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PUBLIC NOTICES

LAW AND PUBLIC SAFETY OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

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Notice of Availability of Funds

Community-Schools Truancy Reduction Partnership Program

Take notice that, in compliance with *N.J.S.A. 52:14-34.4*, the Department of Law and Public Safety, hereby announces the availability of funds for the below grant program.

A. Name of program: Community-Schools Truancy Reduction Partnership Program

B. Purpose: In concert with the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) and New Jersey's Recovery Act: Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Act Grant Program (JAG Recovery), as well as in accordance with Governor Corzine's Prevention Strategy for Safe Streets and Neighborhoods and the closely-related New Jersey High School Graduation Campaign, funding is being made available for eligible applicants to create or expand community-schools partnerships to implement truancy reduction programs.

The degree to which children are connected to school is both a risk and protective factor for juvenile delinquency. As a protective factor, strong bonds to education increase the likelihood that children will graduate from high-school, remain delinquency-free and are better prepared to enter the workforce and obtain a job that pays a living wage. As a risk factor, the link between school failure and delinquency has been well established for some time (see, e.g., *Causes of Delinquency*, Travis Hirshi (1967)). While educational attainment, in itself, does not predetermine whether an individual will engage in crime, there is evidence strongly correlating education and graduation rates with crime rates. Data from numerous sources including the Bureau of Justice Statistics (2007) show that individuals with the least education are often the ones who end up committing crimes and being imprisoned. In New Jersey, the Department of Corrections reports that more than 75 percent of individuals currently imprisoned have failed to obtain a high school degree.

An early indicator of poor attachment to school is chronic truancy. Truancy is defined as an unexcused absence from school. Truancy is also a "status offense," which means that it is a criminal act due to the age of the actor. In New Jersey, for instance, a 15 year-old can be truant; a 20 year-old cannot.

An overwhelming proportion of truant youth face major obstacles in their lives that challenge their ability to attend school on a regular basis. Contributors are often divided into school, family and personal factors. Some school factors include poor relations with teachers, inappropriate academic placement and ineffective or inconsistently applied attendance policies. Some family factors include homelessness, poverty, single-parent families, large family size, transportation difficulties, elevated levels of family conflict and ineffective parental disciplinary practices ranging from over-protectiveness to neglect or rejection. Some personal factors include poor self-esteem, feelings of incompetence, poor relationships with other students or peer pressure and gang involvement.

Chronic truancy, especially early in one's educational career, is related to a number of negative outcomes for youth, including increased potential for dropping-out of school or educational failure via suspension or expulsion. These relationships tend to be circular in that truancy is often both a cause and a consequence of many of these troubling behaviors.

Experts and statistics agree that those who drop out of school are more likely to be incarcerated, rely on public programs and social services and go without health insurance than those who graduate from high school. The Alliance for Excellent Education estimates that high school dropouts from the class of 2006-2007 will cost the United States more than \$ 329 billion in lost wages, taxes and productivity in their lifetimes. The Rochester Youth Study (1996) found that students who reported skipping occasional classes are four times as likely as non-skippers to have committed a serious assault, almost five times as likely to have committed a serious property crime and twice as likely to have been arrested. It also reported that chronic truants are 12 times more likely to have committed a serious assault, 21 times more likely to have committed a serious property crime and almost seven times more likely to be arrested.

There also seems to be a direct link between truancy and adult criminal behavior, as chronic truancy clearly leads to high school dropout and dropouts are greatly over-represented among prison and jail inmates. In its groundbreaking work on the "Cradle to Prison Pipeline," the Children's Defense Fund has powerfully depicted how and why poor minority children are far more likely to drop out of school and be incarcerated. It describes how a number of factors including low achievement and attachment to school are underlying causes that have built the Cradle to Prison Pipeline in this country.

There are many examples of effective truancy reduction programs. In general, components of effective truancy reduction programs tend to include: parent/guardian and whole family involvement; a continuum of holistic supports, including meaningful incentives for good attendance and consequences/interventions for poor attendance; collaboration among community actors, such as law enforcement, health and mental health workers, mentors, social service providers, youth development workers and, of course, educators; strong schools' systems for monitoring, communicating and coordinating responses to incidents of absenteeism and other warning signs; and concrete and measurable goals for program and student performance and positive outcomes.

Moreover, an effective truancy reduction program also recognizes that it is not sufficient simply to get students to school. Students need to have the comprehensive supports to stay in school and be engaged in learning. The National Center for School Engagement (NCSE) has developed and [page=4333] utilizes an evidence-based model for school success and truancy reduction which is based on an integrated approach to what it refers to as the "3 A's": Attendance, Attachment, and Achievement:

-- Promoting **Attendance** involves the design and implementation of evidence-based strategies to reduce excused and unexcused absences.

-- Promoting **Attachment** involves establishing meaningful connections with youth and their families through caring, supportive, and mutually defined expectations. This also includes developing positive school climates, family and community engagement, and student-focused programs and activities.

-- Promoting **Achievement** involves ensuring that students have the tools and resources to complete courses and graduate from high school.

As the first year of the New Jersey High School Graduation Campaign has made evident and has reported on in its year one preliminary report and action plan entitled Forging New Jersey's Cradle to College & Workforce Pipeline for All Children, addressing issues of truancy and dropout prevention is not simply "a schools problem," but rather, one that requires the involvement of all concerned citizens and stakeholders (see www.njgraduation.org for a copy of this report). Together, communities must understand how seemingly different sectors of society are interconnected and contributing to the same pipeline. Thus, the purpose of this funding is to assist community-based non-profit organizations and local school districts to work in effective partnership in creating community-school truancy reduction programs that positively impact students' attendance, attachment and achievement.

The goal of this funding is to reduce the number of truant youth by increasing attendance and positively impacting at-risk youths' attachment to, and achievement in, school. The objectives of the Community-Schools Truancy Reduction Partnership Program are to increase school attendance rates, increase school attachment and achievement, increase the levels of student and community engagement and effectively encourage positive youth activities. Therefore, programs proposed in response to this availability of funding should address truancy reduction in a comprehensive and collaborative manner, including in areas, such as educational and curriculum services, conflict resolution skills, mentor, after school, tutoring and community service programs, crisis intervention and/or leadership development programs. These are simply a sampling representative of the types of programs or approaches that applicants might consider; it is not intended as an exhaustive listing.

In addition, successful applicants should demonstrate how proposed programs will have a clear linkage with effective schools systems for monitoring attendance and coordinating responses. In this sense, proposed programs should clearly demonstrate a strong working relationship between a community partner(s) and the school district, including a description of how the proposed program will serve as a needed response intervention or prevention for students who are truant and/or may be at risk for truancy. For example, a successful application might include a program in which a community-based organization works closely with a school district to provide adult mentor matches for 7th and 8th grade students who are deemed at-risk by the school because of their monitored attendance patterns. This is simply an illustration of one of many types of program models that applicants might consider.

As noted in the Governor's Strategy for Safe Streets and Neighborhoods, prevention and intervention programs should be evidence-based and/or modeled on best practices strategies. An important resource in planning local programs is the Model Programs Guide published through the United States Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP). The guide includes information about scientifically proven prevention and intervention programs that target problem behaviors among youth. This information is available at <http://www.ojjdp.ncjrs.gov/programs/mpg.html>. Additional resources include information contained on the website of the Blueprints for Violence Prevention initiative www.colorado.edu/cspv/blueprints and on the National Center for School Engagement website <http://www.truancyreduction.org>. Applicants can also view New Jersey's Strategy for Safe Streets and Neighborhoods and the Prevention Initiative at <http://nj.gov/oag/crimeplan>. Funding can support a wide range of truancy reduction strategies that are coordinated and may be linked to a neighborhood strategy to reduce crime. Successful applicants must, however, exhibit a working and comprehensive knowledge of the issues relating to truancy and related youth issues in their communities, demonstrate a track record in working with youth and describe how awarded funds will increase graduation rates, school attachment and school achievement.

C. Available funding: A total of \$ 2,000,000 will be offered to support the Community-School Truancy Reduction Partnership projects. Funds will be awarded on a competitive basis. It is anticipated that resulting sub-grant awards will be made to as many as 10 grantees for up to \$ 100,000 each, with an opportunity for renewal for a second year. The second year of funding may be contingent upon successful achievement of stated goals and objectives and strict

adherence to all program requirements.

The Department of Law and Public Safety is not precluded from awarding grants at a higher or lower funding level, or funding fewer or more programs, based on the type and the number of quality submissions.

A 10 percent match is required. The match may be cash, in-kind, or a combination of both. Federal sources of funding may not be used as matching funds. Approved funding may only be used to support the proposed program design in the manner set forth in Section F-2 below. It may not be used to cover expenses incurred prior to the program start-date nor may it be used to supplant any existing funding. The anticipated start-date for this grant program is February 1, 2010, with a renewal date of February 1, 2011. These dates are subject to change.

D. Organizations which may apply for funding under this program: Organizations eligible to apply for funding under this program are limited to qualified non-profit organizations and local public school districts. As noted previously, however, a hallmark of this grant program is that applicants demonstrate evidence of a strong working and planning partnership between the local school district and a community non-profit organization(s). This partnership must be reflected in the grant application in the form of a memorandum of agreement and/or specific letters of commitment from both parties. Applicants must also show in their application that they have worked collaboratively on the program design and plans for implementation. Points may be awarded for applicants that can demonstrate a history and track record of effective community-school partnership in planning for truancy reduction efforts. Moreover, applicants that can show evidence of the participation of broader collaborations and partners focused on truancy reduction are not required, but encouraged. The applicant, regardless of whether a non-profit organization or a school district, must specifically describe its capacity to administer a program of this nature, as well as its track-record and background in implementing truancy reduction or similar prevention/intervention programs.

Qualified non-profit organizations are those organized under Title 15A of the New Jersey Revised Status or otherwise qualified for nonprofit tax exemption under the Internal Revenue Code 26 U.S.C. §501(c)(3). Non-profit applicants must be in good standing with all State and Federal agencies with which they have had an existing grant or contractual relationship. Where appropriate, all applicants must hold appropriate State licenses.

There will be a Mandatory Applicant's Conference on December 3rd, 2009 at 11:00 A.M. at the New Jersey Department of Law and Public Safety, Division of Criminal Justice, Hughes Justice Complex, 8th Floor, 25 West Market Street, Trenton, New Jersey 08625. All eligible applicants are required to have agency and school team representatives attend this Mandatory Applicant's Conference.

E. Qualifications needed by an applicant to be considered for funding: Applicants must comply with all JAG Recovery program and ARRA requirements.

I. A DUNS number is required. A DUNS number is used to track Federal assistance applicants, recipients, and sub-recipients. For further information visit on-line at <http://www.dnb.com/us>.

II. A current and active status Central Contractor Registration (CCR) is required. CCR is the Federal government's database for standard information about Federal financial assistance applicants, recipients and subrecipients. For further information visit on-line at <http://www.ccr.gov>.

III. A demonstration of the capacity to account for and report on all JAG Recovery funds separate and apart from all other grant funds [page=4334] that agency receives. (See <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/recovery/solicitationrequirements.htm> and the JAG Recovery Program Administration and Funding Guidelines)

A. An agency must demonstrate it possesses the financial capacity to segregate, account, report and track all JAG

Recovery funds.

B. An agency must demonstrate the capacity to comply with strict ARRA reporting requirements (monthly reporting by the 7th day of the following month).

C. The information from these reports will be posted quarterly on public websites. Applicants may expect that the information posted will identify subgrantees as delinquent in their reporting.

D. Provide monthly JAG Performance Measures due by the 7th day of the following month. For additional information, visit: www.ojp.usdoj.gov/BJA/grant/JAG_Measures.pdf

E. Provide monthly Financial Reports due by the 7th day of the following month.

IV. Non-Supplanting. Grant funds must be used to supplement existing State and local funds for program activities and must not replace those funds that have been appropriated for the same purpose. See the OJP Financial Guide (Part II, Chapter 3). For additional information visit: <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/recovery/supplantingguidance.htm>.

V. Compliance with other Office of Justice Programs (OJP) Recovery Act Additional Requirements available online at: <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/recovery/solicitationrequirements.htm>

VI. Agencies are not eligible if debarred or suspended from doing business with any unit of government. Applicants must be in good standing with all State and Federal agencies with which they have had an existing grant or contractual relationship.

VII. Where appropriate, all applicants must hold current State licenses, permits and certificates and conduct employee background check, as required.

F. Procedures for eligible organizations to apply: Organizations that wish to apply for funding should submit a completed proposal containing a program narrative, budget, budget narrative and letters of support and other attachments before the proposal submission deadline. The program narrative, excluding the budget, budget narrative, letters of support or other attachments, should not exceed 20 double-spaced, single-sided pages.

An application should contain the following scored program components:

1. Problem Statement/Needs Assessment - 15 percent: Clearly state the problem/need that will be addressed with the grant funds. Include statistics and factual information to substantiate the need and selection of the proposed program. Describe the impact of the problem on the school or community and any steps that have been taken to address the problem. Identify gaps in services and additional resources that are needed to resolve the problem.

2. Program Design, including Goals, Objectives, Action Strategy - 30 percent: Fully and clearly describe the program design and approach that is being proposed. Examples of some of the questions that should be addressed include: How will the partnership between the non-profit organization(s) and school district be coordinated and effectuated? What is the focus of the program (e.g., a specific school or group of schools? a specific grade-level or grade-levels? etc.)? How will students be identified and referred? What type(s) of prevention or intervention service(s) will be employed? Who are the necessary partners for the program design (e.g., health clinics? parents? mentors? law enforcement? etc.) and have they been engaged?

As part of the program design, be certain to state the goals of the program. List clear and measurable objectives to achieve each goal, and describe the linkage between these goals and the specific approaches that are being proposed. Fully describe the implementation process. As part of the program design, applicants should be certain to include the

following points in its program design and action strategy: target population of the program; anticipated numbers of persons to be served by the project; selection process for participation in program; major activities that will be implemented; personnel and resources needed for program; and time frame for program implementation.

3. Planning, Management Structure and Background - 20 percent: Describe the applicant's mission, background, experience and capacity as it relates to the purpose and objectives of implementing a truancy prevention/intervention program of this nature. Similar information should be provided with regard to the primary partner - whether a school district or non-profit organization. Provide information regarding the implementation process of the proposed project. Describe the primary community-school partnership that will be involved, and the contributions of any additional partnering agencies, as well as coordination with other truancy reduction programs or practices. As noted elsewhere, proposals that can detail a history and track record of community-school partnership in addressing truancy will be considered favorably in the review.

Outline the management structure and identify the project director and/or other key individuals who will be directly involved in the operation of the project. Applicants must include a memorandum of agreement and/or specific letters of support that demonstrate a collaborative planning effort and continued partnership in implementing the proposed program. In the case of school district applicants or partners, memorandums of agreement and/or letters of support should be signed by the superintendent of schools or other chief executive officer (in the case, for example, of a charter school or other public alternative school) in order to demonstrate the necessary level of commitment to the project, even if the project being proposed is focused on one particular school or group of schools. Also, include additional letters of support from other proposed partners or collaborators such as local law enforcement, health providers, city government and any other relevant actors as necessary.

4. Data Collection/Performance Measures/Evaluations - 15 percent: Provide a brief narrative and attach copies of any evaluation tools that will be used in determining the effectiveness of the program being proposed. List data that will be collected, and describe the methods that will be used to measure the progress and assess the impact of the project, and persons responsible for conducting the evaluation.

5. Program Budget - 20 percent: Programs should demonstrate that costs are reasonable in relationship to the number of students/persons to be served and to the anticipated results and benefits. Therefore, applicants must clearly indicate how this funding will be used to meet the project goals and/or requirements. The budget must align with the program as described in the structure. Please provide a line item budget and narrative for the proposed program.

A. JAG Program Requirements: JAG grant funds cannot be used directly or indirectly for security enhancements or equipment for nongovernmental entities not engaged in criminal justice or public safety. Nor may JAG funds be used directly or indirectly to provide for any of the following matters unless Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) certifies that extraordinary and exigent circumstances exist, making them essential to the maintenance of public safety and good order:

- Vehicles (excluding police cruisers), vessels (excluding police boats), or aircraft (excluding police helicopters).
- Luxury items.
- Real estate.
- Construction projects (other than penal or correctional institutions).
- Any similar matters.

B. Additional Requirements for nonprofit organizations:

I. Demonstration of nonprofit status in any one of the following methods:

1. Proof of 501(c)(3) status from the Internal Revenue Service;

2. A statement from the state taxing authority or the state Secretary of State, or other similar official certifying that the organization is a nonprofit operating within the State (organized under N.J.S.A. 15A-1 et seq.), and that no part of its net earnings may lawfully benefit any private shareholder or individual;

3. A certified copy of the applicant's certificate of incorporation or similar document; or

4. Any item above, if that item applies to a State or national parent organization, together with a statement by the State or parent organization that the applicant is a local nonprofit affiliate.

II. Submission of nonprofit qualifications:

1. List of board of directors/trustees, addresses, phone number and email.

2. List of officers or similar governing body, addresses, phone number and email.

[page=4335] 3. A board resolution.

4. Proof of current New Jersey Business Registration. (www.state.nj.us/treasury/revenue/dcr/programs/ann_rpt.html) or a copy of a recent Certificate of Good Standing issued by the New Jersey Division of Revenue (<http://www.nj.gov/treasury/revenue/standcert.htm>).

5. Proof of current registration with the New Jersey Division of Consumer Affairs' Charity Registration Division (<http://www.nj.gov/lps/ca/ocp/charities.htm>), or proof of exemption under the Charitable Registration and Investigation Act, *N.J.S.A. 45:17A-18* et seq.

6. A copy of the organization's most recent Form 990-Income Tax Return or copy of the most recent audited financial statements.

III. Mandatory waiver received from local unit of government.

1. The JAG program requires nonprofits funded with a State's local pass through funds to submit a written waiver from each local municipality benefiting from the nonprofit subgrant.

2. Each local unit of government benefiting from a nonprofit subgrant must voluntarily certify that:

a) The funds in question are set aside for local government use;

b) It believes that the proposed project will provide a direct local benefit; and

c) It agrees that funding the project at the state level is in the best interests of the unit of local government.

G. Address of the State agency receiving the proposal:

Heddy Levine-Sabol, Section Chief
Division of Criminal Justice
Program Development/Grants Section

Hughes Justice Complex
25 Market Street
P.O. Box 085
Trenton, NJ 08625-0085

H. Deadline by which proposals must be submitted: All proposals must be received by 4:00 P.M. on or before **January 5, 2010**. Proposals received after 4:00 P.M. on **January 5, 2010** will not be considered for an award. Applicants should submit one signed original and 10 copies of the proposal. Faxed or emailed proposals will not be accepted.

I. Date by which notices shall be mailed of approval or disapproval of proposals: Approximately 45 days after the proposal submission date.