

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



**Public Oversight Roundtable Hearing on**  
**Improving School Attendance: Truancy and Chronic Absenteeism**  
**Issues in the District**

Testimony of  
**Elizabeth Muffoletto**  
Deputy Director of Entry Services

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

December 9, 2021  
10 a.m.

Virtual Hearing  
[www.ChairmanMendelson.com/live](http://www.ChairmanMendelson.com/live)

## **Introduction**

Good morning, Chairman Mendelson, councilmembers, and staff. I am Elizabeth Muffoletto and I serve as the Deputy Director of Entry Services for the DC Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA). I appreciate the opportunity to provide an update regarding CFSA's activities around addressing chronic absenteeism and supporting schools across the District of Columbia in improving school attendance.

## **CFSA Updates**

CFSA has partnered with the Office of the State Superintendent for Education (OSSE), DC Public Schools (DCPS), and the DC Public Charter School Board (DCPCSB) to create the School Year 2021-2022 Operational Guidance for all local education agencies (LEAs). This document outlines the processes DC public schools, public charter schools, private schools and CFSA will undertake this school year in response to concerns about students ages five to 13 who miss 10 or more full unexcused school days from virtual learning, in-person learning, or a combination of both.

This partnership between the District's education and child welfare agencies consists of close, regular collaboration. On a monthly basis, we 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. This year, we implemented a new strategy to support school-based attendance staff through the launch of CFSA's virtual "office hours." On a weekly basis, staff from any LEA has access to the Supervisor of the Educational Neglect Triage Unit Supervisor and they can ask questions about the educational neglect reporting and investigation processes. Staff can also vocalize concerns about attendance issues with students within their school community and get recommendations for next steps.

CFSA continues to receive reports of educational neglect and conduct its intake process via the Child Protective Services Administration. CFSA employs a specialized unit of social workers with the job responsibility of partnering with CFSA's Triage Unit and DC schools to investigate reports of educational neglect. This unit facilitates improved communication with schools and engagement with families to identify the underlying issues that result in children/youth not consistently attending school. In addition to these staff members, through funding provided by the American Rescue Plan Act, CFSA was granted four additional resource development specialist (RDS) positions to strengthen the agency's capacity to process referrals and work with families. As the agency's Human Resource Administration works through the hiring process, once onboarded, these RDSs will primarily work in the community with schools conducting wellness checks, locating and engaging parents and guardians, and connecting families to resources that help remove attendance barriers for their children.

CFSA is committed to being a strong member of the District's team for addressing absenteeism among our learners.

## **Conclusion**

CFSA appreciates your interest and oversight on this important issue, and we look forward to strengthening our partnerships across systems to improve 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.