

PROJECT THRIVE
(TRUANCY HABITS REDUCED, INTERVENTIONS VIA EDUCATION)

EVALUATION &
CATEGORICAL ASSISTANCE PERFORMANCE REPORT



SCHOOL YEAR 2003-2004

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EVALUATION & CATEGORICAL ASSISTANCE PERFORMANCE REPORT

Section I. Please refer to the goals and objectives detailed in your application for continuation funding. Please report on your progress towards each of the goals and objectives in the following format:

Since Ohio passed *Senate Bill 181* making it mandatory that school children meet the minimum attendance requirements of the state, parents/guardians of school-age children have been educated about the legal consequences of SB 181 largely through the coordinated efforts of the Summit County Juvenile Court Truancy Task Force. In conjunction with **Project THRIVE - Truancy Habits Reduced, Interventions Via Education** - the Summit County Juvenile Court Truancy Task Force collaborates with Project THRIVE, Summit County Juvenile Court, and school systems to offer a myriad of services to students and their families living in Summit County. Project THRIVE is a comprehensive truancy and substance abuse prevention program designed to provide school districts with sound strategies for addressing truancy among at-risk youth in Summit County. The program is designed to prevent chronic and habitual truancy and substance abuse in students identified as “at-risk.” THRIVE’s program modalities include truancy awareness, early intervention, treatment, intervention and prevention, mediation, and case management for at-risk students and their families.

During the past school year, THRIVE served four school districts in Summit County (i.e., Akron, Barberton, Cuyahoga Falls, and Woodridge) and continued to offer numerous intervention and prevention activities throughout 12 schools. In the Akron school district, Barber, Bettes, McBright, Rankin and Schumacher Academy participated in THRIVE. In Barberton, Oakdale participated in THRIVE. In Woodridge, Primary, Intermediate and Middle schools participated in the program along with DeWitt, Price, and Sill schools in Cuyahoga Falls school district. In SY 2003-04, Project THRIVE increased the number of students served by more than 92%, when compared to SY 2002-03. This year, Project THRIVE served 444 at-risk students and the program was expanded to serve six additional schools. In both years, most students served by the THRIVE Program were from the Akron school district (see **Table 1 – Frequency Distribution of At-Risk Students by School District**).

Table 1				
Frequency Distribution of At-Risk Students by School District				
	SY 2000-03		SY 2003-04	
School Districts	#	%	#	%
Akron	86	37.2	219	49.3
Barberton	38	16.5	49	11.0
Cuyahoga Falls	46	19.9	58	13.1
Woodridge	61	26.4	115	25.9
Unknown			3	0.7
Total	231	100.0	444	100.0
Source: CHC Project THRIVE Demographics Database				

The goals and objectives of Project THRIVE include the following:

1. *Prevent substance abuse among “at-risk” students achieved by the following objectives: Decrease the number of absences (and tardies) among the “at-risk” population by 40%; increase understanding of substance abuse by 60%; and increase participation in extracurricular activities by 30%.*
2. *Prevent substance abuse achieved by the following objectives: Decrease the number of absences/tardies among the targeted population as compared to last school year by 40%; and increase family’s knowledge between the correlation of truancy and substance abuse by 50%.*
3. *Decrease substance abuse among targeted population achieved by the following objectives: Reduce the number of suspensions for drug-related offenses among youth that have a history of truancy in pilot schools comparing years 2001-02 to 2002-03 by 40%; and reduce substance related criminal activity by program participants by 40%.*
4. *Reduce truancy by adhering to State mandate of 93% school attendance achieved by the following objectives: Increase attendance rates of youth in selected schools to meet 93% attendance rate; decrease recidivism of juvenile complaints of both youth and families by 50%.*

The following data are used to provide an evaluative summary for Project THRIVE - to see which aspects of the program are most effective so that client services can be improved.

Goal 1: Prevent substance abuse among “at-risk” students achieved by the following objectives: Decrease the number of absences (and tardies) among the “at-risk” population by 40%; increase understanding of substance abuse by 60%; and increase participation in extracurricular activities by 30%.

Objective 1: Decreased Number of Absences/Truancy

During the school year 2003-2004, school administrators identified more than four hundred students as being at-risk for truancy in Summit County. School administrators identified 444 at-risk students as those who have had three or more unexcused

absences since the beginning of the school year. On occasion, school administrators refer children/families to Project THRIVE when they have determined that a child's excessive excused absences or tardies place the student at-risk. During this evaluation period, program activities designed to work with the student, family, school personnel, and case manager demonstrate that 278 early intervention letters were sent to parents/guardians informing them of their child's absences and warning them of the risks to their family (e.g., academic and legal consequences); 334 student mediations sessions were scheduled with students, parents/guardians, school personnel and case managers - with completed agreements among 212 families (a completion rate of 64%).

As indicated in Table 2, **Attendance Outcome Data for Program THRIVE**, attendance outcomes were calculated as follows: **Successful Attendance** means that the student successfully completed Program THRIVE and/or had fewer than 3 unexcused or excused absences from the time of last contact with the program; **No Change** means that the student missed three or more additional days of school since participating in the Program; **No Service** means that the family of the at-risk student transferred from the school district and/or were non-compliant (refused case management or otherwise disengaged from the program); and **Court Referral** means that the family of the at-risk student was referred to the Summit County Juvenile Court due to unchanged truant behavior.

As was the case in the previous school year, the number of absences among the "at-risk" population decreased considerably. Of the 137 students terminated at the end of the school year - those who were on active caseload and received mediation and case management services - almost 60% decreased their number of absences and improved their attendance rate during the school year. These students had fewer than three unexcused or excused absences from the time of last contact with the program. Only 4.4% of these families were referred to juvenile court for violation of S.B. 181; 10% transferred from their referring school district and/or were non-compliant; and 26% missed three or more additional school days. Compared to SY 2002-03, this school year more students successfully completed the program and the number of families referred to juvenile court continues to remain under 5%. Students/families who received mediation and/or case management services through Project THRIVE improved their attendance rates overall.

Table 2: Attendance Outcome Data for Project THRIVE				
	SY 2002-03		SY 2003-04	
	#	%	#	%
Outcomes				
Successful Attendance	89	56.3	81	59.1
No Change	28	17.8	36	26.3
No Service	37	24.4	14	10.2
Court Referral	4	2.5	6	4.4
Total	158	100.1	137	100.0
* Percentage due to rounding.				
Source: Project THRIVE Client/Termination Database				

Project THRIVE continues to provide support for parents and children at-risk for truancy. Between January and June 2004, project staff provided 1,626 hours of direct service contacts to families (and schools) supported by the program. Specifically, 334 of those hours were house visits, 749 hours were consultation, case coordination, and referral services; and 542 hours were prevention services.

In this evaluation period, the Summit County Quality of Life/Partnership for Success designated “reducing truancy” as one of three countywide goals to better life for children largely due to the activism of the Truancy Task Force and Project THRIVE. In addition to providing services to schools, Project THRIVE cosponsors school programming and offers summer programming for children living in districts served by THRIVE. During the summer 2004, Project THRIVE case managers began the Summer Enrichment Program to address truancy and AOD prevention. These activities began in June 2004 and included titled programming such as Akron Mayor’s After School Summer Program, Honey-Locust Summer Enrichment Program, Honey Locust Family Learning Night, National Youth Sports Program, Summit County Juvenile Truancy Court, Summit County Detention Groups, Sill Middle School Leadership & Mentoring Camp, Perkins Middle School “Activities Central,” Van Buren Summer Group, and the Summit County Juvenile Detention Center Friday Education/Process groups. These findings suggest that Project THRIVE has made a significant impact on the lives of at-risk students and their families.

Objective 2: Increase Understanding of Substance Abuse

Students in the schools served by Project THRIVE are becoming increasingly aware of the harmful effects of substance abuse. As indicated in Table 3, **Survey of Perceived Risk & Disapproval of Drug Use**, these data reveal that students have an excellent understanding of the harmful effects of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs.

Survey data results reveal that almost all of the students served by Project THRIVE understand that drug addiction can negatively affect their relationship with their parents and friends and that using these substances including alcohol, tobacco and street drugs prevent them from academically succeeding in school.

As part of the numerous prevention activities conducted by Project THRIVE and members of the Task Force, case managers provided anti-drug education to 533 students in each of the school districts served by Project THRIVE. Pre- and post-test survey results for these presentations clearly demonstrate the effectiveness of prevention activities on students exposed to information that increases their awareness and understanding of substance abuse. As indicated in Table 3, **Survey of Perceived Risk & Disapproval of Drug Use (Pre- & Post-test Results) for SY 2003-04**, survey results revealed that an increased number of students clearly understood the psychological, social and physical hazards of substance abuse. For example, the post-test results revealed that 97% of the students perceived their parents would disapprove of any substance use (i.e., alcohol, cigarette, or drugs). Student perceptions regarding the use of alcohol, drugs, and tobacco are equally

encouraging. Approximately 98% of the students indicated that their friends think people who smoke cigarettes and drink alcohol hurt themselves. Almost all of the students surveyed in the post-test (97%) indicated that their friends think marijuana usage is bad.

Comparatively speaking, pre- and post-test results revealed modest changes in the perceived risk and disapproval of drug use – representing increased awareness of substance abuse after students participated in Project THRIVE prevention activities. Drug, tobacco, and alcohol use among the program population remains significantly low, family values regarding substance abuse are positive and peer pressure regarding AoD issues are appropriate for this age group. Overall, these survey data suggest that students participating in Project THRIVE have an increased understanding of substance abuse far greater than 60%.

Table 3			
Survey of Perceived Risk & Disapproval of Drug Use (Pre- & Post-test Results)*			
Survey Questions	Pre-test Results	Post-test Results	Percent Difference
Would your parents be mad if you drank alcohol?	96.6	97.7	1.1
Would your parents be mad if you smoked cigarettes?	97.8	97.9	0.1
Do your friends think it is bad if you try marijuana?	97.2	96.9	-0.3
Do your friends think people who use drugs are smart?	3.0	3.5	0.5
Do you think people hurt themselves by smoking cigarettes?	97.8	97.5	-0.3
Do you think people hurt themselves by drinking alcohol?	96.4	97.9	1.5
Have you drunk alcohol in the last 30 days?	1.5	1.0	-0.5
Have you smoked cigarettes in the last 30 days?	0.2	0.0	-0.2
Have you smoked marijuana in the last 30 days?	0.2	0.2	-
* Pre & Post-test Results reported for “yes” responses only			
Survey results for SY 2003-04; Pretest N=533; Posttest N=515			
Source: CHC Project THRIVE Database, Student Survey of Perceived Risk & Disapproval of Drug Use			

Objective 3: Increase Participation in Extra-Curricular Activities

Project THRIVE staff continues to significantly increase participation in extra-curricula activities which focus on truancy and substance abuse awareness. During SY 2003-04, project staff provided age-appropriate prevention information to approximately 1,836 children and their families – up 41% from last year. Between January and June 2004, project staff conducted 69 extra-curricular prevention activities in schools and in communities. Some of the extra-curricular activities organized and/or assisted by project staff included: attending parent/child activity night, facilitating intervention and awareness programs for after-school programs, attending monthly meetings on promoting youth and alcohol advertisements, presenting drug, alcohol and tobacco prevention activities at THRIVE schools, attending the after-school programs of THRIVE schools, providing information about the dangers of tobacco to youth as well as a host of other prevention activities. Moreover, project staff is dedicated to ensuring that at-risk students participate in extra-curricular activities throughout the school year and summer months.

Goal 2: *Prevent substance abuse achieved by the following objectives: Decrease the number of absences/tardies among the targeted population as compared to last school year by 40%; and increase family’s*

Objective 1: Decrease number of absences/tardies

As was mentioned in the evaluation of Goal 1, the number of absences among the “at-risk” population decreased considerably. Of the 137 students terminated at the end of the school year - those who were on active caseload and received mediation and case management services – almost 60% decreased their number of absences and improved their attendance rate during the school year. From the time students were referred to the program, the mean number of unexcused absences for this group was 4.61. When these cases were terminated from the program, the mean number of unexcused absences for this group was 6.52. This finding suggests that the students significantly reduced their unexcused absences after engaging in the THRIVE program.

Objective 2: Increase Family Knowledge of Truancy and Substance Abuse

Project THRIVE’s case managers continue to conduct workshops and presentations aimed at involving families in its program modalities. Program staff focused each of these workshops/presentations on educating parents about the positive correlation between truancy and substance abuse. Staff involve parents in THRIVE’s public campaign to prevent truancy and substance abuse among in Summit County. Since January 2004, case managers educated nearly 100 families at various school functions and community events that included: School Open Houses, Parent/Child Night, and Parent-Teacher meetings. In addition, case managers spent approximately 334 hours educating parents about truancy and substance abuse in their homes.

Based on the survey data collected after parents completed mediation, Project THRIVE has been successful in encouraging parents to take an active role in the academic lives of their children. As indicated in Table 4, **Frequency Distribution of Truancy Knowledge Survey Results for Parents**, 87 parents were surveyed after they completed mediation services provided by the program. Ninety-nine percent of the parents surveyed are aware of the legal consequences regarding truancy under Senate Bill 181. Additionally, 98% of the parents understand that they may have to go to court if their child misses too much school. Almost 60% of the parents surveyed report that kids who miss school are more likely to use illegal drugs than kids who attend school regularly. Almost 85% of parents clearly understand that school attendance leads to academic success. Overall, these findings suggest that parents are educated about the state law regarding truancy and are increasingly aware of the negative correlation between truant behavior and risks of substance abuse.

Table 4			
Frequency Distribution of Truancy Knowledge Survey Results for Parents (N=87)			
	% True	% False	% Unkn wn
If kids are not in school, they are more likely to use illegal drugs**	58.6	37.9	3.4
Being absent from school doesn't affect a child's grades	16.1	83.9	0.0
A new state law can send parents to jail if their children don't go to school	98.9	0.0	1.1
Students who drop out of school are more likely to be unemployed	88.5	11.5	0.0
Missing school makes children feel bad about themselves**	65.5	33.3	1.1
There is no penalty for parents if their children miss school**	3.4	94.3	2.2
If a child misses too much school, the parents may have to go to court	97.7	0.0	2.3
Most people in prison have a high school diploma	9.2	85.1	5.7

In addition to the information collected as parents completed mediation, parents were surveyed at the end of the school year to determine their satisfaction with the services received from Project THRIVE and to determine their understanding of the correlation between truancy and substance abuse. Regarding truancy and substance abuse, 78% of the 60 parents surveyed indicated that their knowledge regarding the importance of school attendance increased because both parent and child participated in Project THRIVE and 48% indicated their knowledge about substance abuse increased because parent and child participated in Project THRIVE (See Table 7, **Parent Satisfaction Survey**).

Goal 3: *Decrease substance abuse among targeted population achieved by the following objectives: Reduce the number of suspensions for drug-related offenses among youth that have a history of truancy in pilot schools comparing years 2001-02 to 2002-03 by 40%; and reduce substance-related criminal activity by program participants by 40%.*

Objective 1: Reduce School Suspensions for drug-related & substance-related offenses

Since the implementation of Project THRIVE, all of the participating schools have noticed a decrease in the number of suspensions related to drug offenses and criminal activity. During the SY 2003-04, all of the school representatives were surveyed and asked to provide the number of students suspended for criminal activity and the number of students suspended for drug-related activity. Of the twelve schools who received services from Project THRIVE, only Woodridge Middle reported having six drug-related suspensions that involved four youth, during SY 2003-04. All other schools reported no suspensions for criminal and drug-related activity during the SY 2003-04, SY 2002-03, and SY 2001-02.

Goal 4: *Reduce truancy by adhering to State mandate of 93% school attendance achieved by the following objectives: Increase attendance rates of youth in selected schools to meet 93% attendance rate; decrease recidivism of juvenile complaints of both youth and families by 50%.*

Objective 1: Increase School Attendance Rates

In SY 2003-04, all of the (reporting) schools participating in Project THRIVE continued to maintain school attendance rates at or above the State mandate of 93%. As indicated in Table 5, **School Attendance Rates**, the average attendance rate for the schools in the program increased to 95% - up 1% from SY 2002-03.

Table 5				
School Attendance Rates				
	SY 2000-01	SY 2001-02	SY 2002-03	SY 2003-04
Akron Public Schools				
Barber	-	-	-	95.6%
Bettes	-	-	-	95.9%
McEbright Elementary	-	-	-	94.3%
Rankin Elementary	95.3%	95.3%	95.8%	95.9%
Schumacher Elementary	95.4%	95.4%	96.7%	96.3%
Barberton				
Oakdale Elementary	94.1%	94.4%	93.8%	95.0%
Cuyahoga Falls				
Dewitt Elementary*	-	-	95.8%	95.8%
Price Elementary*	-	-	-	94.8%
Sill Middle*	-	-	-	94.2%
Woodridge				
Woodridge Primary	94.6%	94.7%	95.4%	95.0%
Woodridge Intermediate*	-	-	-	95.4%
Woodridge Middle*	-	-	-	95.8%
Average**	95%	95%	94%	95%
* Attendance data not available for SY 2003-04; Data reported for SY 2002-03.				
** Average of Project THRIVE schools reflects a cumulative average.				

Objective 2: Decrease Juvenile Recidivism Rates

In Summit County, the number of families found in violation of S.B. 181 (court hearings for truancy/failure to send cases) has decreased significantly since the implementation of Project THRIVE. Since January 2004, 763 juvenile court cases for “failure to send” were processed in SY 2002-03 compared to 625 in SY 2003-04 – representing a decrease of 18%. In fact, court referrals for truancy/failure to send cases have decreased every year since the Task Force and Project THRIVE have been in existence.

Section II. Please review the timeline submitted with your application for funding. Attach a copy of the timeline in your current approved award. Thoroughly address the following questions:

1. What were the factors that impacted development, implementation, success and stumbling blocks of this program/initiative?

In order to implement Project THRIVE in twelve schools, several grant applications were submitted to numerous agencies and foundations in SY 2003-04. In addition to the funding provided by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention,

the Community Health Center successfully secured six additional grants totaling \$69,300, from the following entities:

Barberton Community Foundation (\$12,000)
Department of Job and Family Services - Summit County (\$25,000)
Department of Youth Services (\$29,000)
Dollar General (\$1,000)
Holland Oil (\$300)
Lloyd & Louise K. Smith Foundation (\$2,000)

One of the successful factors identified in this evaluation of Project THRIVE is the Community Health Center's ability to develop community partnerships in programming. During the next school year, Akron Public School has promised to provide a match of \$52,500 to help support program services for Project THRIVE. While additional funding is always a major stumbling block for most programs, Project THRIVE staff continue to campaign with other stakeholders to solicit their participation when educating the community about the positive correlation of truancy and substance abuse.

During the SY 2003-04, the court administrator who inspired many members on the Summit County Truancy Task Force left the employment of the Juvenile Court. While the focus of the court remained extremely supportive of the goals and objectives for Project THRIVE, the Task Force was reorganized and downsized. In past years, Task Force membership had increased to almost 50 members. New members were invited to join the Task Force upon an invitation to speak about the services offered by their local organization. The new coordinator of the Task Force encouraged the downsizing of the Task Force to ensure that its goals were met and to offer membership to those who directly influence/educate the court, schools and families about truancy.

2. What corrective action will you take?

Since downsizing membership on the Task Force, Project THRIVE has continued to fulfill its stated goals and objectives. Court administrators and magistrates, school personnel and project staff remain committed to improving coordination and service-related information used to assist families at-risk.

3. What adjustments will you make to your timeline?

Project THRIVE has stayed on course this year according to the timeline originally submitted in the application for continued funding. The truancy awareness campaign, which began at the start of the school year, was very successful. Billboards and posters which espoused the message – "The classroom or the courtroom: It's your choice ... Go to school. It's the law." - reminded members of the community that truancy is taken seriously in Summit County. Prevention, mediation, and chronic truancy programming continued on course as case managers assisted families in addressing personal issues that lead to habitual or chronic truancy. Fundraising to sustain the program continued throughout the summer and grants will be submitted to assure that funding is available to provide case management, mediation and referral services to families in need. Each of the annual agency audits were conducted by JCHO and ODADAS as was anticipated and the Division of Youth Services also conducted an internal audit of the Community Health Center.

4. Was there a request for technical assistance, and if so, what type and from whom?

Project THRIVE and the Summit County Truancy Task Force did not request technical assistance during this evaluation period; however, both are exploring ways in which they might increase mass media campaigns regarding truancy and increase parental involvement in participating schools.

Section III. Please attach information on four core data (for clarity of the data please provide in narrative form.) If you provided this information in your last report, state so, but also provide any relevant updates or insights such as evidence based data; increased sector membership, resources or parental involvement; impacts derived from police

1. Age of Onset

During SY 2003-04, age-related data was available for the 251 students referred to the program. As indicated in **Table 6, Frequency Distribution of Ages of Participating Students**, almost 30% of all at-risk students referred to Project THRIVE were between ages 6 and 7. In fact, nearly 60% of the students referred to Project THRIVE were under 10 years old. The average age of students referred to the program for mediation and/or case management was 9.10, representing a range of 6 to 14 years old.

Table 6		
Frequency Distribution of Ages* of Participating Students		
Age	Number	Percent**
6	26	10.4
7	46	18.3
8	42	16.7
9	33	13.1
10	38	15.1
11	24	9.6
12	23	9.2
13	16	6.4
14	3	1.2
Total	251	100.0
* Age calculated based on student age as of 7/26/04; * Percentage due to rounding.		
Source: Age data calculated based on CHC Project THRIVE Demographics Database		

Frequency of Use in the Past 30 Days

Although Project THRIVE expanded the number of schools served this year, the number of students who report using alcohol, drugs, or tobacco continues to remain less than 1%.

At post-test, five (1%) of 515 students reported using alcohol in the last 30 days and one student (0.2%) reported using marijuana. By grade-level, a more detailed analysis indicated that 5th grade students reported using alcohol and drugs in the last 30 days. No students reporting smoking cigarettes in the last 30 days (See Table 3 - **Survey of Perceived Risk & Disapproval of Drug Use**). While there were no students who were referred from Project THRIVE to the Community Health Center for AoD treatment, two parents served by the program were referred for AoD treatment.

Perception of Harm

As indicated in Table 3, **Survey of Perceived Risk & Disapproval of Drug Use**, pre- and post-test results for students participating in prevention activities of Project THRIVE clearly demonstrated an increased understanding of the risks associated with substance abuse. Almost 98% of the students perceived that their parents would be mad or disapprove if they ‘drank alcohol or smoked cigarettes’. At least 98% of the students believed that people who drank alcohol or smoked cigarettes hurt themselves. Overall, test results revealed increases in knowledge of substance abuse and perception of harm.

Perception of disapproval of use by peers and adults

Survey data collected in Table 3, **Survey of Perceived Risk & Disapproval of Drug Use**, revealed that more than 97% of the students surveyed reported that their peers think drug use is ‘bad’ and that their peers think people who use drugs exercise poor judgment or “are not very smart.” In Table 4, **Truancy Knowledge Survey Results for Parents**, the data revealed that 59% of all parents surveyed believed that kids who are not in school are more likely to use illegal drugs. In Table 7, **Parent Satisfaction Survey**, 48% of those families who received extensive case management services reported an increase in their knowledge about substance abuse because both the parent and the child participated in Project THRIVE. These data suggest that perception of disapproval of use by peers and adults continued to increase as a result of client participation in and exposure to Project THRIVE programming.

Section IV. Please provide a detailed response to the following questions. Your responses will be used to collaborate with other Drug-Free grantees and to assess your needs, if any, for technical assistance.

1. In the past six months, have the efforts of the coalition worked or not worked to reduce youth substance abuse? If yes, what is working? If no, provide detailed explanation.

Response: In an effort to address the questions contained in Section IV, a special meeting of the Summit County Juvenile Court Truancy Task Force was convened. The responses of task force members are summarized throughout this section. These responses clearly articulate the commitment of coalition members to remain steadfast in their approach to eradicate truancy and substance abuse among youth in Summit County.

Project THRIVE continues to work diligently to prevent substance abuse and truancy through the Summit County Juvenile Court and Truancy Task Force - a strong coalition of Juvenile Court staff, parents, youth treatment providers, community/agency partners, police department representatives, and Summit County school administrators and educators. Project staff has done an excellent job of increasing collaboration when planning prevention, extra-curricular, and family activities in conjunction with coalition members and community organizations. The downsizing of the Truancy Task Force has enabled the coalition to include key decision-makers who are directly involved with school districts and closely interact with families at-risk. Current membership on the Task Force include diversion specialists, social service directors, attendance officers, truancy officers, and other school and judicial administrators who are consider essential to improving and enhancing communication between the courts, schools and communities. The successful redirection of the Task Force allows all stakeholders to examine the processes and procedures used when referring cases to Juvenile Court and effectively change the

referral process so that judicial intervention can be pursued for those families who are chronically or habitually truant.

2. In the past six months, has the level of collaboration improved? Please explain.

Response: The level of collaboration has improved among the courts, schools and communities served by Project THRIVE. Since January 2004, the Task Force has worked with Barberton Public schools to ensure that truant cases are referred and heard in a timely manner at Summit County Juvenile Court. Initially the Task Force met quarterly; however, many members of the Task Force felt the need to standardize the meeting schedule and the Task Force is now returning to a monthly meeting schedule. Task Force planning continues despite challenges in establishing a meeting schedule to accommodate all of the members of the coalition. In SY 2004-05, the Task Force will continue the campaign poster, beginning August/September 2004 and have planned for 30 billboards in targeted school districts. Throughout SY 2003-04, more than 1000 public service announcements were made on local cable programs and the Task Force has planned to increase its market next year. The new theme, "You Missed School/You Missed Out" will be marketed by the Task Force throughout the SY 2004-05 year.

In addition to the planned truancy campaign, Judge Linda Tucci Teodosio (Summit County Juvenile Court Judge) will hold truancy hearings in schools next year. As part of a pilot program this school year, Judge Teodosio held a well-attended truancy hearing at Goodrich Middle School. This type of cutting-edge programming brings the juvenile court into the community and serves to heighten truancy awareness among students, parents and school staff.

3. In the past six months, which agencies/elements of local government did you collaborate and in what circumstances?

Response: In the past six months, the Summit County Truancy Task Force and Project THRIVE collaborated with numerous agencies of local government. In Summit County, a 10-year plan has been developed by social service agencies to coordinate areas of need – the coalition is involved with this plan to ensure that truancy awareness remains in the forefront of community initiatives. The Juvenile Court, on behalf of Judge Teodosio, continues to send letters to all superintendents of schools reminding them of the truancy laws in the State. This information is passed on to parents as part of a coordinated effort to inform at-risk families of Senate Bill 181. In addition, court magistrates conducted mock trials at schools within Summit County, presented truancy information to the Girl Scouts of the Western Reserve and Caring Communities (grandparents with school-age children living in their home), and conducted seminars at the University of Akron outlining truancy issues and the law. Diversion units within the local police departments assist the court by escorting parents to truancy hearings. Court probation officers go into school systems and provide information to school administrators, teachers, and children. In the past six months, court staff has been collecting information from schools and social service agencies to develop a "best practices" referral manual that will serve as an school/court resource for families in crisis.

Through direct programming to families at-risk, Project THRIVE collaborates with numerous agencies to provide intervention, prevention and diversion programming. These local and community agencies include: Akron Public Schools, the Mayor's Youth Program, Akron Metropolitan Housing Authority (AMHA), Family Solutions/Child Guidance, Akron-Summit Library, Woodridge Schools, The University of Akron, Summit County Juvenile Court, Summit County Detention, Cuyahoga Falls Schools, Western Reserve Girl Scouts, First Tee of Akron, Barberton Health Department, and the Community Health Center Prevention Program.

4. In the past six months, has citizen participation in the coalition increased? What do the experiences mean to the people involved and how do these meanings related to intended goals?

Response: While citizens (parents) currently do not hold membership on the Summit County Truancy Task Force, parents are strongly encouraged to become involved in all of the prevention and intervention activities held in the community. In the past six months, citizen participation in the coalition has not increased. However, the Task Force has indicated that citizens and other members of the private sector will be included on special subcommittees if needed. Currently several parents of children attending participating schools are members of the Task Force. The coalition has solicited citizen participation through focus

groups conducted by Project THRIVE. As part of their prevention activities, Project THRIVE staff hosted several parent/child nights at the schools and in the communities served by the program. To ensure that parents are satisfied with the program and have an opportunity to provide suggestions for improvement, a parent satisfaction survey is administered at the end of each school year. In Table 7, **Parent Satisfaction Survey**, families who benefited from mediation and case management services through Project THRIVE were surveyed, in part, to assess their knowledge of substance abuse and their satisfaction with the program. Approximately 78% of the parents reported that their knowledge regarding the importance of school attendance has increased due to their participation in the program. As part of the substance abuse prevention activities, during mediation each parent is given a parenting guide (Growing Up Drug-Free: A Parent’s Guide to Prevention) and other anti-drug information. As an indicator of Project THRIVE’s efforts to provide anti-drug and truancy education, 48% of those surveyed felt their knowledge about substance abuse increased by participating in Project THRIVE. Ninety (90%) percent of the parents surveyed felt their child benefited by participating in Project THRIVE and 88% felt they benefited from participating in the program. Overall, 93% of the parents surveyed were satisfied with the help their family received from THRIVE’s case managers and 87% would like Project THRIVE to continue in the future. As an indicator of parental satisfaction with services, Kristin Kitzmiller, a Project THRIVE case manager and prevention specialist at Woodridge and Cuyahoga Falls school districts, was honored at the Community CARE (Chemical Abuse Reduced by Education) Appreciation Awards. Along with Summit County Juvenile Court Judge Teodosio, Kristin was honored for her sincere dedication to reducing truancy and her commitment to helping families.

Table 7		
Parent Satisfaction Survey (n=60)		
Survey Questions	True %	False %
Do you feel that you benefited from participating in THRIVE?	88.3	11.7
Do you feel that your child benefited from participating in THRIVE?	90.0	10.0
Has your knowledge regarding the importance of school attendance increased because you and your child participated in THRIVE?	78.3	21.7
Has your knowledge about substance abuse increased because you and your child participated in THRIVE?*	48.3	48.3
Were you satisfied with the help that you received from the case manager?	93.3	6.7
Would you like Project THRIVE to continue in the future?	86.7	13.3
Unknown = 3.3%;		
Source: Project THRIVE Parent Satisfaction Survey		

5. In the past six months, what enhancements have there been in planning and prevention efforts? How does your coalition effectively document these impacts?

Response: In the past six months, Project THRIVE expanded the number of participating schools. The program picked up six additional schools and continued to provide intervention and prevention activities for a total of twelve schools in four districts. The efforts of the program are documented through extensive prevention logs and mediation summaries kept by case managers for each activity held in the past six months. In addition, parent satisfaction and truancy knowledge surveys as well as student perceived risk & disapproval surveys document intervention and prevention efforts for families at-risk. The findings of these survey data are reported in the evaluation summary of this document (see Section I). In addition, the court provides members of the Task Force with minutes that express action items and planned activities. These minutes serve as the official record for coalition planning efforts. Schools also assist the coalition in documenting the impacts of planning and prevention efforts. For example, schools provide attendance data when students are sent a school letter, when they are referred to Project THRIVE, and when they are terminated from the program. When cases are terminated from the program, closing attendance data,

outcome data (i.e., family status regarding services and truancy behavior) and the number of days students are in the program is recorded in the THRIVE database.

6. In the past six months, what lessons has your coalition learned in developing and implementing multiple strategies across the multiple sectors?

Response: The collaboration level has improved over the past six months. Specialists directly impact the manner in which the Task Force currently operates – now, the Task Force is focused on truancy issues and communication is improved between the court and the schools. Each of the stakeholders on the Task Force share a common concern and focus on the problems that at-risk families face. Now when families are summoned to appear in court on a truancy charge, the Sheriff will sometimes escort them to court. School officials are in court to provide relevant information regarding the truancy case brought before the Judge. Improvements in the truancy docket have been more effective since the court streamlined its approach to hearing truancy cases. The court is more aggressive when following up on dispositions and requiring that families needing more support attend counseling and receive social support services.

Case managers assigned to work in participating schools offered suggestions for improving the implementation of Project THRIVE. Project THRIVE staff suggested that there be a general meeting of school personnel to ensure that administrators in participating schools are aware of the compliance requirements for the grant. This meeting could be held each quarter since it is likely that turnover among school personnel will occur. Referrals to mediation were sometimes problematic when families are sent for services late in the school year. A team approach in determining when and who will be referred for mediation might help to alleviate this problem next year. While parents have become more knowledgeable about the truancy laws and there has been a decrease in the number of absences among at-risk youth, some youth continue to incur excessive (excused) tardies throughout the school year. School programming which focuses on tardies and absences might prove beneficial for at-risk youth, given this finding.

7. In the past six months, has there been any measurable change in factors contributing to and reducing the risk of substance abuse including attitudes and perceptions?

Response: As mentioned previously, the attitudes and perceptions of students and parents continue to improve. Project staff continues to provide the most appropriate intervention and prevention programming in schools and the community so that families will benefit from the case management and mediation services offered through Project THRIVE. As evidenced by all of the school systems that participate in THRIVE, each feel that the program is effectively serving the needs and the interests of families at-risk. At the end of the school year, school administrators in each of the participating schools were asked to complete a school satisfaction survey. Ninety-three (93%) percent of 30 school administrators surveyed indicated that they felt their school benefited by participating in Project THRIVE. Ninety (90%) percent were satisfied with the job performance of the case manager assigned to their school and 97% would like Project THRIVE to continue at their school in the future.