

School Liaison Cohort Meeting

July 19, 2018

**School Liaison Cohort Meeting**

DCF Training and Development Center  
225 Turnpike Road, Southborough, MA 01772

July 19, 2018

10:00am – 1:30pm

**Welcome & Attendance**

**Icebreaker** 10:00am-10:15am

**Review of Initial Intent** 10:15am-10:45am

- Reviewed contract language (see PowerPoint)
- Discussed how the School Liaison is not an Educational Advocate (we will be compiling a list of educational advocacy supports available across the state to help fill this gap)

**School Liaison Statewide Themes** 10:45am-11:30am

- See PowerPoint for pie charts of themes identified

**Brown Bag Lunch and Networking** 11:30am-12:00pm

**Café Style Group Discussion** 12:00pm-1:00pm

- See below for discussions

**Future Trainings/Next Steps** 1:00pm-1:30pm

- See below for discussion notes on next steps

**Café Group Discussion Notes:**

**What are the barriers to connecting with the schools in meaningful ways? (\* indicates brought up in one or more discussion groups)**

- Areas are culturally different
- Resistance from the schools\*\*\*\*
- Need a tool to collect info to see what the schools need\*
- Schools forget about contacting the FRCs
- Schools' time frame is limited\*\*\*

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- FRC staff time is limited\*\*
- Schools criminalizing families
- Schools don't think families will change
- Schools don't recognize FRCs as prevention
- Schools don't report absences
- Cultural/racial bias in schools
- Transportation
- Lack of partnership
- Lack of communication
- Knowing what the roles of the school liaison should be\*\*
- Schools think we're going to tell them what to do
- Contact person
- Legal rights not being followed
- Legal processes being delayed or not put in place
- Passing families over from school to FRC
- Mistrust\*
- Getting constant updates about students' progress
- Schools feeling limiting/withholding information\*\*
- Transition of positions within the schools\*
- Silos: insular districts/schools/agencies
- Schools thinking School Liaisons are advocates
- Unable to connect to all schools\*
- Lack of responsiveness from schools\*
- Getting schools to recognize mental health
- Being reactive
- Schools under-reporting/waiting too long to involve the FRC
- Schools not being accountable
- FRC not part of attendance policy
- Schools not sure who they're supposed to talk to
- School politics
- Families not taking next steps, not feeling comfortable supporting themselves

**How have you been successful/what strategies have been useful in connecting with the schools?**

- Screenings held at the FRC to connect with families around school issues
- Talking to principals and adjustment counselors
- Showing up for school events\*\*\*\*
  - Open houses at start of school year
  - School meetings
  - Resource fairs
- Be there for anything the schools need

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- Backpacks for success
- Sending flyers to the schools
- Addressing truancy with families
- Direct communication\*
- Family groups programming and collaborating with the school
- One on one presence in the school system
- Finding ways to be helpful
- Offering workshops to schools
- Curriculum for attendance in school policy
- Building rapport
- Collaborating with school attendance officers
- Email communication
- Parent/family sharing that they know their rights
- Keep them close and use kindness
- Build relationships from the inside
- Attend community meetings\*
- Volunteering in the schools
- Attend SEPAC meetings
- Send a letter to schools every August explaining the School Liaison position, what we do, how we can help.
- Invite the schools every time the FRC has an event
- Looking at the bigger picture
- Write referral for FRC into schools' attendance policy
- Go to guidance meetings monthly to re-train school staff about FRC services
- Run groups with guidance counselor
- Go to do attendance calls to families at the schools
- Weekly attendance meeting
- Meeting bi-weekly with school administrators/guidance regarding active families\*
- Know the school staff

**What ideas do you have for continuing to build relationships with the schools?**

- Collaborating with families and schools at the beginning of the year
- Continuing truancy meetings at the FRC
- Putting out surveys to the schools (through the superintendent)
- Help schools on their terms
- DBT skills classes to school adjustment counselors
- Referral letter from the school after student is truant
- Cultural training in schools
- Equity coalition meetings at night
- Offering workshops with schools for families

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- Continue outreach
- Trying to find out how FRC can service schools (e.g. trainings, transportation, space)
- Transporting clients to school appointments, meetings, open houses
- Attend community partnership meetings
- Continued connection with school personnel during summer and transitional times
- Communication with McKinney Vento contact people
- Contact and collaborate with City Connects
- Re-educating providers
- Get to know the school adjustment counselors/attendance officers and build a relationship
- Follow up emails, start/mid/end of year emails
- Better hours for part time School Liaisons
- Regular meetings with administration, special education, and superintendent\*
- Curriculum provided by FRC to families regarding CRA
- Become part of the schools' policies\*
- Have lunch with a school contact (purposeful networking)
- Utilize peer mentors to address school refusal
- Be proactive about understanding the mental health component of school refusal and educating schools and families

**Next Steps:**

- School Liaison Cohort Meetings will be held quarterly moving forward
- DCF encourages FRC staff to use FRConnect discussion boards for maintaining connections between School Liaison Cohort Meetings and add a photo to their profile page
- DCF will look into the possibility of mentor/mentee relationships for School Liaisons who are interested in partnering for support
- School Liaisons are encouraged to attend upcoming Regional PMPD meetings that include ESSA training with FRC management in Western Ma and possibly in other regions
- DCF is prioritizing training needs for School Liaisons based on feedback from the group.  
Currently, the most requested trainings include:
  - Special Education/Basic Rights/IEPs
  - Attendance/School Refusal
  - Transition Age Youth
  - School Discipline
  - Placement Options
  - CRA Law and Process
  - School/Special Education Evaluations and Assessments
- DCF will be sending out a School Liaison contact list so the group can contact each other with questions, concerns, and support
- DCF will be sharing contact info for our team member Elaine Arsenault, from the Federation for Children with Special Needs

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- School Liaisons are asked to submit educational/law resources to Kate Darmetko, who will compile a list and share with the group

Feedback from the cohort meeting was very positive. The survey results listed that folks liked the time of the meeting and felt that it was a very worthwhile opportunity to connect with others doing the same work.