

TO: Juvenile Welfare Board Members

FROM: James E. Mills, Executive Director
Browning Spence, Director, Community Planning and Research *HCS*

Requested Action

The Juvenile Welfare Board is requested to continue to allocate funds to support the Truancy Court Services available through Pinellas County Children in Need of Services and Families in Need of Services (CINS/FINS) programming.

Options

- 1. Allocate up to \$58,671 of Community Contingency Unallocated (OTO) funding to the Family Resources (FR) Teen Truancy Court Program for 9 months funding for two Truancy Case Manager positions.
- 2. Allocate \$112,490 for Family Resources, Inc.'s request for continued funding of all temporarily funded activities
- 3. Deny the request.
- 4. Any other action the Board deems appropriate.

Recommended Action

Approve the request for Option 1.

Source of JWB Funds

Community Contingency

Fiscal Impact

Option 1: The FY 02-03 Community Contingency Unallocated fund would be reduced by \$58,671 from \$387,039 to \$328,368.

Narrative

As a result of funding cuts to the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) in the last year, FR reported a \$307,327 loss to local CINS/FINS programming. In March '02, JWB approved contingency funding for both the Youth Crisis Shelter staff and the Truancy Court of \$87,492 to maintain the programs at their former level until September 30, 2002 to see if funds might be restored and the CINS/FINS studied in detail. The State did not restore any monies to DJJ.

JWB convened a group consisting of Family Resources, law enforcement, school system, DJJ and States Attorney staff in order to examine services provided through the CINS/FINS continuum. Key findings:

2000-2001 Pinellas County Schools Absence Rates*					
	Total # Students	Absent 11-20 days		Absent 21+ Days	
		Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Middle Schools	28,440	6,060	21.31%	3,376	11.88%
High Schools	33,965	7,621	22.44%	6,358	18.72%
*Note: School absences do not equal truancy. Students may be absent because of vacation or illness; however, a significant portion of school absence is due to truancy.					
-Data from FDOE School Advisory Council School Advisory Council Report					

- The community work group views Truancy Court /Case Management as a critical early intervention service.
- Truancy Court provides an option after the school's process and prior to a CINS petition.
- Case staffing of Truancy Court participants provides monitoring and follow up for case plans.
- During 00-01, Truancy Court provided services to 134 youth and their families:
 - 61% of the youth improved attendance by 20% within 30 days of truancy court.
 - At one year, 76% had no new involvement with the juvenile justice system following Truancy Court.

Family Resources has also requested support for two Prevention (Life Skills) Counselors for the shelters. These staff provide skills training, goal-setting, conflict resolution, and resistance skills two hours per day with youth in the shelter, and provide required ratios for staff coverage.

Staff is recommending support for the Truancy Court positions, but not the Life Skills positions for the following reasons:

- The Truancy Court positions are seen as a vital early intervention component in the system;
- Without JWB funds, staffing for Truancy Court would end after September 30, 2002;
- Addressing truancy will be a School District priority for 02-03 and increased referrals are anticipated;
- FR has indicated they have the ability to shift existing staff to maintain requires ratios at the shelter after the life skills positions are eliminated; OCIP counselors may also be available to provide some life skills classes.
- Funding both options prior to the beginning of the 02-03 fiscal year would significantly deplete the Community Contingency fund.

Staff recommends that JWB Community Contingency dollars be allocated to preserve the Truancy /Case Staffing positions through June 30, 2003. This will provide funding up to the beginning of the state's new fiscal year. Legislative advocacy efforts are planned on several fronts to encourage the restoration of DJJ funds in the 03-04 state budget for CINS/FINS services to previous levels; if successful, state funds would be available as of July 1, 2003.

Meanwhile, staff recommends that FR implement their interim coverage plan for life skills staffing, and encourages FR to investigate alternative funding sources for both the life skills and truancy positions while pursuing legislative advocacy.

Staff Resource Persons: Wendy Antonio, Gary Cernan & Patrick Draves.