

**GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**  
**Child and Family Services Agency**



**Public Oversight Hearing on**  
**Chronic Absenteeism and Truancy**

Testimony of  
**Tanya Torres Trice**  
**Acting Director**

Before the  
Committee of the Whole  
The Honorable Phil Mendelson, Chairman

Council of the District of Columbia  
John A. Wilson Building,  
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20004

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12:00 p.m.  
Hearing Room 412 (Track B)  
DC Council Website ([www.dccouncil.gov](http://www.dccouncil.gov))

## **Introduction**

Good afternoon, Chairman Mendelson, councilmembers, and committee staff. I am Tanya Torres Trice, and I am proud to serve as the Acting Director of the DC Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA). I am joined today by Joseph Osiecki, Educational Neglect Triage Supervisor in the Office of Hotline and Investigations. I appreciate the opportunity to provide an update on CFSA's ongoing efforts to address chronic absenteeism and support schools across the District in improving attendance.

## **Building Stronger Cross-System Collaboration**

A child's success depends on the collective commitment of multiple systems working together to meet their needs. This is especially true for children involved in the child welfare system, for whom educational stability is a key predictor of long-term well-being. By strengthening collaboration between CFSA and education bodies across the District, we can ensure that every child has the support they need to thrive.

CFSA continues to partner with the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE), DC Public Schools (DCPS), and the DC Public Charter School Board (DCPCSB) to develop the School Year 2025–2026 Operational Guidance for all local education agencies (LEAs). This crucial document outlines the procedures that DC public schools, public charter schools, private schools, and CFSA will follow in response to concerns about students ages 5 to 13 who accumulate 10 or more unexcused absences.

Our partnership goes beyond developing guidance; it is built on close, regular collaboration. We continue to hold monthly check-in meetings with representatives from DCPS and DCPCSB to

discuss attendance data, reporting figures, and the impact the operational guidance has on educators' efforts to mitigate attendance issues for the District's students and families.

We continue to hold open office hours on a weekly basis where school staff from any LEA can ask questions about the educational neglect reporting and investigation processes.

This consistent communication ensures that we can identify and address challenges proactively.

### **Streamlining Processes and Improving Communication**

I am happy to report that in June 2025, CFSA launched its new comprehensive child welfare information system, Stronger Together Against Abuse and Neglect DC (STAAND). This system fully integrates the educational neglect reporting process into a single, unified platform. This is a significant improvement from previous years, where CFSA had to rely on a two-system approach and manually enter every referral into our legacy system.

To ensure our educational partners were ready to use this new system, Joseph Osiecki and his team led a summer outreach series focused on STAAND for DCPS and DCPCS school users. This training covered registration, the Mandated Reporter form, and the STAAND dashboard. Recognizing that any new system presents challenges, we also connected with all DCPS and DCPCS schools to identify points of contact and extend ongoing technical support this school year.

Each year, we gather feedback from schools to incorporate it into our practice, and this past school year was no different. Our school partners specifically asked for real-time access to the referrals they have made. In response, we built a new feature into STAAND that provides a real-time list of all educational neglect referrals a school has submitted, including the status of each

referral and the name of the assigned CFSA worker, if applicable. This is a major upgrade from our previous email-based system.

Additionally, to ease the reporting workload for schools, we now allow them to report sibling groups in a single referral. Previously, schools were required to report each student individually, which was very time-consuming. These updates promote greater transparency and efficiency across our collaboration.

This summer, CFSA worked closely with the Department of Human Services (DHS) to prepare for the upcoming Truancy Reduction Pilot Program at Kramer Middle School, scheduled to launch this fall. This initiative is a collaborative effort among DCPS, DCPCS, DHS, and CFSA to support families once a student reaches 10 unexcused absences. CFSA has provided continued support and assistance in building a strong referral pathway for this pilot program to our Educational Neglect Triage Unit.

### **CFSA Data and Outcomes**

For School Year 2024–2025 (August 1, 2024, through July 31, 2025), we received 7,857 educational neglect reports. Of these, 7,432 were screened out, 184 were screened in for investigation, and 52 investigations resulted in a substantiated finding of educational neglect. It is important to note that a screened-out referral does not mean the child and family do not receive support.

During the screen-out process, every referral receives the same level of care and attention. A CFSA educational neglect worker reviews the referral, conducts outreach to the school and family, completes a comprehensive history review, and takes any other necessary action to resolve attendance issues and/or determine if a child welfare response is warranted.

To provide further insight into the screened-out data, the top five reasons for a referral being screened out include:

- Does not rise to the level of an allegation of Educational Neglect
- Triage Unit Resolved Issues
- School interventions not exhausted
- Current CFSA Involvement
- Family is out of jurisdiction

Since the implementation of the Educational Neglect Unit in 2012, a very small number of reports have resulted in a substantiated finding of educational neglect. Despite this, CFSA continues to provide supportive resources to children and families who do not rise to the level of educational neglect.

### **Community Outreach and Resources**

As part of our comprehensive child and family well-being system, CFSA collaborates with various community-based organizations to provide essential support services, including educational supports, through our Collaboratives, the Family Success Centers, and the 211 Warmline.

In addition to monitoring calls to the Hotline and the Educational Neglect Portal, CFSA also monitors calls to the 211 Warmline for educational support requests. This past fiscal year, the 211 Warmline received 45 education-specific calls and were able to connect residents to community resources. Call agents responded to inquiries about OSSE grants, summer camps with a focus on technology and STEM, and educational opportunities like home health aide

training and GED programs. In each case, appropriate resources were provided, and no follow-up was required.

### **Conclusion**

CFSA will continue to partner with the education cluster to support efforts to reduce chronic absenteeism, aligning our role with cases that warrant child welfare intervention.

Our overall goals are the same: We believe children should be in school, and we will continue to be a strong partner in the District's efforts to reduce absenteeism. We understand that addressing chronic absenteeism demands a comprehensive, multi-pronged strategy and strong collaboration across all sectors. We look forward to strengthening our cross-system partnerships to enhance attendance outcomes and reduce educational neglect for children and families.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.