    Both

g. Set up with resource referrals

TCP Team    School    Both

h. Follow up on referrals

TCP Team    School    Both

6. How is information about roles and responsibilities communicated within the team?

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7. How much time do team members have to discuss cases before meetings?

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8. What would you estimate is the most common form of communication between team members?

Phone    Email    In person    Letters    Fax

9. Are there any barriers to communication among team members?

Yes

Explain: \_\_\_\_\_

No

Explain: \_\_\_\_\_

Don't Know

10. How well do the TCP team and school staff work together?

Very well     Sufficiently     Poorly

11. How are conflicts among team members handled?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## VI. Other Issues/ Opinions

**Interviewer Suggested Script Interviewer Suggested Script:** *We are near the end of the interview. This is the last set of questions. We would like your opinion. You are always welcome to state that you do not know the answer or do not wish to answer any of the questions.*

1. For which age group do you think this program would be most effective?

Elementary school (K-5)     Middle school (6-8)  
 High school (9-12)     Don't know

2. Would you consider this program to be a comprehensive approach to truancy that simultaneously focuses on prevention and intervention?

Yes

Explain: \_\_\_\_\_

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No

Explain: \_\_\_\_\_

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Don't Know

3. How effective do you think this program would be with students with more than 20 absences?

More effective

Somewhat more effective

Just as effective

Somewhat less effective

Less effective

Don't know

4. Would you say this program values diversity and cultural differences?

Yes

Explain: \_\_\_\_\_

---

No

Explain: \_\_\_\_\_

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Don't Know

5. Would you say students are treated with respect in this program?

Yes

Explain: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

No

Explain: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Don't Know

5. What do you see as the limitations of what the TCP can achieve?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

6. Do you think that the TCP is a successful program that should be retained?

No

Explain: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Yes

Explain: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Don't know

## Appendix B: Baltimore City Student Questionnaire

*Hello.*

*My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am calling from the University of Maryland Institute for Governmental Service and Research. The Maryland courts have asked us to evaluate the Truancy Court Program or the TCP. The information from our evaluation of the program will help the courts better understand how well it is working. I understand that you are/were involved in the program and I hope that you would be willing to talk to me over the phone about your experience with TCP. This is an interview that would last about 30 minutes. All of your answers will be STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL and known only by the researchers at the University of Maryland. No one associated with either TCP or NAME OF SCHOOL will know what you tell me. You can refuse to answer any question you wish or stop the interview at any time. We are interested in your opinion. There are no right or wrong answers. Is now a good time to talk? (If not, schedule a time to call back.)*

*Please let me know if I need to repeat a question or if there is something I need to explain. <<Child's Name>>, just to give you an idea of how the interview is set-up, I'll begin with a few questions about the rules regarding school attendance, then we'll move on to more specific topics such as, problems that lead to poor school attendance, services provided by the TCP, and your opinions about TCP. Before I proceed, do you have any questions for me? Let's begin.*

## ATTENDANCE POLICY/TRUANCY QUESTIONS:

***Interviewer Script: The following questions relate to attendance policies at your school.***

1a. Before you were referred to TCP, did you know your school's rules about attendance?

No (Skip to Question 2)       Yes

**IF YES**→

1b. How did you learn about your school's rules about attendance?  
(Choose all that apply from the list below.)

1	Student-teacher meeting	4	Telephone call from school
2	Student handbook	5	School staff explained
3	Letter from school	6	Other:

2. Did you know how many unexcused absences you had at the time you were referred to TCP?

No       Yes

3a. Before you were referred to TCP, did you know that you might have to go to court if you had too many unexcused absences?

No (Skip to Question 4)       Yes

**IF YES**→

3b. When did you learn this? \_\_\_\_\_

3c. From whom did you learn this? \_\_\_\_\_

## REFERRAL PROCESS QUESTIONS:

***Interviewer Script: The next set of questions asks you about how you were referred to the program.***

4. How did you first learn about your referral to TCP?

\_\_\_\_\_

Comprehension

5a. Did you receive any written information about the program?

No (Skip to Question 6)  Yes

**IF YES→**

5b. What information did you receive?

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5c. From whom did you receive this information?

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**GENERAL PERSPECTIVE QUESTIONS:**

*Interviewer Script: Now I would like to ask you some general opinion questions about how you felt about the program. These questions are open ended so please feel free to provide us as much information as you would like.*

6. What did you like best about the program?

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7. What did you like least about the program?

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8. If you could change one thing about the program, what would it be?

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## MORE DETAILED PROCESS QUESTIONS

*Interviewer Script: Thank you for your opinion on your overall experience with the program. I am now going to ask you a more detailed set of questions about your experience with the program.*

### Comprehension

9a. Did you understand the program?

No       Yes

9b. Did you understand what the judge said to you?

No       Yes

9c. Did you understand what the Program Coordinator said to you?

No       Yes

10. In general, did you feel you had enough time to speak and/or ask questions in court?

No       Yes

11. In general, did you feel comfortable speaking and/or asking questions in court?

No Explain: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Yes Explain: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

12a. During court, did you receive any punishments? (EXAMPLES scolding, book report)

No (Skip to Question 13a)       Yes

**IF YES**→

12b. How did this make you feel?

\_\_\_\_\_

12c. How did the punishment make you feel about your school attendance?

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13a. Did you receive any rewards from TCP for going to school (verbal praise, gift card)?

No (Skip to Question 14)     Yes

**IF YES→**

13b. How did this make you feel? \_\_\_\_\_

13c. How did the reward make you feel about your school attendance? \_\_\_\_\_

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14. Sometimes there are things going on in a student's life that makes it hard to go to school. Thinking back to when your school reported that you had unexcused absences that lead to your referral to TCP what are some of the reasons that you didn't go to school regularly?

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15. What services or programs did TCP connect you with to help you deal with this issue/these issues?

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16a. Was a mentor assigned to you?

No (Skip to Question 17)     Yes

**IF YES→**

16b. How often did you meet with the mentor? \_\_\_\_\_

16c. How often did the mentor talk to your parent or guardian?  
\_\_\_\_\_

16d. Do you think that the mentor helped improve your attendance?

No Explain: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Yes Explain: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Don't Know

17. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about your experience with TCP?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS

*Interviewer Script: We're almost through. We just have a few more questions that will help us to describe the students who participate in this survey.*

18. What is your birth date? \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

19. What is your sex?  Female  Male

20. Are you Hispanic or Latino/Latina?  No  Yes

21. What is your racial background?

1 = Black or African American

2 = Asian

3 = American Indian or Alaska Native

4 = Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander

5 = White or Caucasian

6 = Multiple race

7 = Other race (please specify: \_\_\_\_\_)

22. What is the highest grade of regular school that you have completed?

0 = Preschool/Kindergarten

1 = 1st grade

2 = 2nd grade

3 = 3rd grade

4 = 4th grade

5 = 5th grade

6 = 6th grade

7 = 7th grade

8 = 8th grade

9 = 9th grade

10 = 10th grade

11 = 11th grade

## Appendix C: Baltimore City Parent/Guardian Questionnaire

*Hello.*

*My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am calling from the University of Maryland Institute for Governmental Service and Research. The Maryland courts have asked us to evaluate the Truancy Court Program or the TCP. The information from our evaluation of the program will help the courts better understand how well it is working. We understand that you and your son/daughter, NAME, recently participated in the program and we hope that you would be willing to share your TCP experience with us by participating in a 30-minute telephone interview. All of your answers will be STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL, and known only by the researchers at the University of Maryland. No one associated with either TCP or NAME OF SCHOOL will know what you tell me. You can refuse to answer any question you wish or stop the interview at any time. We are interested in your opinion. There are no right or wrong answers. Is now a good time to talk? (If not, schedule a time to call back.)*

*Please let me know if I need to repeat a question or if there is something I need to explain. Ms./Mr. XXX, just to give you an idea of how the interview is set-up, I'll begin with a few questions about attendance policies at your child's school, then we'll move on to more specific topics such as, obstacles to school attendance, services provided by the TCP, and your opinions about TCP. Before I proceed, do you have any questions for me? Let's begin.*

**ATTENDANCE POLICY/TRUANCY QUESTIONS:**

*Interviewer Script: The following questions relate to attendance policies at your child's school.*

1a. Before you were referred to TCP, did your child's school provide you with information about the school's attendance policies?

No (Skip to Question 2)       Yes

**IF YES**→

1b. How did your child's school provide information to you about the school's attendance policies? (Choose all that apply from the list below.)

1	Parent-teacher night/meeting	4	Telephone call from school
2	Parent handbook	5	School staff explained
3	Letter from school	6	Other:

2. Did you have knowledge of the number of unexcused absences your child had at the time your child was referred to TCP?

No       Yes

3a. Prior to your involvement with TCP, did you know that legal action could be taken against you and/or child because your child was truant?

No (Skip to Question 4)       Yes

**IF YES**→

3b. When did you learn this? \_\_\_\_\_

3c. From whom did you learn this? \_\_\_\_\_



11. Overall, would you say your experience was .....

- 1 Better than you expected
- 2 About the same as you expected
- 3 More challenging than you expected

Please explain your answer: \_\_\_\_\_

12. How well do you think your child has responded to the program? (Explain answers)

Has responded well: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Has responded somewhat: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Has not responded well at all: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Voluntary Program

13a. Is this a voluntary program for your child?

- No (Skip to Question 14)       Yes

**IF YES**→

13b. Should it continue to be voluntary, or should it become a mandatory program?

- Voluntary       Mandatory

### Comprehension

14a. On a scale from 1 to 10, how would you rate your understanding of the program? 1 means you understood nothing and 10 means you understood everything.

14b. On a scale from 1 to 10, how would you rate your understanding of what the judge said to you? 1 means you understood nothing and 10 means you understood everything.

14c. On a scale from 1 to 10, how would you rate your understanding of what the Program Coordinator said to you? 1 means you understood nothing and 10 means you understood everything.

### Consent Form

15a. Did you sign the Consent Form to allow your child to participate in TCP?

- No (Skip to Question 16)       Yes

**IF YES→**

15b. Did you understand that private/confidential information about your child would be discussed among team members?

No       Yes

15c. Did you understand what effect your signing the consent form would have on your child's participation in the program?

No       Yes

15d. Did you want to sign it?

No       Yes

15e. Why did you sign? \_\_\_\_\_

15f. On a scale from 1 to 10, how would you rate your understanding of the Consent Form? 1 means you understood nothing and 10 means you understood everything.

16. From whom do you usually receive information about the program? And, via what method (e.g., phone, mail, email)?

<input type="checkbox"/> Teacher:	<input type="checkbox"/> phone	<input type="checkbox"/> mail	<input type="checkbox"/> e-mail	<input type="checkbox"/> other: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Principal:	<input type="checkbox"/> phone	<input type="checkbox"/> mail	<input type="checkbox"/> e-mail	<input type="checkbox"/> other: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Guidance Counselor:	<input type="checkbox"/> phone	<input type="checkbox"/> mail	<input type="checkbox"/> e-mail	<input type="checkbox"/> other: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____	<input type="checkbox"/> phone	<input type="checkbox"/> mail	<input type="checkbox"/> e-mail	<input type="checkbox"/> other: _____

(Specify)

17. How would you rate the level of commitment expected of you from the:

Judge:

Not enough     Just right     Too much

Attendance Officer:

Not enough     Just right     Too much

Teacher:

Not enough     Just right     Too much

Principal:

Not enough     Just right     Too much

Guidance Counselor:

Not enough     Just right     Too much

18. In general, did you feel you had enough time to speak and/or ask questions in court?

No Explain: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Yes Explain: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Don't Know

19. In general, did you feel comfortable speaking and/or asking questions in court?

No Explain: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Yes Explain: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Don't Know

20a. Did your child receive any sanctions (EXAMPLES verbal reprimand, book report)

No (Skip to Question 21)       Yes       Don't Know

**IF YES→**

20b. Do you think the sanction was appropriate?

No       Yes       Don't Know

20c. Do you think the sanction was effective in improving your child's attendance?

No       Yes       Don't Know

21. Did your child receive any rewards or incentives (verbal praise, gift card)?

No (Skip to Question 22)       Yes       Don't Know

**IF YES→**

21b. Do you think the incentive was appropriate?

No       Yes       Don't Know

21c. Do you think the incentive was effective in improving your child's attendance?

No       Yes       Don't Know

***Interviewer Script: Thank you for your opinion on your overall experience with the program. I am now going to ask you a more detailed set of questions about your experience with the program.***

Mentoring

22. Was a mentor assigned to your child?

- No (Skip to Question 23)       Yes       Don't Know

**IF YES**→

22a. How often did the mentor meet with your child?

22b. How often did you talk with the mentor?

22c. Do you think the mentor helped improve your child's attendance?

No Explain: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Yes Explain: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Don't Know

***Interviewer Script: The next set of questions asks you about your experience receiving services through TCP.***

23. Thinking back to the period of time that your child's school reported your child had unexcused absences that led to your referral to TCP, what individual or family factor(s) do you think contributed to your child's not going to school on a regular basis.

a. Bullying and harassment at school       No       Yes

**IF YES**→

1. How did the program help you and/or your child or family to address this issue?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. Were you and/or your child referred to any of the following service(s) to address this issue, and if so did you and/or your child utilize the service and how helpful were the services? (Choose all that apply from the list below.)

Service	Referred		Utilized		Helpfulness		
	Parent	Child	Parent	Child	Not at All	Some what	Very
Individual Counseling							
Mentoring							
Alternate Transportation							
Other, specify:							

b. Student feeling bored at school  No  Yes

**IF YES**→

1. How did the program help you and/or your child or family to address this issue?

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2. Were you and/or your child referred to any of the following service(s) to address this issue, and if so did you and/or your child utilize the service and how helpful were the services? (Choose all that apply from the list below.)

Service	Referred		Utilized		Helpfulness		
	Parent	Child	Parent	Child	Not at All	Some what	Very
Individual Counseling							
Tutoring							
Mentoring							
Other, specify:							

c. Student feeling disconnected to teacher(s)  No  Yes

**IF YES**→

1. How did the program help you and/or your child or family to address this issue?

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2. Were you and/or your child referred to any of the following service(s) to address this issue, and if so did you and/or your child utilize the service and how helpful were the services? (Choose all that apply from the list below.)

Service	Referred		Utilized		Helpfulness		
	Parent	Child	Parent	Child	Not at All	Some what	Very
Anger Management							
Individual Counseling							
Tutoring							
Mentoring							
Other, specify:							

- d. Student feeling disconnected to peers  No  Yes

**IF YES**→

1. How did the program help you and/or your child or family to address this issue?

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2. Were you and/or your child referred to any of the following service(s) to address this issue, and if so did you and/or your child utilize the service and how helpful were the services? (Choose all that apply from the list below.)

Service	Referred		Utilized		Helpfulness		
	Parent	Child	Parent	Child	Not at All	Some what	Very
Anger Management							
Individual Counseling							
Family Counseling							
Mentoring							
Mental Health Treatment							
Other, specify:							

- e. Student's low grades or frustrations in learning  No  Yes

**IF YES**→

1. How did the program help you and/or your child or family to address this issue?

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2. Were you and/or your child referred to any of the following service(s) to address this issue, and if so did you and/or your child utilize the service and how helpful were the services? (Choose all that apply from the list below.)

Service	Referred		Utilized		Helpfulness		
	Parent	Child	Parent	Child	Not at All	Some what	Very
Anger Management							
Individual Counseling							
Tutoring							
Mentoring							
Mental Health Treatment							
Other, specify:							

f. Student's alcohol/drug use  No  Yes

**IF YES**→

1. How did the program help you and/or your child or family to address this issue?

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2. Were you and/or your child referred to any of the following service(s) to address this issue, and if so did you and/or your child utilize the service and how helpful were the services? (Choose all that apply from the list below.)

Service	Referred		Utilized		Helpfulness		
	Parent	Child	Parent	Child	Not at All	Some what	Very
Anger Management							
Individual Counseling							
Family Counseling							
Substance Abuse Treatment							
Mentoring							
Alternate Transportation							
Mental Health Treatment							
Other, specify:							

g. Family member's alcohol/drug use  No  Yes

**IF YES**→

1. How did the program help you and/or your child or family to address this issue?

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2. Were you and/or your child referred to any of the following service(s) to address this issue, and if so did you and/or your child utilize the service and how helpful were the services? (Choose all that apply from the list below.)

Service	Referred		Utilized		Helpfulness		
	Parent	Child	Parent	Child	Not at All	Some what	Very
Anger Management							
Individual Counseling							
Tutoring							
Family Counseling							
Substance Abuse Treatment							
Mentoring							
Alternate Transportation							
Mental Health Treatment							
Other, specify:							

h. Student's employment  No  Yes

**IF YES**→

1. How did the program help you and/or your child or family to address this issue?

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2. Were you and/or your child referred to any of the following service(s) to address this issue, and if so did you and/or your child utilize the service and how helpful were the services? (Choose all that apply from the list below.)

Service	Referred		Utilized		Helpfulness		
	Parent	Child	Parent	Child	Not at All	Some what	Very
Individual Counseling							
Tutoring							
Mentoring							
Other, specify:							

i. Family member's employment  No  Yes

**IF YES**→

1. How did the program help you and/or your child or family to address this issue?

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2. Were you and/or your child referred to any of the following service(s) to address this issue, and if so did you and/or your child utilize the service and how helpful were the services? (Choose all that apply from the list below.)

Service	Referred		Utilized		Helpfulness		
	Parent	Child	Parent	Child	Not at All	Some what	Very
Tutoring							
Family Counseling							
Mentoring							
Alternate Transportation							
Other, specify:							

j. Family responsibilities (i.e. child care; taking care of sick relative)

Please specify: \_\_\_\_\_  No  Yes

**IF YES**→

1. How did the program help you and/or your child or family to address this issue?

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2. Were you and/or your child referred to any of the following service(s) to address this issue, and if so did you and/or your child utilize the service and how helpful were the services? (Choose all that apply from the list below.)

Service	Referred		Utilized		Helpfulness		
	Parent	Child	Parent	Child	Not at All	Some what	Very
Tutoring							
Family Counseling							
Mentoring							
Alternate Transportation							
Other, specify:							

k. Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_  No  Yes

**IF YES**→

1. How did the program help you and/or your child or family to address this issue?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Were you and/or your child referred to any of the following service(s) to address this issue, and if so did you and/or your child utilize the service and how helpful were the services? (Choose all that apply from the list below.)

Service	Referred		Utilized		Helpfulness		
	Parent	Child	Parent	Child	Not at All	Some what	Very
Anger Management							
Individual Counseling							
Tutoring							
Family Counseling							
Substance Abuse Treatment							
Mentoring							
Alternate Transportation							
Mental Health Treatment							
Other, specify:							

**Note to Interviewer: Questions 24-25 apply only to participants who indicated that they received service referral(s) in question 23. If respondent did not receive any service referrals, skip to 26.**

24a. You previously indicated that service(s) were recommended to you. Did the program make arrangements to help you and your child access/receive services?

No  Yes

24b. What was the team member's position who recommended service(s)?

25a. Did the team member follow-up with you later to see whether the service(s) had been helpful?

No  Yes

25b. Did you feel comfortable telling the team member whether or not the service(s) were helpful?

No Explain: \_\_\_\_\_

Yes Explain: \_\_\_\_\_

Don't Know

26. Are there any other comments/suggestions you would like to add/make regarding the program?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS

*Interviewer Script: We're almost through. We just have a few more questions that will help us to describe the parents/guardians who participate in this survey.*

27. What is your birth date? \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

28. What is student's birth date? \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

29. What is your sex?  Female  Male

30. Are you Hispanic or Latino/Latina?  No  Yes

31. What is your racial background?

1 = Black or African American

2 = Asian

3 = American Indian or Alaska Native

4 = Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander

5 = White or Caucasian

6 = Multiple race

7 = Other race (please specify: \_\_\_\_\_)

32. What is your marital status?

- 0 = Never married
- 1 = Married (living together)
- 2 = Separated
- 3 = Divorced
- 4 = Widowed

33. Besides yourself, how many other adults in your household have parenting/guardianship responsibilities? \_\_\_\_\_

34. What is the total number of children who live in your household for whom you are a parent/guardian? \_\_\_\_\_

35. In addition to <<CHILD's NAME>>, have any of your other children ever had issues with school attendance?

- No       Yes

36. What is the highest grade of regular school that you have completed?

- 0 = Preschool/Kindergarten
- 1 = 1st grade
- 2 = 2nd grade
- 3 = 3rd grade
- 4 = 4th grade
- 5 = 5th grade
- 6 = 6th grade
- 7 = 7th grade
- 8 = 8th grade
- 9 = 9th grade
- 10 = 10th grade
- 11 = 11th grade
- 12 = 12th grade
- 13 = Some college
- 14 = Undergraduate degree
- 15 = Some graduate school
- 16 = Graduate degree

IF ANSWER TO QUESTION 36  $\geq$  12 SKIP TO QUESTION 37.

37a.[IF NOT A HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATE] Since withdrawing from regular school have you obtained your GED?

- No       Yes

38. Thinking about all of the people who lived in your home in 2008, what was the combined household income? Please include money from jobs, social security, retirement income, unemployment payments, and public assistance. Also include income from interest, dividends, net income from business, farm or rent and any other money income received.

I'll read a list of income categories. Please let me know when I reach the category that represents the combined incomes of everyone who lived in your household in 2008.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> < \$10,000           | <input type="checkbox"/> \$40,000 to \$49,999 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$10,000 to \$19,999 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$50,000 to \$59,999 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$20,000 to \$29,999 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$60,000 or more     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$30,000 to \$39,999 |   |

Appendix D: Application for School Participation in TCP

**APPLICATION FORM FOR TRUANCY COURT PROGRAM**  
**2008-2009 School Year**

School \_\_\_\_\_ Number \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ Facsimile \_\_\_\_\_  
Principal \_\_\_\_\_ Email :  
Cell phone number:  
Assistant Principal \_\_\_\_\_ Email:  
Cell phone number:

**SCHOOL TRUANCY COURT PROGRAM TEAM:**

There should be at least one teacher, an administrator and either a guidance counselor or school psychologist on the team. There also needs to be a person responsible for attendance data.

TCP Contact Person:                      Email  
TCP Attendance Monitor:                Email  
TCP Team Members:                      Email:

Location of weekly TCP meeting (Library preferred; same location mandatory for each session):

Is there a parent liaison at this school? If so, please provide name and contact information:

Does the school have any adjunct tutoring programs? If so, please describe the program, the individual or organization that manages the program, the requirements for participation and when and where the program takes place:

What was the attendance percentage for this school during the academic years 2006-2007 and 2007-2008?

Is the main concern absenteeism or tardiness?

What is the school policy/procedure currently in place to address chronic absenteeism? Is this is writing? How are the parents informed?

In order for this program to be successful, the school team needs to be a cooperative partner with the CFCC. If accepted as one of the participating schools \_\_\_\_\_ SCHOOL agrees to complete the following:

**STUDENT SELECTION:**

- ❑ Using attendance records and student selection rubric identify potential students for inclusion in the program. Participants should have 3-5 unexcused absences or tardies in the prior three month period preceding the start of the TCP. Students currently involved in the Juvenile Justice System are **INELIGIBLE** to participate.
- ❑ A maximum of fifteen students can participate in Truancy Court per semester. The ideal group size is typically ten to twelve.
- ❑ Participants may be excused during the course of the session and other referrals accepted based on availability and the discretion of the judge
- ❑ The school is responsible for sending out the initial invitation letters, calling the home and if necessary making home visits to complete the preliminary student TCP folder prior to the start of the program (see attachments)

### **TEAM CONTACT PERSON Responsibilities:**

- Acts as the liaison between the TCP team and the school. Responsible for having a completed folder with a signed permission form, a teacher evaluation form and cumulative attendance data in each student's Truancy Court file prior to the start of the first TCP session.
- Responsible for making certain that weekly assessments and attendance data are placed in the folders for each participating student.
- Responsible for seeing that weekly school **ACTION** items are completed.
- Attend all weekly Truancy Court sessions seated with the judge and facilitate Truancy Court team meetings.
- Coordinate special events with team, e.g., Parent Orientation, Field Trip, Family Fun Activity, and Graduation.
- Complete, distribute, and return surveys for program evaluation.

### **Other School Responsibilities to be provided by team members or other school personnel (e.g., principals, counselors, and attendance clerks):**

- Distribute and collect Truancy Court Weekly Report Cards to teachers regarding students' weekly performance.
- Provide weekly attendance reports for each student and file in student's truancy court file prior to each session. Provide grade and discipline reports when appropriate.
- Provide historical and longitudinal data for program evaluation. (CFCC-assisted)

### **Teacher Responsibilities:**

- **Promptly** complete Truancy Court Weekly Report Card for each student participating in Truancy Court, providing information on academics, attendance, preparation, and behavior. Include positive remarks about student's achievements.
- **Attend Truancy Session** when requested to provide comments feedback on a particular student.



Appendix F: Invitation Letter

**PLEASE INSERT YOUR SCHOOL LETTER HEAD HERE**

Date

RE: \_\_\_\_\_

Dear Parent/Guardian:

According to the school records, your child has been unlawfully absent \_\_\_\_\_ days, or tardy \_\_\_\_\_ days (see enclosure).

The Maryland State Compulsory Attendance Law requires children between the ages of five (5) and sixteen (16) to attend school on a regular basis. The law states that it is the responsibility of the parent to insure regular attendance. The law also sets forth the penalties for violation of the law, including a fine not to exceed \$50 per day of unlawful absence or imprisonment not to exceed ten (10) days, or both for the first conviction.

It is very important for children to attend school everyday on time. A consistent program of instruction will enable them to be successful..

We are requesting that you work with us to improve your child's attendance and ask that you attend the \_\_\_\_\_ School Truancy Court Program on \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ o'clock in the morning in Room \_\_\_\_\_. At this time you will have the opportunity to meet the Truancy Court Program Judge for \_\_\_\_\_ School. We believe that the school-based Truancy Court Program will help your child succeed at school by improving his or her attendance.

Please call \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ to confirm your attendance.

Sincerely,

Principal  
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**Appendix G: Truancy Court Program Permission Slip/Consent Form**

**TRUANCY COURT PROGRAM**

**Permission Slip/Consent Form**

I grant permission for my child \_\_\_\_\_ to participate in the \_\_\_\_\_ Truancy Court Program and the Mentoring component.

I give the Truancy Court team members permission to exchange confidential (private) information regarding my child's academic records and the services provided. Team members may include persons from the Baltimore City Public School System, Department of Social Services, Court personnel, members of the legal community as well as persons from the UB CFCC program.

I understand that information shared with the team will remain confidential. I understand that truancy Court is **not** a legal court session, but a voluntary school-based program to increase attendance and enhance student achievement. I further understand that I may revoke this permission at any time by requesting it in writing. I agree to attend with my child (or designate another family representative to do so) for the first TCP meeting and a minimum of two (2) other times during the ten (10) week session.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Guardian Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\* Address:

\* Telephone:

\* REQUIRED

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Appendix H: Truancy Court Program Intake Form

**INTAKE FORM**

The student whose name appears below has been enrolled in the Truancy Court Program being held here at \_\_\_\_\_ School beginning \_\_\_\_\_. For the student to be successful, we need to have as much information about the student as possible. Please take a few minutes to fill in as much information below as you can.

**STUDENT** \_\_\_\_\_ **ID#** \_\_\_\_\_

**Grade:** \_\_\_\_ **Gender:** \_\_\_\_ **DOB:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Home Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Parents/Guardian(s)** \_\_\_\_\_

**Relationship to student:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Home Phone** \_\_\_\_\_ **Work Phone** \_\_\_\_\_

**Is the student performing AT, ABOVE or BELOW grade level? (Circle one)**

**Comments:**

**Does the student have an IEP?**

**What is the student's reading level?** \_\_\_\_\_ **Math level?** \_\_\_\_\_

**Is the student involved with DJS or DSS?**

**Is the student involved in after school activities? If so, please name a few.**

**Who lives in the household with the student?**

**Has the student ever been retained? ( Y / N ) What grade has he/she repeated?**

**GOALS for student to achieve during Truancy Court semester:**

**Completed by:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

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### Appendix I: Chi-Square Test of Differences in Graduation Rates among Schools

		Barclay	Highland -town	Patterson	Steuart Hill	Walter P. Carter	William Lemmel	Total
Graduated w/in 2 semesters	Count	16	10	9	19	8	11	73
	Expected Count	10.3	10.8	17.0	11.8	11.3	11.8	73.0
	Std. Residual	1.8	-.2	-1.9	2.1	-1.0	-.2	
Did not graduate w/in 2 semesters	Count	4	11	24	4	14	12	69
	Expected Count	9.7	10.2	16.0	11.2	10.7	11.2	69.0
	Std. Residual	-1.8	.2	2.0	-2.1	1.0	.2	
Total	Count	20	21	33	23	22	23	142
	Expected Count	20	21	33	23	22	23	142.0

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	25.436 <sup>a</sup>	5	.000
Likelihood Ratio	27.051	5	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	.309	1	.578
N of Valid Cases	142		

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 9.72.

**Appendix J: Logistic Regression Analysis of Factors Affecting  
Graduation from TCP**

	Fall 2008 Participants			Spring 2009 Participants		
	B	S.E.	Exp(B)	B	S.E.	Exp(B)
Race	2.090	1.228	8.082	.007	.932	1.007
Gender	.249	.778	1.282	-.116	.638	.890
Age During TCP	-.071	.281	.931	.049	.258	1.050
Middle School Student	1.860	1.568	6.423	.164	1.251	1.179
High School Student	-1.077	2.271	.341	-1.546	1.722	.213
Absences '07-'08	.029	.026	1.030	-.030	.022	.971
Grade Promotion '08	-.918	1.627	.399	.420	1.411	1.521
MSA Math Basic Level '07-'08	.881	.878	2.413	.467	.977	1.595
MSA Math Advanced Level '07-'08	1.625	1.338	5.077	-1.620	1.632	.198
MSA Reading Basic Level '07-'08	-1.612	.989	.200	-.258	.931	.773
MSA Reading Advanced Level '07-'08	.233	1.515	1.262	-.965	1.223	.381
Student Mobility	-.233	1.036	.792	-1.404	.769	.246
Special Education Status	-1.013	.930	.363	-.279	.772	.757
Free/Reduced Price Lunch	-.574	.980	.563	.817	1.074	2.263
TCP Participant Previous Semester	---	---	---	.525	.942	1.690
Number Suspensions '07-'08	-.358	.874	.699	-1.633*	.817	.195
DJS Referrals Prior to TCP	.145	1.252	1.156	.329	1.783	1.389
Constant <sup>19</sup>	.425	3.063	1.529	-.052	2.581	.949

\*  $p=.05$

<sup>19</sup> Dependent variable is TCP Graduation during 2008-2009 (Yes/No).

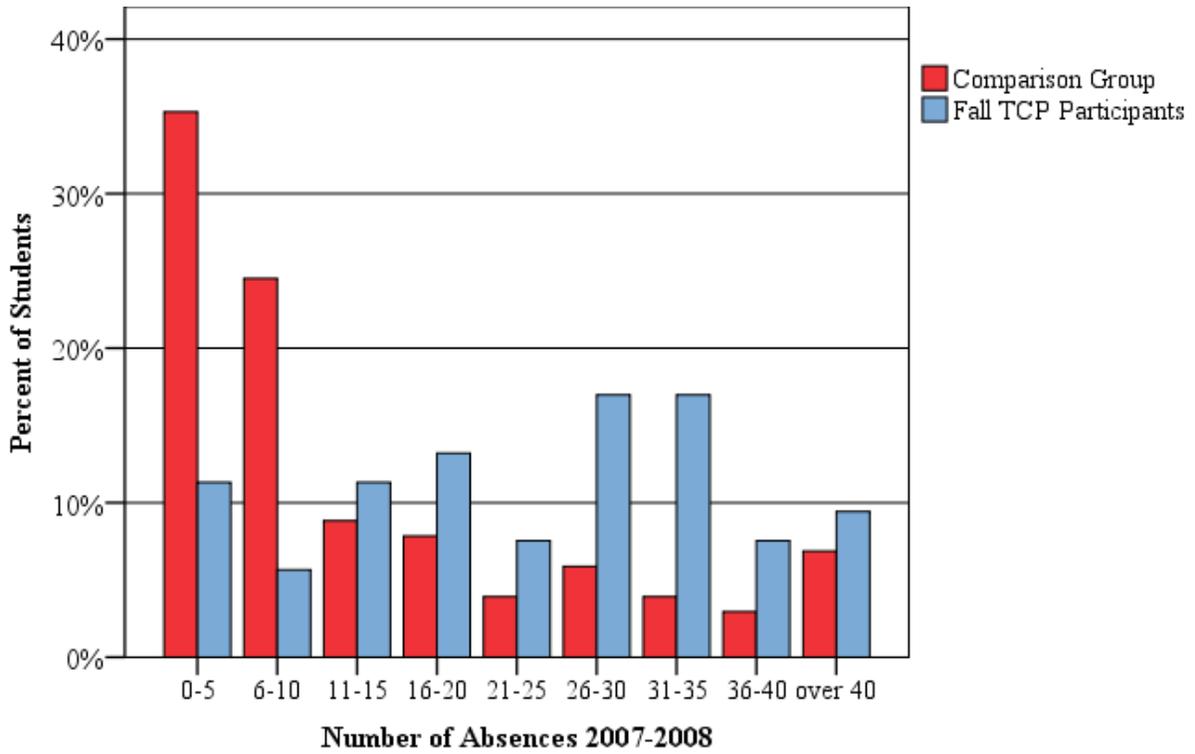
**Appendix K: Logistic Regression Analysis of Factors Affecting Graduation from TCP,  
High School Students Excluded**

	Fall 2008 Participants			Spring 2009 Participants		
	B	S.E.	Exp(B)	B	S.E.	Exp(B)
Race	---	---	---	2.029	1.493	7.604
Gender	.012	.765	1.013	.058	.740	1.060
Age During TCP	.293	.164	1.341	.004	.168	1.004
Absences '07-'08	.043	.031	1.044	-.051	.029	.950
Grade Promotion '08	-.315	1.596	.729	.598	1.747	1.819
MSA Math Basic Level '07-'08	-.053	.912	.948	-.539	1.143	.584
MSA Math Advanced Level '07-'08	2.440	1.950	11.477	-1.625	1.643	.197
MSA Reading Basic Level '07-'08	-1.051	1.113	.350	2.708	1.529	15.000
MSA Reading Advanced Level '07-'08	-.022	1.727	.979	-.866	1.325	.421
Student Mobility	.044	1.116	1.045	-1.560	.964	.210
Special Education Status	-1.108	.903	.330	-.105	1.091	.901
Free/Reduced Price Lunch	-.033	1.180	.968	1.501	1.222	4.485
TCP Participant Previous Semester	---	---	---	.943	1.015	2.568
Number Suspensions '07-'08	-1.273	1.333	.280	-2.109	1.080	.121
DJS Referrals Prior to TCP	.207	1.457	1.230	-.376	2.829	.687
Constant <sup>20</sup>	-3.167	2.577	.042	-.362	2.691	.696

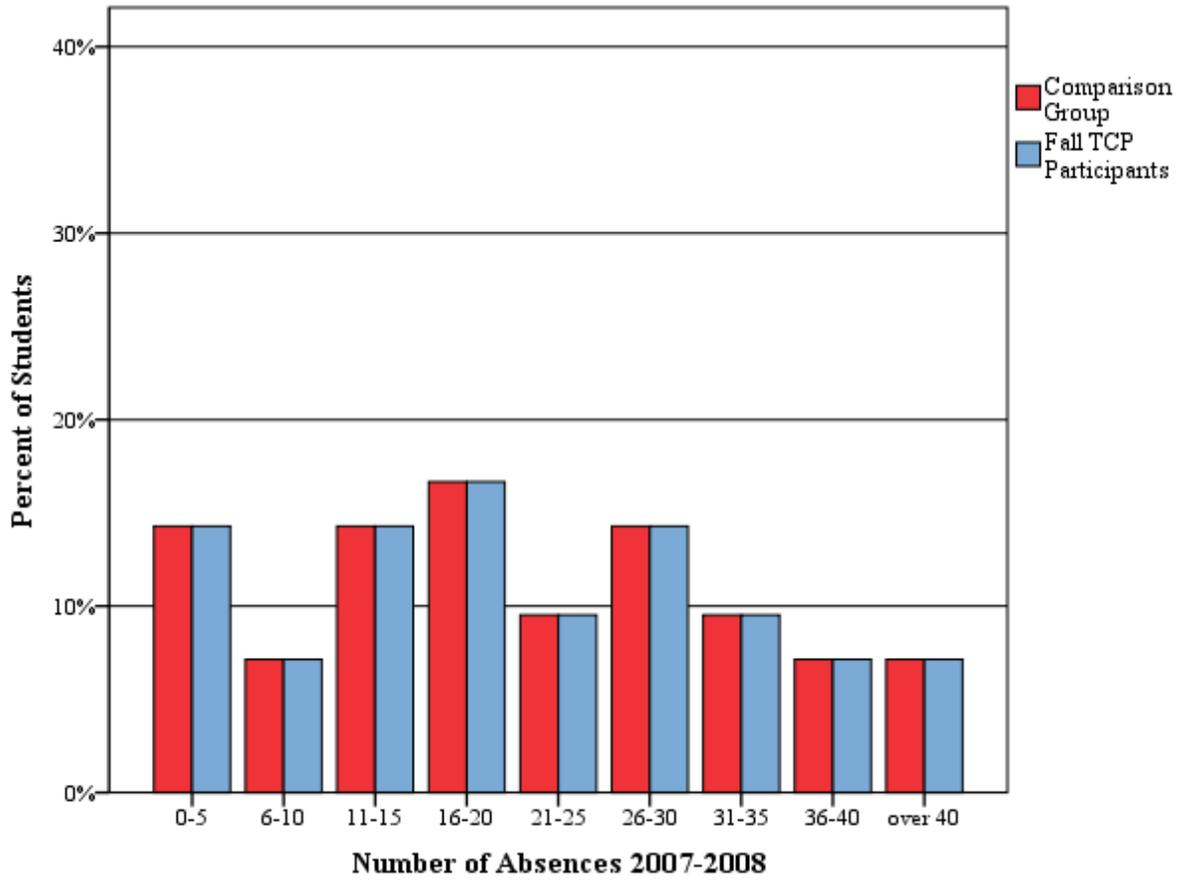
\*  $p=.05$

<sup>20</sup> Dependent variable is TCP Graduation during 2008-2009 (Yes/No).

**Appendix L: Days Absent during 2007-2008 for Fall 2008 TCP Participants and Comparison Group**



**Appendix M: Days Absent during 2007-2008 for Revised Group of Fall TCP  
Participants and Comparison Group**



**Appendix N: Characteristics of Revised Group of Fall 2008 TCP Participants  
and Comparison Group**

	<b>Fall 08 Participants</b>	<b>Comparison Group</b>
Gender		
Male	52.4%	54.8%
Female	47.6%	45.2%
Race		
African American	90.5%	95.2%
Caucasian	4.8%	2.4%
Hispanic	2.4%	2.4%
Asian	2.4%	0%
American Indian	0%	0%
Age in 2008	10	10
Level of School		
Kindergarten	2.4%	4.8%
Elementary	42.9%	57.1%
Middle	54.8%	38.1%
High	0%	0%
Attending Title I School*	100%	83.3%
Free/Reduced Price Lunch	88.1%	90.5%
Special Education	21.4%	11.9%
Mid-Year Mobility	11.9%	19.0%
Limited English Proficiency	2.4%	2.4%
Mean number of days absent 2007-2008	21	22
Median number of days absent 2007-2008	19	20
Mean number of suspensions per student 2007-2008	0.07	0.21

\*Difference between fall 2008 TCP participants and the comparison group is significant,  $p < .05$

**Appendix O: Academic Performance and DJS Involvement of Revised Fall 2008 TCP  
Participants and Comparison Group**

	<b>Fall 08 Participants</b>	<b>Comparison Group</b>
Mean MSA Scores 2007-2008:		
Reading	394	394
Math	398	387
Percentage of students referred to DJS prior to 2008-2009 academic year	7.1%	4.8%

**Appendix P: OLS Regression Models of Impact of TCP on Absences, 2008-2009**

	Model 1 TCP Participation			Model 2 TCP Graduation		
	B	S.E.	Standardized Beta	B	S.E.	Standardized Beta
Race	-.288	4.094	-.007	1.357	4.030	.032
Gender	-2.562	2.211	-.119	-2.597	2.139	-.120
Age	.819	.451	.200	.968*	.439	.237
Number of Absences '07-'08	.346*	.089	.428	.370*	.087	.458
TCP Participant	-.715	2.110	-.033	---	---	---
TCP Graduate	---	---	---	-5.217*	2.285	-.221
Mid-Year Mobility	4.072	2.921	.138	3.860	2.826	.131
Special Education Status	-2.257	3.061	-.077	-2.525	2.928	-.087
Free and Reduced Price Lunch	.610	3.404	.017	.993	3.305	.028
Number of Suspensions '07-'08	3.734*	1.809	.222	3.088	1.758	.184
DJS Referral Prior to '08-'09	-.513	4.738	-.011	.617	4.623	.013
(Constant) <sup>21</sup>	-1.495	6.331		-2.607	6.153	

\*p < 0.05

<sup>21</sup> Dependent variable is Days Absent '08-'09.

**Appendix Q: Comparison of Mean Tardies and Absences Prior to and During TCP  
Participation for Spring 2009 Participants and Graduates**

	TCP Participants			TCP Graduates		
	Mean	Std Deviation	St. Error Mean	Mean	Std Deviation	St. Error Mean
Tardies	.451	7.767	1.088	4.750*	7.195	1.469
Unexcused Absences	.922	5.959	.834	2.667*	3.655	.746
Excused Absences	-.078	.440	.062	-.083	.504	.103

\*p < 0.05

**Appendix R: OLS Regression Models of Impact of TCP on MSA Math Scores,  
2008-2009**

	Model 1 TCP Participation			Model 2 TCP Graduation		
	B	S.E.	Standardize d Beta	B	S.E.	Standardized Beta
Race	19.375	21.626	.135	15.597	22.192	.109
Gender	-1.354	9.342	-.024	-2.835	9.688	-.051
Age	-.737	2.985	-.041	-1.162	3.069	-.064
TCP Participant	-5.263	8.529	-.095	---	---	---
TCP Graduate	---	---	---	2.157	9.797	.037
Mid-Year Mobility	10.505	12.732	.127	10.676	12.780	.129
Special Education Status	27.799	16.722	.280	26.594	16.712	.268
Free and Reduced Price Lunch	9.627	12.292	.116	9.556	12.341	.115
Number of Suspensions '07-'08	-10.173	5.912	-.291	-9.214	5.865	-.264
DJS Referral Prior to '08-'09	-7.122	14.603	-.079	-8.001	14.916	-.088
(Constant) <sup>22</sup>	8.645	37.880		11.132	38.730	

\*p < 0.05

<sup>22</sup> Dependent variable is MSA Math Score '08-'09.

**Appendix S: OLS Regression Models of Impact of TCP on MSA Reading Scores,  
2008-2009**

	Model 1 TCP Participation			Model 2 TCP Graduation		
	B	S.E.	Standardize d Beta	B	S.E.	Standardize d Beta
Race	13.091	21.717	.090	6.740	22.233	.046
Gender	8.004	9.381	.143	5.387	9.706	.096
Age	-1.983	2.973	-.109	-2.670	3.051	-.147
TCP Participant	-5.879	8.468	-.105	---	---	---
TCP Graduate	---	---	---	5.689	9.782	.095
Mid-Year Mobility	-12.312	12.785	-.146	-12.093	12.804	-.144
Special Education Status	.772	15.239	.009	.257	15.249	.003
Free and Reduced Price Lunch	4.232	12.340	.050	4.195	12.360	.050
Number of Suspensions '07-'08	7.194	5.888	.205	8.464	5.840	.241
DJS Referral Prior to '08-'09	-11.556	14.526	-.126	-13.789	14.828	-.150
(Constant) <sup>23</sup>	14.341	37.853		19.064	38.573	

\*p < 0.05

<sup>23</sup> Dependent variable is MSA Reading Score '08-'09.

## Appendix T: TCP Supplemental Attendance Data for 2009-2010

University of Baltimore School of Law  
Center for Families, Children and the Courts  
Truancy Court Program  
Supplemental Attendance Data

The AOC funded the continuation of the University of Baltimore School of Law Center for Families, Children and the Courts (CFCC) Truancy Court Program (TCP) in five Baltimore City public elementary/middle and middle schools and one high school in both 2009-2010 and 2010-2011.

The 2009-2010 schools included:

- City Springs Elementary/Middle School
- Hazelwood Elementary/Middle School
- Winston Middle School
- Barclay Elementary/Middle School
- Harlem Park Elementary/Middle School
- Patterson High School (ninth graders only)

The data made clear how much the students participating in the TCP gained from the TCP. The TCP and its Mentoring Program served 140 students and their families during the 2009-2010 school year. Nearly two-thirds of the total participants graduated from the TCP, the criteria for which included a 75 percent decrease in attendance and improvement in classroom behavior and academic performance.

In 2009-2010, elementary and middle school TCP students saw a 78 percent decrease in absences during the Fall 2009 program, as compared with their attendance in Spring 2009. Even after completing the program, these same students maintained their excellent attendance records, with a 65 percent decrease in unexcused absences in Spring 2010 as compared to Spring 2009. Similarly, tardies for the same population decreased by 77 percent during the Fall 2009 program, while there were 71 percent fewer tardies in Spring 2010, as compared to Spring 2009.

Although the Baltimore City Public Schools experienced great hardship in early Spring 2010, with an historic blizzard keeping schools closed for over a week and treacherous road and walkway conditions continuing well after the schools reopened, the students participating in the Spring 2010 TCP also excelled. The data collected in the TCP schools by CFCC indicated that the participants reduced the number of unexcused absences by half during the program and by 62

percent after completing the program, as compared to the number of unexcused absences during Fall 2009.

In 2010, CFCC introduced user surveys of TCP parents and students that yielded qualitative information about the perceived success of the program. Consistent with the numerical data, this analysis provided a picture of an effective program that was appreciated by and created changes for students and their families. Using a pre- and post-test model, the surveys captured data on school-related attitudes and perceptions for 24 students from five schools, both before and after their participation in the Fall 2009 TCP. Comparing responses from surveys taken before and after the program, CFCC found that:

- Three-fourths of the students reported that their parents or guardians asked more often about their school day.
- Half of the students reported an improved outlook on doing and completing their homework.
- TCP students believed that their teachers cared about them.
- TCP students reported that their parents helped them more often with homework than before their participation in the program.

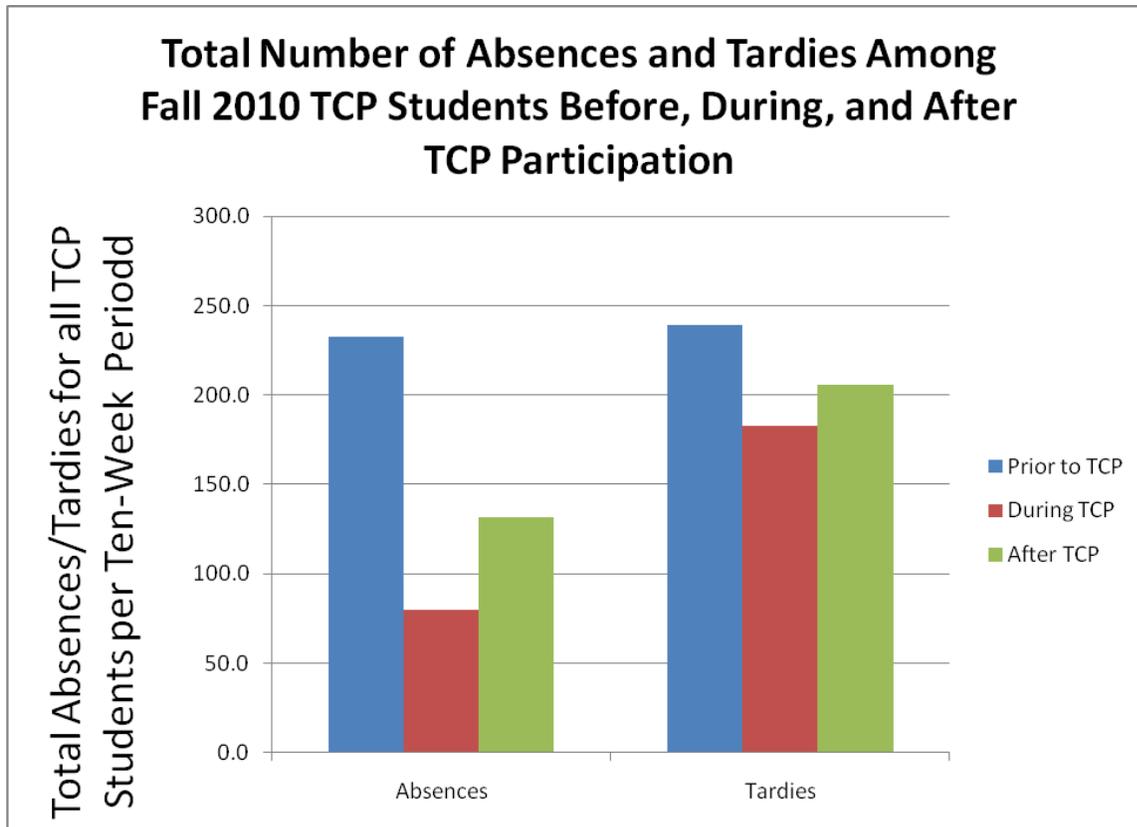
In 2010-2011, the TCP schools included:

- Hampden Elementary/Middle School
- Hazelwood Elementary/Middle School
- Tench Tilghman Elementary/Middle School
- Barclay Elementary/Middle School
- Violetville Elementary/Middle School
- Patterson High School (ninth graders only)

The TCP and its Mentoring Program served 138 students and their families during the 2010-2011 school year. Over two-thirds of the total participants (93 students) graduated from the TCP, the criteria for which included a 75 percent decrease in attendance and improvement in classroom behavior and academic performance.

The TCP graduates were not the only ones who improved - on average, all TCP participants in the AOC-funded schools decreased their absences by 47 percent while participating in the ten-week program, as compared to their attendance in the ten weeks prior to the program (there was a 53 percent decrease in the five elementary-middle schools).

The data also suggested that participating students maintained these improvements even after their participation in the program ended.<sup>24</sup> There was a 43 percent decrease in absences and a 14 decrease in tardies among Fall TCP participants in four schools.



Although the AOC report indicates that students at the one high school receiving the TCP did not show significant improvement, CFCC’s data shows considerable decreases in unexcused absences at Patterson High School during 2010-2011.

The Patterson High School TCP included 12 participants overall, eight of whom graduated – a 67 percent graduation rate. Two went on to graduate from the TCP in the Spring, and two did not graduate. The Fall TCP graduates averaged only 1.6 absences per student in the TCP’s ten-week period – an extremely low number by high school standards. The two students who did not graduate in the Fall but continued in the Spring improved their attendance significantly during the Spring TCP – from an average of ten absences to only four absences each during the Spring TCP. Of the three new Spring semester participants, one graduated – and then went on to graduate from high school a few weeks later. He originally had been selected for the TCP as the first and only high school senior, when teachers and administrators had flagged him as a student who was unlikely to meet the graduation requirements. With the TCP’s support, however, he made it to that important goal.

<sup>24</sup> It is difficult to analyze for the Spring 2011 or full-year participants because final program graduations were delayed due to MSA testing and snow days, leaving only the final few weeks of school for a post-TCP analysis.

Both students and parents completed user surveys at the end of the Fall 2010 and Spring 2011 TCP sessions. The students also completed pre- and post-tests in the Fall to determine whether there were any changes in their attitudes as a result of their participation in the TCP. The 18 students from three schools who completed both pre- and post-tests did show some interesting changes in their self-reports. On average, their reports indicated increases in:

- Feelings of connection with and safety in their neighborhoods;
- Parental help with homework;
- Recognition of the importance of attending school every day, on time;
- Perceptions of their ability to be whatever they wanted to be when they grow up.

Nearly all (24 out of 26) of the students who responded to the survey felt that the TCP addressed the issues that were preventing them from attending school.