

Tackling Truancy with Community and Court Responses

Clark County, WA

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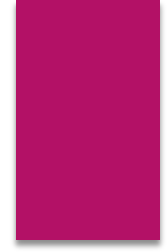
RFK NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER FOR JUVENILE JUSTICE

Agenda

- ▶ History of Truancy in Clark County and Washington State
- ▶ Steps taken to begin our work
 - ▶ Identified springboards and forces of resistance
 - ▶ Collaboration – identified key stakeholders, education partners, community organizations
 - ▶ Data and Research – identified data sources, surveyed and
- ▶ The New Process
- ▶ Outcomes

Clark County's History

- ▶ 1996 – Becca Bill went into effect. Clark County developed the Clark County Truancy Project.
- ▶ 2000 – Clark County implemented a Balanced and Restorative Justice Philosophy.
- ▶ 2007 – Clark County became a Models for Change site funded by the MacArthur Foundation.
- ▶ 2012 – Clark County formed the Juvenile Justice Council.
- ▶ 2015 – Clark County received an OJJ grant to reduce racial and ethnic disparities at the point of arrest and referral
- ▶ 2016 – WA passed legislation limiting long-term suspensions/expulsions to no more than the length of an academic term
- ▶ 2021 – Judges can no longer sentence a student to juvenile detention for not following a court's order



Truancy Reform

What prompted change?

- High number of truancy petitions filed in court due to Washington State's truancy law
- Concern about available resources due to pending legislation mandating that each student appearing at an initial truancy hearing be appointed counsel - 2009

Who propelled change?

- Superior Court Bench – Court and Detention was not an appropriate response to truancy. Truancy is a symptom of a larger problem.
- Clark County Juvenile Court convened a diverse working group (i.e. juvenile court, school districts, child welfare, community agencies, and ESD 112).



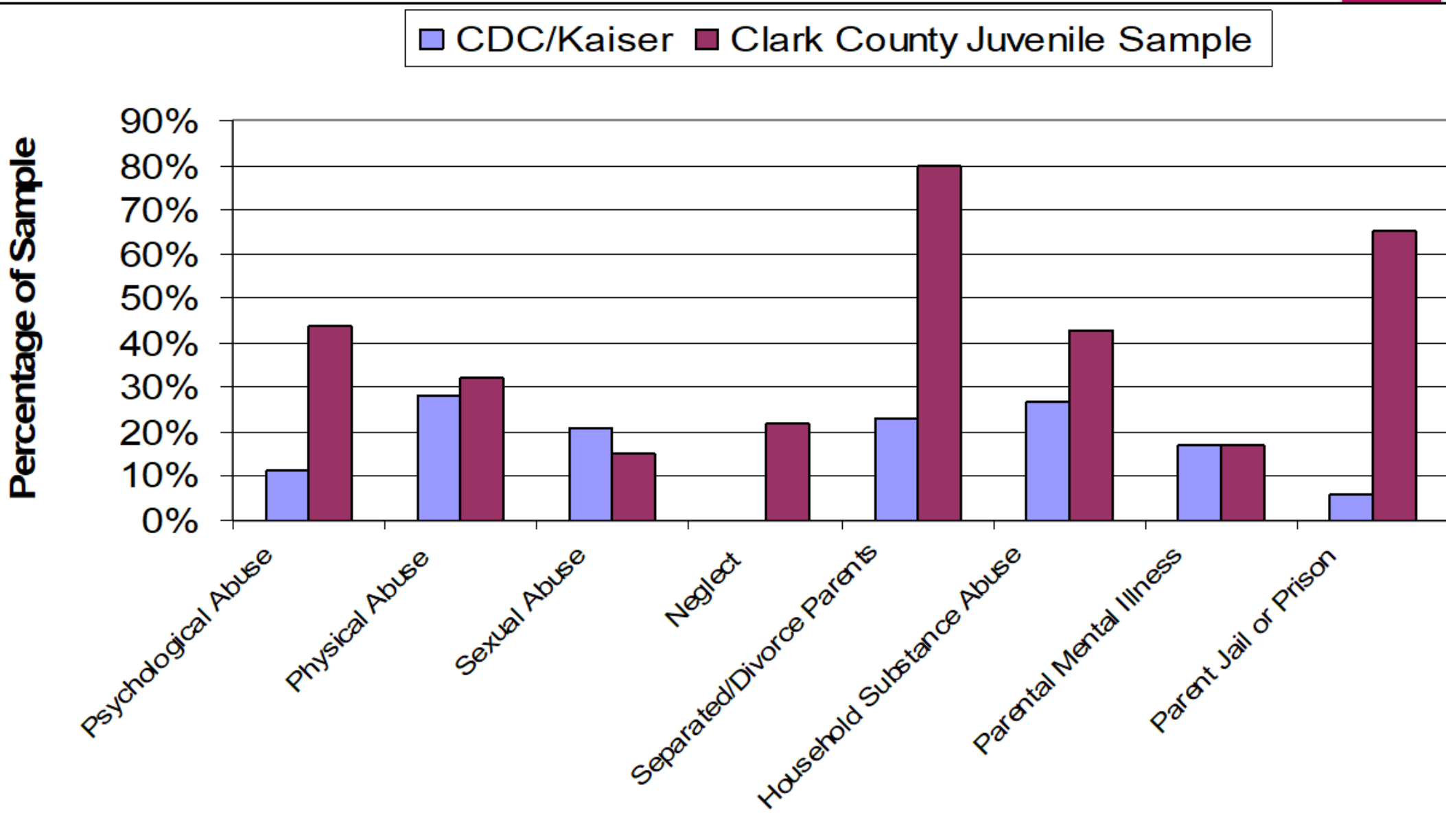
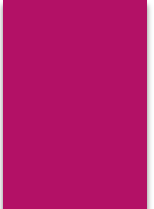
What are your springboards?

What are your forces of resistance?

Truancy Reform

Why change?

- Local Research: Students appearing at truancy court for the first time expressed skipping school due to anxiety, taking care of family members, disinterested, being bullied, changes in living situation, physical illness.
- Research on students with contempts were found to have significantly higher ACE scores, and are particularly likely to have experienced parents with alcohol and other drug abuse problems (52.5%), parental separation/divorce (80%) and incarceration of household members (62.5%).



MAYSI-2

- ▶ Alcohol/drug use scale: 12% of cases scored in the caution range; 9% scored in the warning range
- ▶ Angry-irritable scale: 37% of cases scored in the caution range; 13% scored in the warning range
- ▶ Depressed-anxious scale: 36% of cases scored in the caution range; 11% scored in the warning range
- ▶ Somatic complaints scale: 54% of cases scored in the caution range; 13% scored in the warning range
- ▶ Suicidal ideations scale: 15% of cases scored in the caution range; 13% scored in the warning range
- ▶ Thought disturbance scale: 31.4% scored in the caution range; 21.6% scored in the warning range

Impact of ACEs

Adverse

Childhood

Experiences

Changes youth's VIEW of the world AND how they RESPOND to it

- Hinders healthy brain development
- Low stress tolerance: React with defiance, fighting, or checking out (survival mode)
- Decrease ability to respond, learn, and problem solve
- Difficulty making friends, maintaining relationships, and trusting adults
- View adults as unsafe people who can't be trusted
- Develop negative self-concept ("I'm bad")


What We Know

- Punitive discipline is not effective with students who have high ACEs score
 - Does not teach skills or resolve conflict
- They already see the world as hostile
 - Punitive responses increase stress and trigger survival responses (e.g., defiance)
- Punitive disciplinary practices disproportionately impact minority students and students with special education needs
- **Students just need one healthy adult relationship to offset ACEs score**

A Restorative Lens



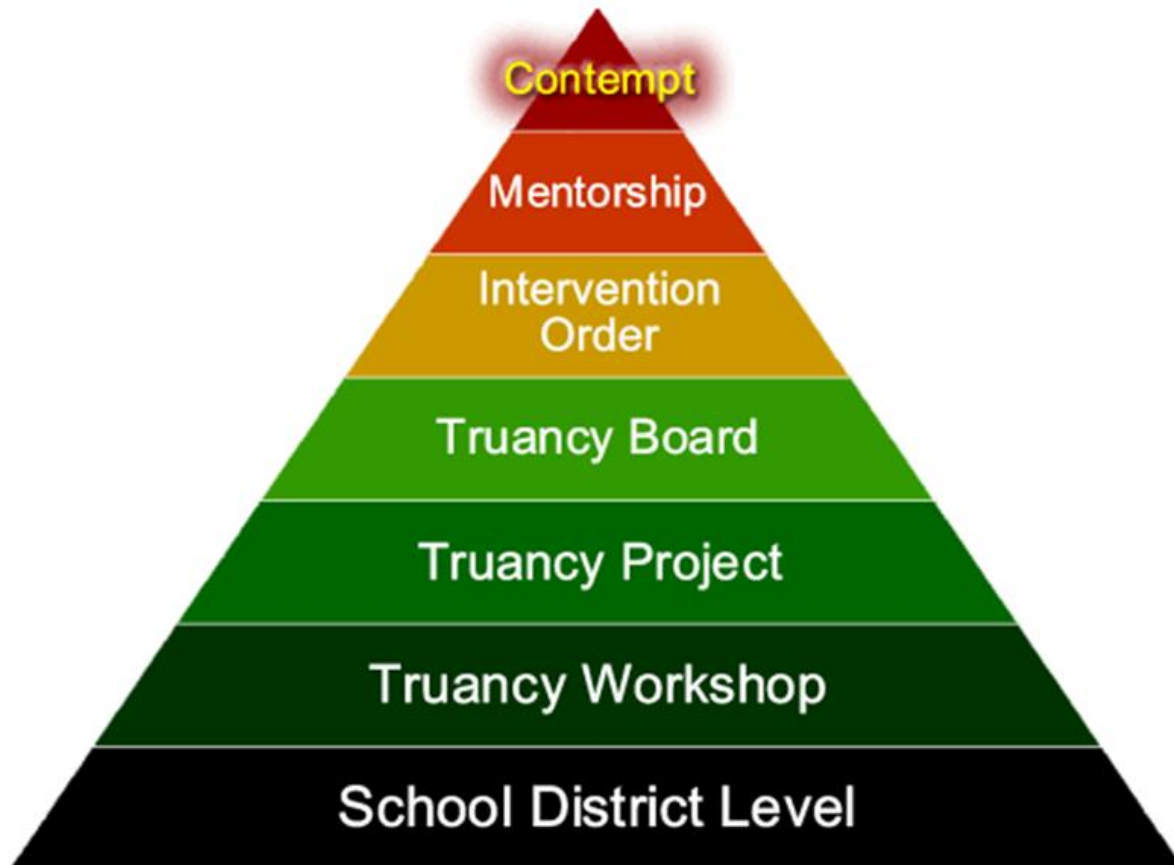
- Disciplinary issues are more than rule-breaking – they are about causing harm
 - *Harm* is the focal point through which we engage youth
- Punishment is not enough
 - Taking personal responsibility for harm done leads to genuine restoration and healing, and to personal growth
- Those directly impacted and the community as a whole are as important as the youth who caused the harm
- Our response to harm done should result in a safer/healthier school and community

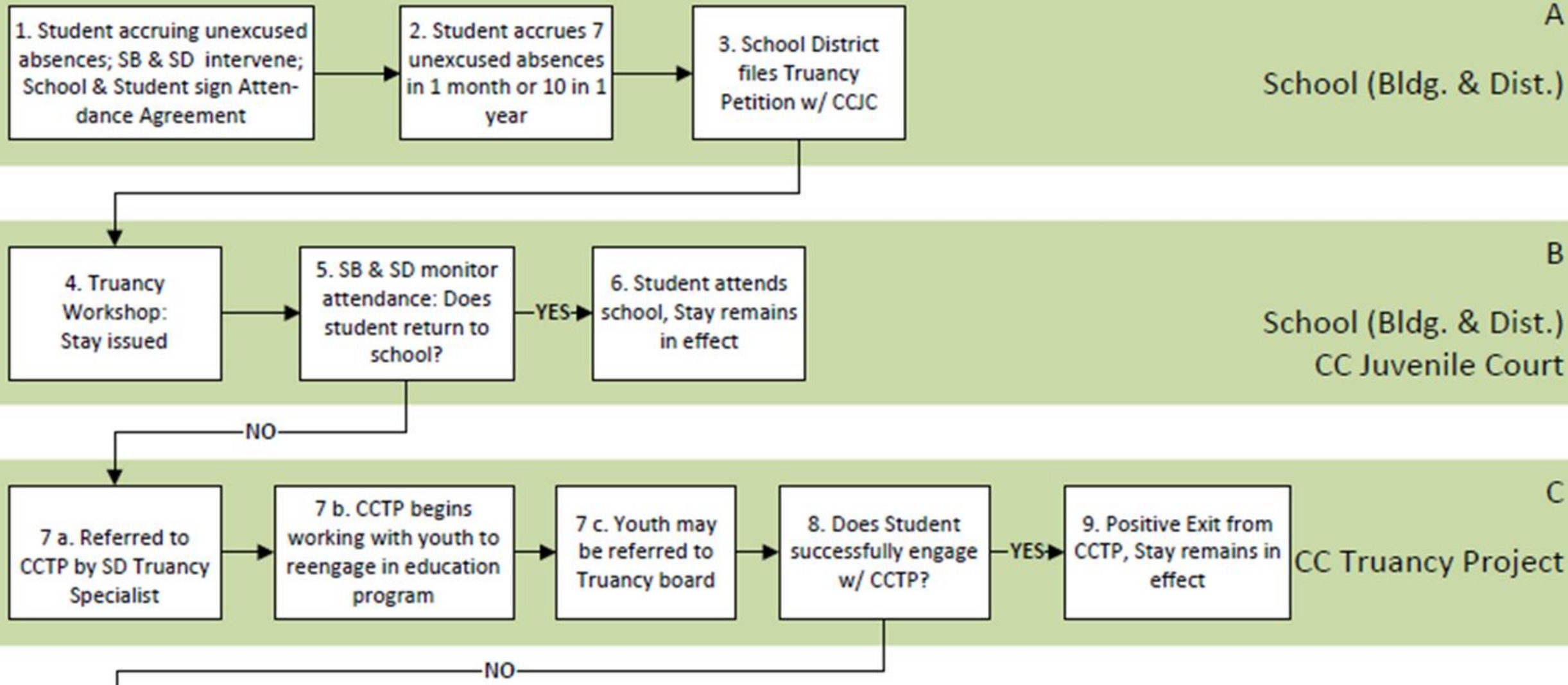


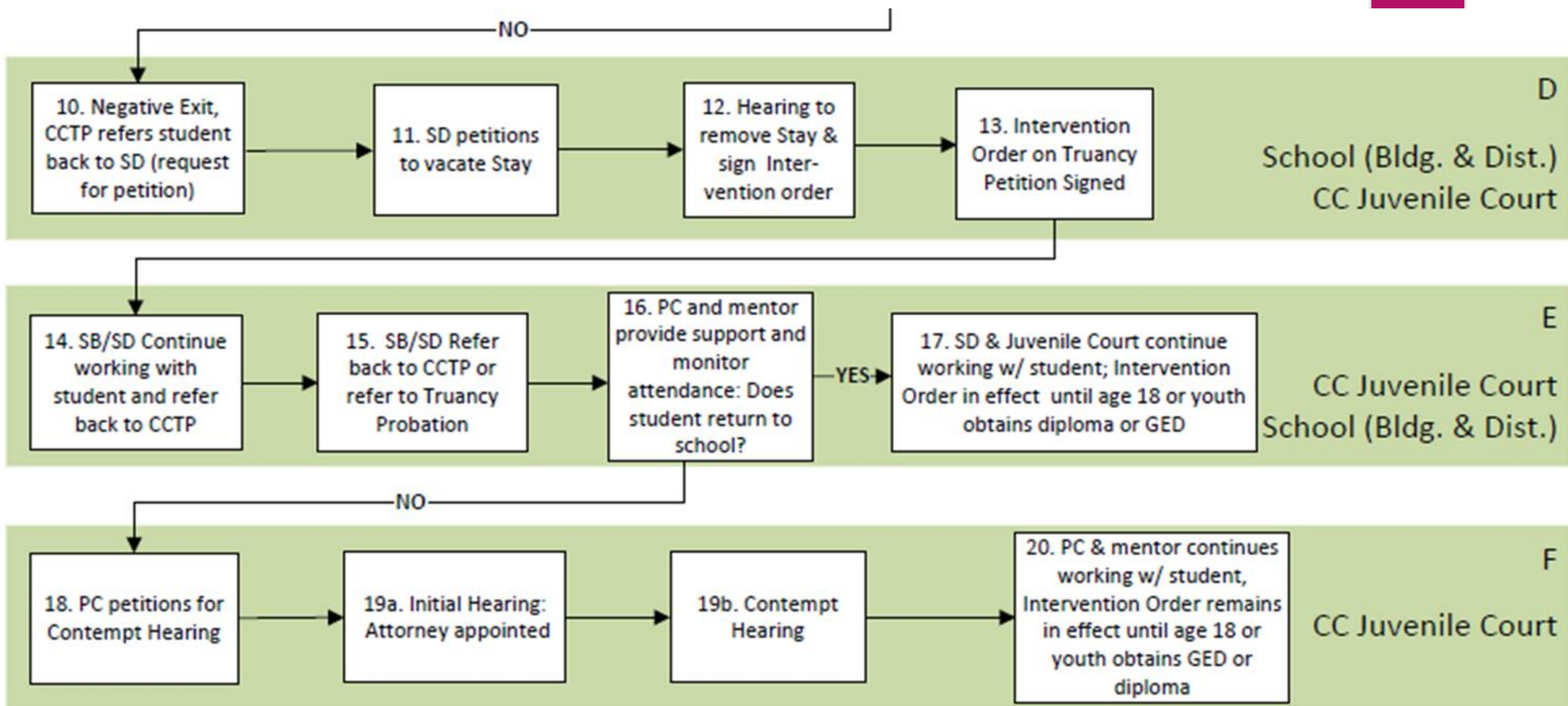
Given the position of the Bench and the research findings, **it was imperative to partner with schools and the community** to develop education and support services in a graduated response plan to increase school attendance and substantially reduce the need for the court to invoke contempt proceedings.

Who are the key stakeholders or decision makers you need to engage in your community to create and/or support effective interventions?

The New Process







Truancy: Pre-Petition

Pre-Petition Interventions

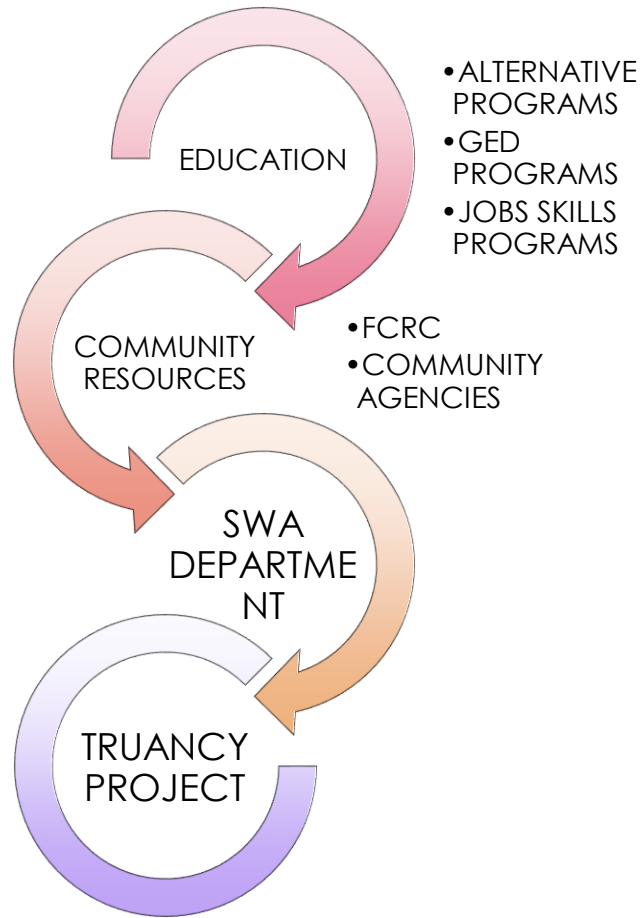
**Field
Attendance
Specialist**

**Attendance
Assessments**

**Student
Success
Coordinator**

RE³

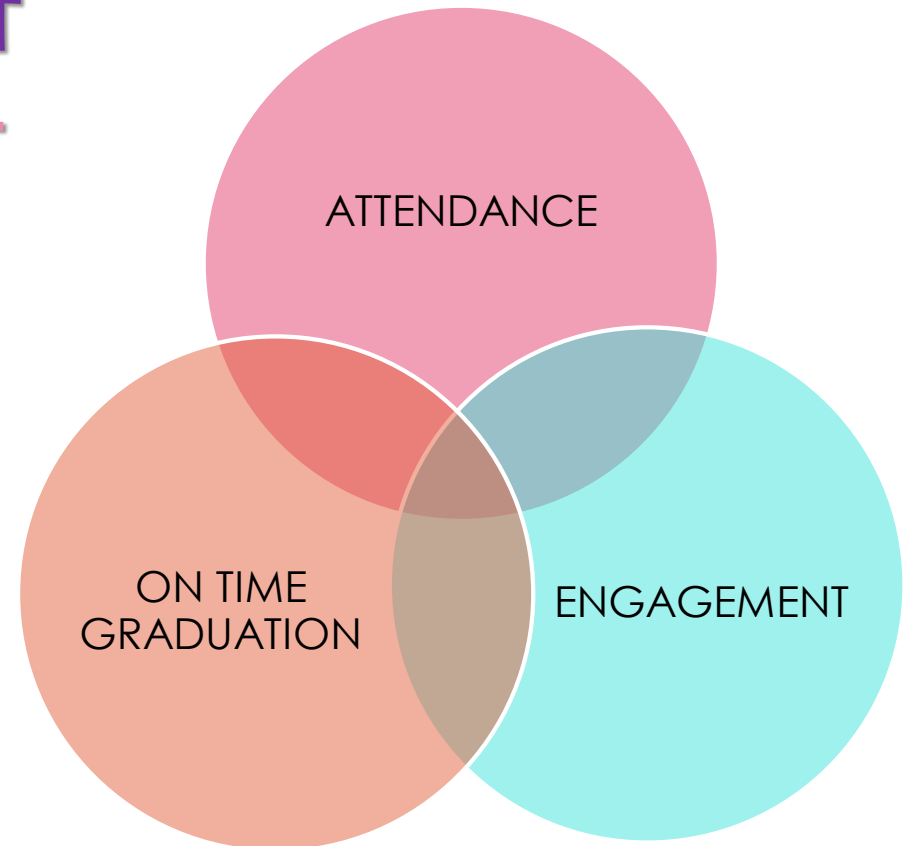
Truancy/Re-engagement Boards



RE-CONNECT

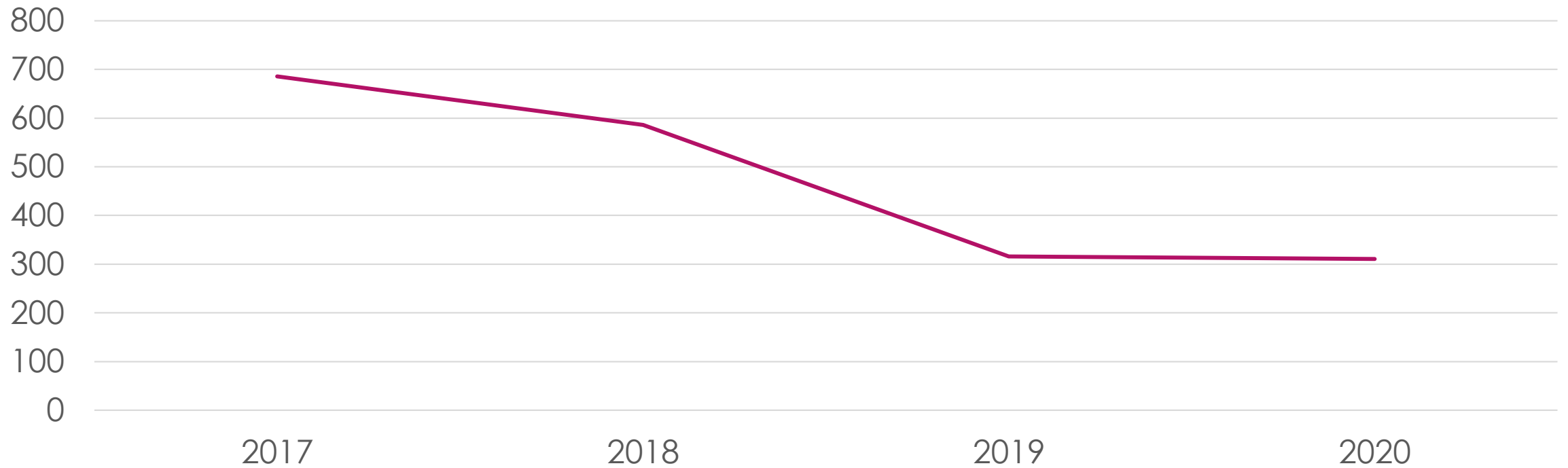
RE-COMMIT

RE-ENGAGE

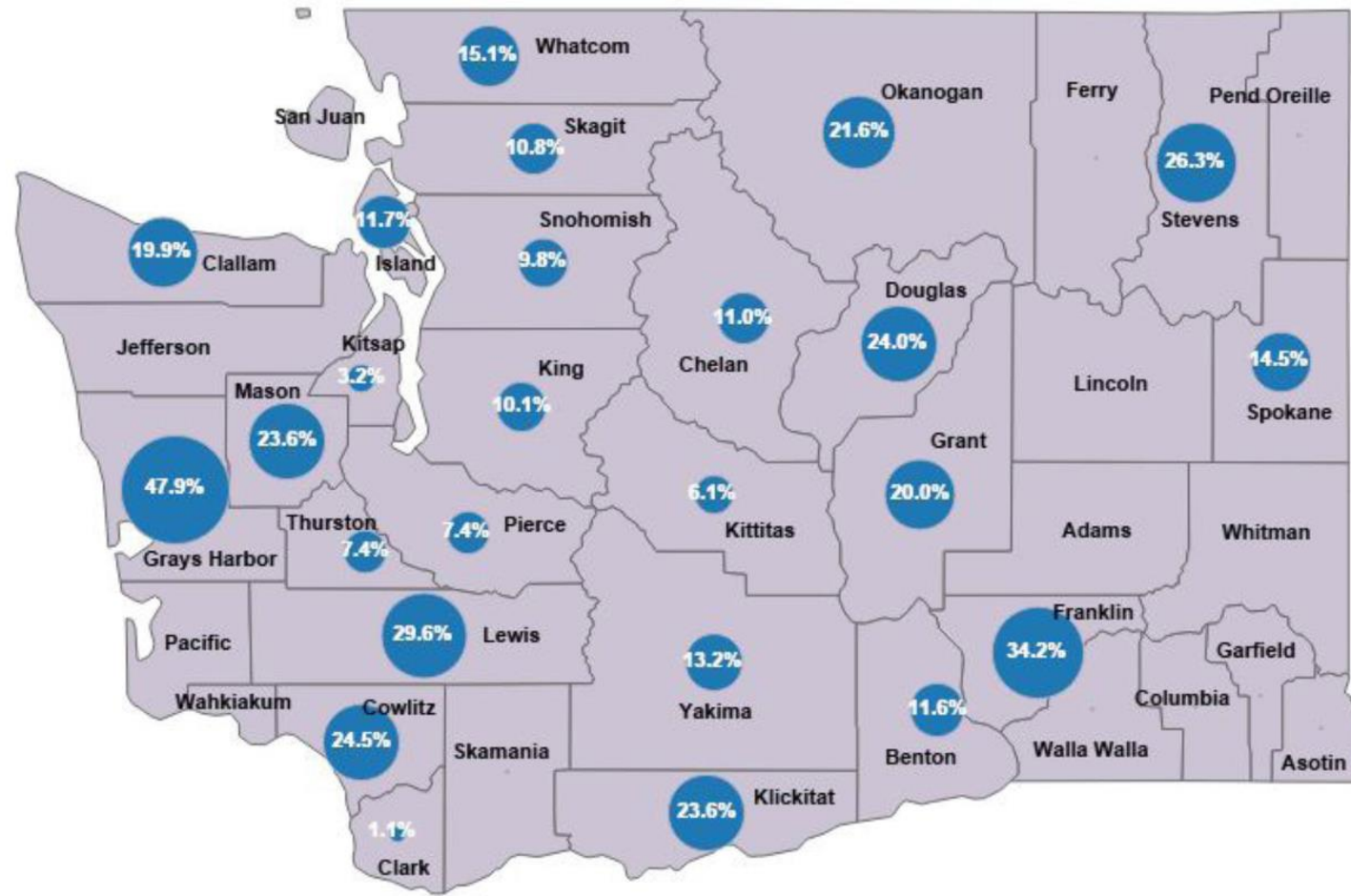


Our Outcomes

Truancy Cases Filed by Year



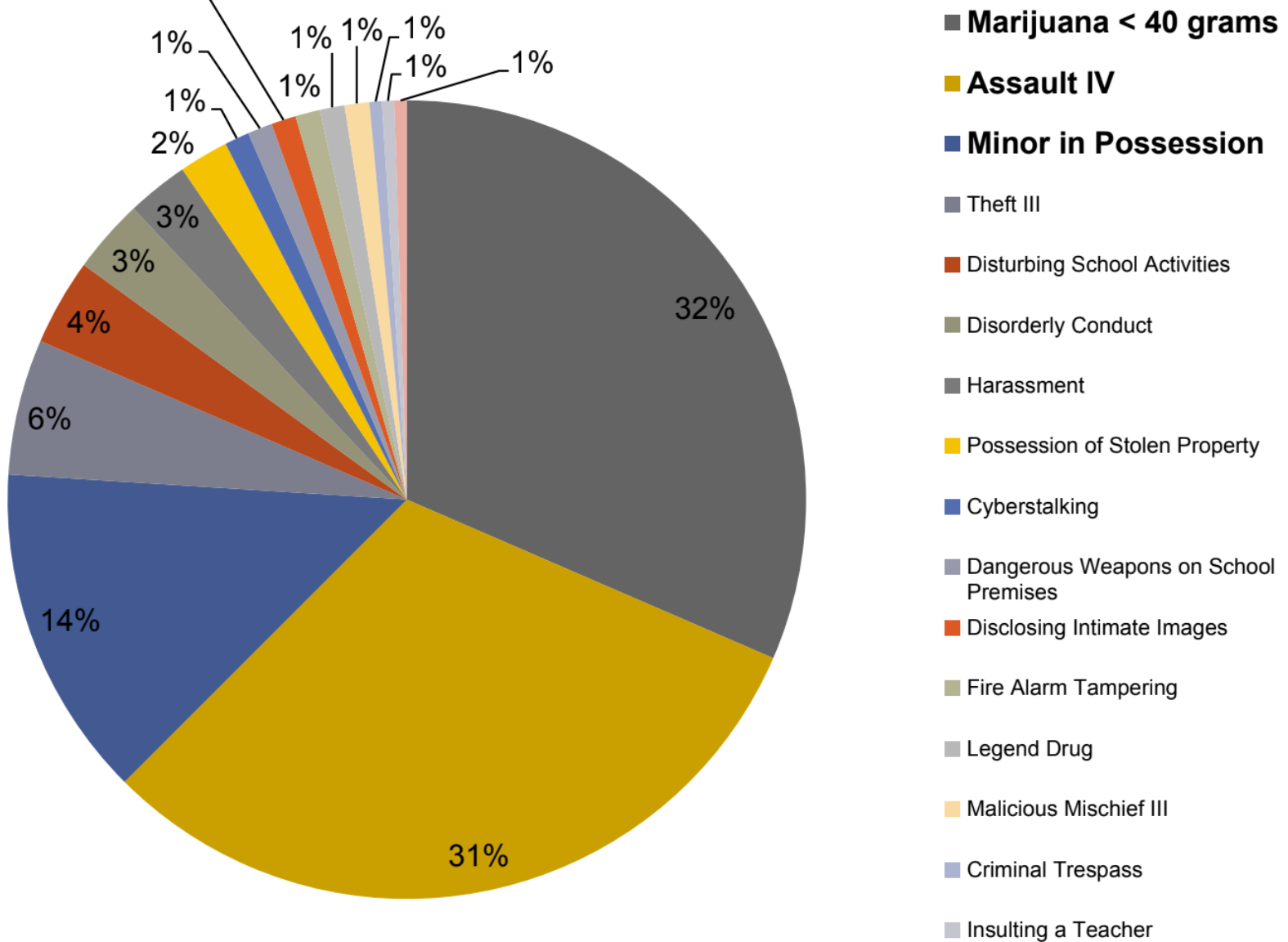
Admissions to Detention for Truancy - 2016



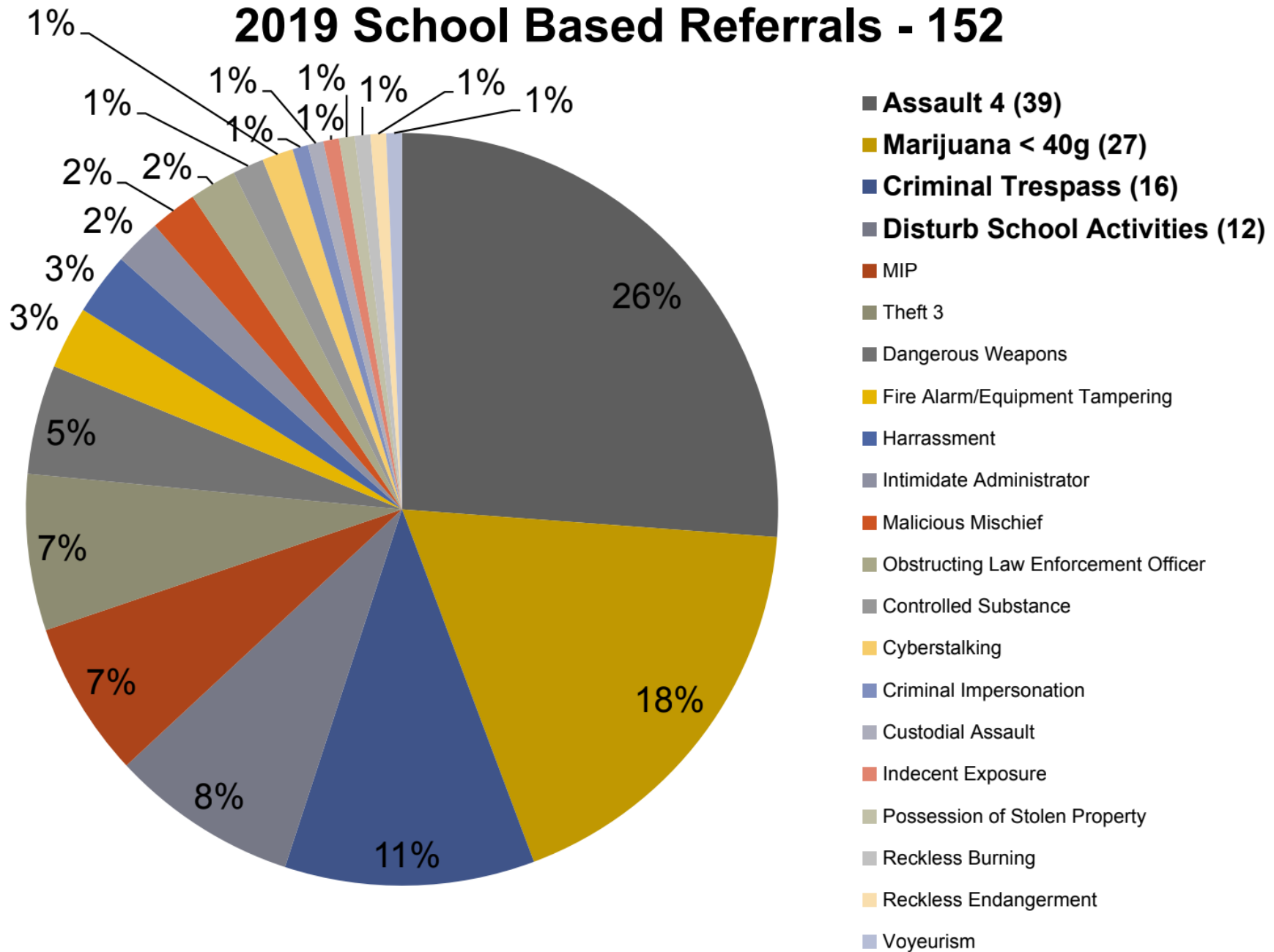
Success reducing truancy petition filings led to success reducing school related misdemeanor referrals and filings

- ▶ Established relationships and ongoing collaboration – Juvenile Justice Council
- ▶ Shared vision – Restorative Philosophy
- ▶ Annual trainings
- ▶ Access to data
- ▶ Pooling resources

2017 School Based Referrals - 230 Total



2019 School Based Referrals - 152



A Common Vision

We all desire our kids to grow into healthy, successful, productive, and contributing members of our community. Along the way, we know that they will make mistakes or poor choices. Being held accountable and repairing harm for poor conduct and delinquency is important, but incarcerating children should be the last option. Our goal is to provide kids the tools they need through education and social-emotional development that will encourage a sustainably prosperous outcome for all in an equitable manner. This approach does not ignore incidents of criminal conduct, but is responsive to evidence-based research that has proven to be more effective to reduce juvenile delinquency and increase public safety.