



Eaton County, Michigan
Plan to address the School to Prison Pipeline
December, 2013



Introduction: On September 18th and 19th, Eaton County participated in the Michigan School Justice Partnership Call to Action Summit held in Ann Arbor, Michigan, to address the school to prison pipeline in our county. The goal of the event was to provide a better understanding of the school-to-prison pipeline and the wide-ranging impacts of school exclusion, including: school retention and graduation rates; delinquency rates; a student’s success later in life; and the overall economic development in Michigan. Eaton County was represented by Harriett Dean, Eaton County Truancy Coordinator, Sara Lurie, Prevention Program Services Supervisor and The Eaton Regional Education Service Agency, and Tim Click, Barry-Eaton County Department of Human Services Director. Also serving on the Eaton County Home Team is Honorable Judge Julie Reincke, Eaton County District Court, and Sarah Hamelink, Assistant Principal at Grand Ledge High School. The Eaton County Home Team (ECHT) plans to expand the Eaton County Team as part of the action plan for the county in 2014. The ECHT met several times over the course of the summer to prepare for the summit.

In addition to preparation for the summit, Harriett Dean also served on Michigan Department of Education’s Truancy Workgroup, which met over the course of two full days in July and August. Because school districts statewide define absences differently from district to district, the role of this workgroup was to recommend a common statewide definition of truancy, defining excused and unexcused absences and addressing tardiness. This initiative will be addressed later in this document.

I. Assessing our Landscape

Part One: Is truancy and Issue in Eaton County?

Is truancy a problem in Eaton County? Absolutely. In the past two years, the Truancy Intervention Program served just shy of 500 students and their families to help overcome barriers to education. These cases indicate that poor family management, a key risk factor contributing to school dropout. Other contributing factors to truancy in Eaton County include low attachment to school, behavioral and mental health issues, difficult peer and personal relationships, parental loss of control over child, low value of education by parents, “district hopping” under School of Choice, and According to the 2012 Michigan Profile for Healthy Youth, high rates of marijuana use.

Risk and Protective factors that contribute to truancy:

The Michigan Profile for Healthy Youth (MiPHY) was completed by 7th, 9th, and 11th grade students in Eaton County during the 2012 school year. 50% of the buildings in Eaton County contributed to the on-line, anonymous survey, resulting in a valid county report. What are risk and protective factors? They are the aspects of a person (or group) and environment or personal experience that make it more likely (*risk factors*) or less likely (*protective factors*) that people will experience a given problem or achieve a desired outcome. For example, if a person smokes, that is a risk factor for having a heart attack. If he walks two miles a day, that's a protective factor against that same heart attack.

Risk and protective factors are key to figuring out how to address community health and development issues. It's a matter of taking a step back from the problem, looking at the behaviors and conditions that originally caused it, and then figuring out how to change those conditions. In the case of youth, risk and protective factors are critical because reduction of risk factors and increasing protective factors contributes to the resiliency of our youth. The MiPHY also addresses social norms in a community, and how those norms impact education and the overall climate of Eaton County. Risk and protective factors are considered in four domains; Peer/individual, Family, School, and Community.

➤ *Risk factor- substance use*

Eaton County youth use alcohol at an alarming rate. Of the 7th, 9th, and 11th grade students self reporting alcohol use, 47.2% have drunk alcohol (more than a few sips) in their lifetime. 37.0% of county youth report drinking alcohol in the past 30 days (indicates recent use). Eaton county students report age 13.8 as the average age they were first drunk.

Eaton County does a good job of obeying the law in terms of sales to minor. Only 3.2% of Eaton County youth report getting alcohol from a retail store or gas station. Even fewer students report being served in a restaurant or bar (.3%). The majority (38%) of youth who obtained alcohol report they get it from someone older providing it for them (family, an older sibling or giving someone money to buy for them). 61.2% of youth drinking alcohol report they drank it in someone's home (house party) as opposed to in a public venue. The students who report using alcohol in Eaton County, 39.7% have grades that are D's and F's. 16.1% of Eaton County youth reporting have binge drank in the past 30 days, defined as five or more alcohol drinks in one sitting, within a few hours.

In Eaton County, 3.8% of county 7th grade students and 13.3% of county 9th grade students report using marijuana in the past 30 days, and 25.5 of 11th grade students indicate past 30 day use (an indicator of recent use). This is reflective of the "transition" years from middle school to high school, a critical point in prevention. 24.3 % of 9th grade students in Eaton County have tried marijuana, and the average age of first use of marijuana is age 13.¹ That percentage jumps to 25.2% of 11th grade students have used marijuana in the past 30 days, and 44.5% of 11th grade students have tried marijuana. Of the students surveyed who have tried marijuana, 60.5% of those students earn D's and F's in school. County wide, collectively, 20.7% of all Eaton County youth 7th grade and higher have smoked marijuana in the past 30 Days, and 36.5% of Eaton County youth 7th grade or higher have ever tried marijuana.¹

1 | Michigan Profile for Healthy Youth, 2012, Michigan Department of Education, Eaton County Report

In addition, 17.5% of Eaton county 7th grade students report marijuana as being either sort of easy to get or easy to get. That percentage jumps to 43.0% of 9th graders and 68.2% of county 11th graders that report marijuana is either sort of easy to get or easy to get. County wide, 39.9% of county youth do not perceive marijuana to be of moderate or great risk to their health. ¹ In this case, 67.9% of students reporting county wide that marijuana is not a great risk earn A's and B's in school, and 32.9% earned D's and F's.¹ This may be linked to Michigan's medical marijuana law, which may contribute to youth's perceptions that marijuana is safe.

There are other risk factors that contribute to truancy and high dropout rates. Bullying continues to impact student attendance despite anti-bullying laws in Michigan and school climate initiatives. The MiPHY also addresses attitudes toward danger and violence in collecting youth data. In Eaton County, 23.4% of county youth self-report being bullied on school property in the past twelve months, and 16.7% report being electronically bullied via text, email, Facebook, Twitter and other social media. 74.1% of county students surveyed report seeing someone else being bullied, pushed, hit, or punched one or more times in the past twelve months. 86.5% report verbal abuse by other students, including spreading lies and rumors one or more times in the past twelve months. 53.0% of county students report seeing someone damage, wreck or ruin other student's things during the past twelve months. 26.3% of county youth have been in a physical fight one or more times in the past twelve months.¹

Despite these numbers, only 5.3% of county youth surveyed feel unsafe or very unsafe at school. Historically, school is recognized as the greatest protective factor in a youth's life. Data shows that we need to do better, however. 28.1% of county high school reported on the MiPHY that assigned school work was never or seldom meaningful or important, and that percentage includes 53.6% who reported earning D's and F's. 40.9% of Eaton County youth surveyed self reported that their classes were dull or slightly dull. 65.5% of those students earned D's and F's. 41.0% of our county youth report they almost always hated being at school during the past year, and 60.2% of those students reported getting D's and F's. 66.6% of county students reported they it is not at all or a little true that they do interesting activities at school and 83.5% of those earn D's and F's. 86.1% of student reported it is not at all or a little bit true that they are able to assist in establishing classroom activities and rules.¹

This is just a quick snapshot of a small amount of data that impacts truancy and dropout rates. Eaton County has a total of eight districts that fall in our county: Bellevue, Charlotte, Eaton Rapids, Grand Ledge, Maple Valley, Olivet, Potterville, and Waverly. Bellevue and Olivet belong to the Calhoun County ISD system, as most of their students reside in Calhoun County. Maple Valley has a large majority of students who live in Barry County. Waverly School District has students in both Ingham and Eaton Counties. This means that programming and resources are often divided by county lines, and the juvenile court system is limited to the county of residence the student lives in, not which district they attend. This makes collaboration and cooperation amongst counties a critical piece – for instance Barry County has no truancy prevention programming, so Maple Valley schools are forced to determine if truant case is an Eaton County student, they can refer to our county Truancy Intervention Program. However, a student who attends Maple Valley but lives in Barry County is not referred anywhere for truancy intervention.

1 | Michigan Profile for Healthy Youth, 2012, Michigan Department of Education, Eaton County Report

This is important because students who drop out of school often do not move far away from their home city because their employment opportunities are limited. Often, students who drop out have parents who dropped out, too, and may raise children that drop out.

In the next year, or second phase of the ECHT Action Plan, we hope to delve deeper into the local data surrounding truancy and dropout rates for five key districts:

- Charlotte
- Eaton Rapids
- Grand Ledge
- Maple Valley
- Potterville

We will consider:

- Number of students who have unauthorized absences annually
- Number of students reported as truant
- Number of students suspended/expelled and for how long
- How often are youth assigned to in-school detention or the behavior room
- Number of school-aged children referred to law enforcement or arrested
- What data is missing that is needed to better understand the issue(s)
- Are there particular schools, grades or classes where school exclusion is more prevalent

And the Demographics:

- What are the gender and the racial/ethnic backgrounds of the students who have missed school due to 1) truancy, 2) suspension, and/or 3) expulsion?
- How many students with disabilities have missed school due to 1) truancy, 2) suspension, and/or 3) expulsion?
- Is there a disproportionate number of youth of color, students with disabilities, pregnant and parenting teens, children involved with the child welfare system, or lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT) youth who are excluded from school when compared with the general student population

Part Two: What services could be put into place to prevent school exclusion and court involvement?

- Truancy Intervention Program

Currently, Eaton County has a Truancy Intervention Program (TIP) that serves as a preventative/early intervention program for students with chronic absenteeism and truancy issues. Our courts and Prosecuting Attorney distinguish between parental responsibility for

attendance (age ten and under) and juvenile responsibility (age 11 and older) in terms of court referrals. Court intervention is an expensive use of resources, so if we can intervene prior to court involvement, or even better, intervene prior to truancy issues, many resources will be saved.

In Eaton County, the TIP program is the main intervention tool for truancy. It involves having schools exhaust their efforts in improving student attendance via parent communication and in-person meetings with parents and students prior to referral. Once TIP is involved, we attempt to develop an attendance plan and monitor that attendance with facilitators who meet with the students weekly to discuss attendance and academic progress. There is also a Community Mental Health Therapist available on a referral basis for students in need of counseling services. If additional intervention is needed, a pre-trial inquiry is conducted with the Truancy Coordinator, school staff, CMH, and the student family at the Eaton County Youth Services building that houses Day Treatment and Juvenile Court. This step formalizes an attendance plan but still allows a youth to be pre-adjudicated and avoid a juvenile record if the plan is followed. If this step does not see a reduction in absenteeism, an inquiry before the referee in Juvenile Court is scheduled. The referee will place the youth on an informal consent calendar, still pre-adjudicated, yet with a probation officer assigned. The student can still avoid a juvenile record if they can successfully complete the terms of the consent calendar. The next step involves a formal calendar agreement, formal probation, and a juvenile record until the youth turns 17. Ultimately, Day Treatment, Community based treatment, or even residential treatment may be appropriate for the youth. This may cause the student to have a juvenile record until they turn age 30.

➤ Multi-tiered System of Supports

There are other preventative steps in place in Eaton County to help prevent truancy and school dropout prior to it becoming an issue. Eaton County has all five constituent districts (Charlotte, Eaton Rapids, Grand Ledge, Maple Valley, and Potterville) involved in the **Multi-tiered system of supports** (MTSS). MTSS is a framework to provide all students with the best opportunity to succeed academically and behaviorally in school. MTSS focuses on high quality of explicit instruction interventions matched to student need, and monitors progress frequently to make decisions about changes in instruction or goals. Data is used to allocate resources to improve student learning and to support staff in implementation of effective learning. MTSS has Guiding Principles that include:

- Universal Screening
- Data-based Decision Making and Problem Solving
- A Continuum of Evidence-based Practices
- Implementation with Fidelity
- Monitoring Progress

There are also eleven components of Michigan's MTSS Framework. All eleven components are necessary for the system to be implemented

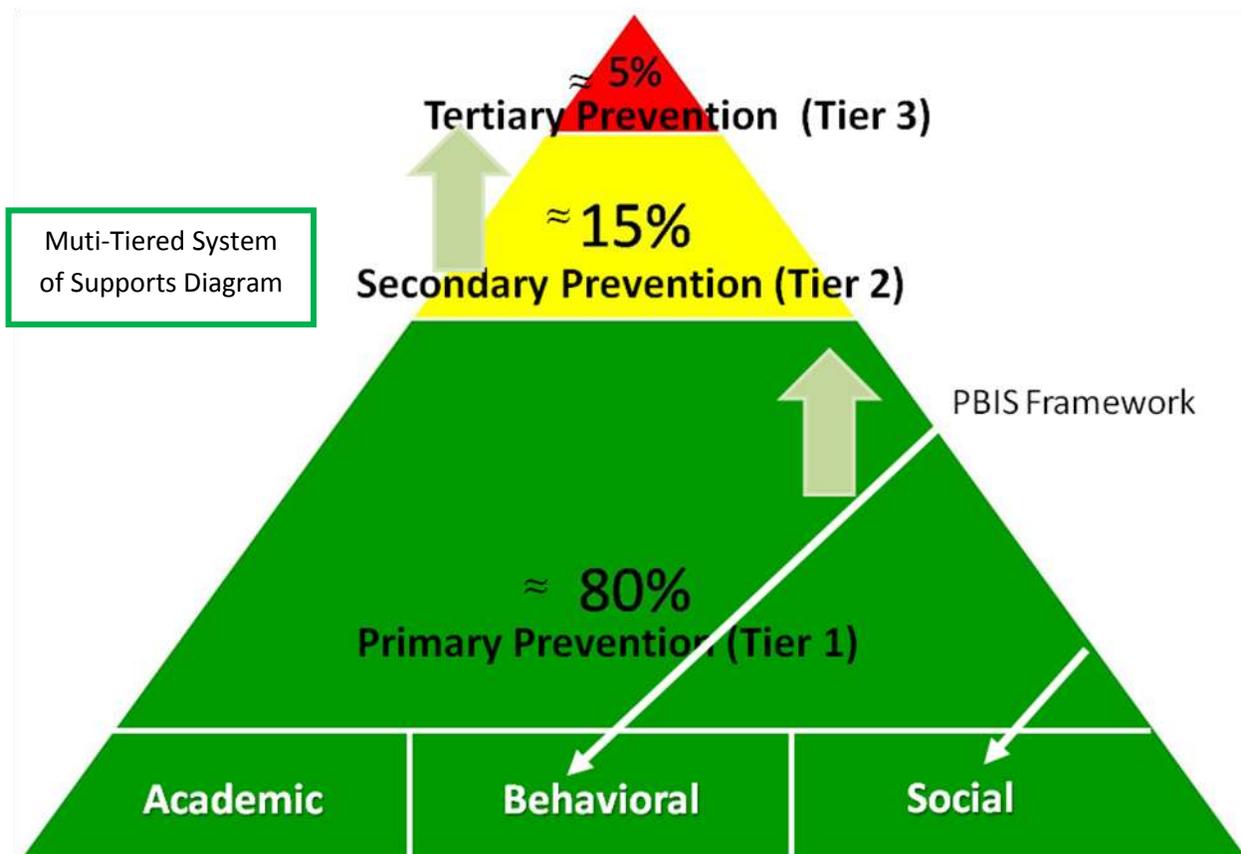
1. Implement effective instruction for all learners (explicit instruction)
2. Intervene early
3. Provide multi-tiered model of instruction and intervention
4. Utilize a collaborative problem solving model
5. Assure a research-based Core Curriculum aligned with National and State standards
6. Implement research/evidence based, scientifically validated instruction and interventions
7. Monitor student progress to inform instruction
8. Use data to make decisions
9. Use assessments for three purposes; universal screening, diagnostics, and progress monitoring
10. Implement with fidelity
11. Engage parents and community

Tier one intervention is built on a foundation of evidence based practices. It is not a program, nor is it a quick fix. Implementing the MTSS system is a 5-10 year system change. The main evidence base practices included in MTSS are:

- Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS)
- School-wide reading
- Explicit Instruction (a structured, systematic, and effective method for teaching academic skills)
- Drop-out Prevention

These practices put the odds in our favor that the practices we support in education will be successful, and they prioritize the use of resources that provide the "biggest bang for the buck".

Next is a diagram that illustrates how the MTSS framework supports student success:



- PBIS stands for Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports. PBIS is a framework that supports all students, on the premise that reaching the bottom 20% of the learners will impact the entire school climate. IT is a system, not a program that addresses the behavioral aspect of student learning. PBIS changes not only the behavior of the children through consistent messages, but changes the climate of the school by changing the behavior of adults in the school. It teaches, acknowledges and reinforces the behaviors expected in the classroom that make the learning environment conducive for learning for all students. You get the behavior you teach, and PBIS is data-driven, using clear and measurable expectations with consistent recognition and consequences. School buildings develop PBIS Leadership teams to create the organizational structures to support continuous improvement and customize implementation at the building level. PBIS allows teachers to have more instructional time when fewer behavioral issues are present in the classroom, and allows for more student engagement. Engaged students are learning students! All of the above initiatives increase student learning and positively impact dropout rates.

➤ *Crisis Prevention Intervention (CPI)*

Eaton County teaching staff and administrative teams are trained in de-escalation and nonviolent crisis intervention via the **CRISIS PREVENTION INSTITUTE**. CPI is a non-harmful behavior management system designed to aid educators and school employees in maintaining the best possible **Care, Welfare, Safety** and **Security** of agitated or out-of-control students, parents, community members and other employees. CPI provides a framework to problem solve and strengthen crisis intervention skills, deescalate agitated persons, and in few cases properly and non-violently restrain an individual who may be a harm to self or others.

Part Three: to what extent should law enforcement play a role in reducing student exclusion?

1. Usually truancy is a major part of the problems being experienced by children in day treatment or community treatment. Having children in day or community treatment to ensure that they attend school is expensive and certainly not as desirable for the student as having a good education experience in normal public or private schools. Truancy often leads to children dropping out of high school which often leads to subsequent court involvement through criminal behavior or eviction as adults.

2. Courts are not the ideal venue for solving truancy problems but can be helpful when other remedies have been exhausted. Juvenile probation officers very often work with students to promote school attendance. Court action can help motivate parents to cooperate with school attendance by using the threat of removing children from their home or incarcerating the parent for failure to require the child to attend school. However, putting a parent in jail for not sending a child to school can have a negative effect on the child by removing the security that parent provides.

3. School Resource officers are present in several Eaton County Schools, including Charlotte and Grand Ledge. Grand Ledge, Eaton Rapids, and new this year at Waverly schools have in-school suspension programs for students caught with or under the influence of alcohol or drugs in school. Rather than the standard suspension, which could be up to 45 days, students are offered the opportunity to lessen the suspension to five days by completing a drug assessment, completing weekly drug drops and maintain negative drug drops, make arrangements with teachers to get assignments for any days missed during the suspension period, and complete community service. Once the student returns to school, daily attendance and maintaining grades is expected. Charges are held in abeyance by local law enforcement agencies pending the successful completion of In-school suspension.

The ECHT will look at expansion of these programs to include other offenses resulting in suspensions. Reviewing School Handbooks and addressing policies that suspend students for truancy is also a priority for the 2014 Action Plan. Re-entry meetings and developing re-entry plans for students coming off suspensions is an effective strategy that is relatively easy to implement, so that will also be considered for inclusion in the 2014 Eaton County Action Plan.

The answers to the following questions are still unclear in Eaton County:

- How are referrals to law enforcement and arrests tracked? Are schools reporting this information to state and federal education officials?
- Are there procedures to reconnect a youth back into school once s/he is involved with the court? At what level? How consistently?
- Are there particular schools, grades or classes where court referrals or school-based arrests are more prevalent?

Part Four: What are the biggest barriers to reducing school exclusion?

School Suspensions county-wide vary from district to district. Some school handbooks are very clear and have a succinct path for discipline, such as Charlotte Upper Elementary School's example:

Insubordination: Defiance of authority, attitudes or behavior insulting or contemptuous. Non-compliance of a reasonable request from school personnel. This includes refusal to do assigned school work.

1st offense: Notify parent, in-school suspension, loss of school privileges

2nd offense: Up to 10 day suspension or expulsion

Versus Maple Valley Elementary policy for the same offense:

Insubordination: Disrespect towards School Employee: refusal to follow directions from a school employee and/o use of verbal or profane abuse to a school official

1st offense: Conference with principal, in school, suspension or 1 day out of school suspension

2nd offense: 2 day Out of School Suspension

3rd Offense: 3 day Out of School Suspension

Attendance policy violations also vary from district to district. For example, at Potterville High School:

Students are considered ABSENT for a class when they arrive more than twenty-five (25) minutes late. NOTE: Students who arbitrarily choose to come late to class for an illegitimate reason may receive progressive disciplinary steps from the teacher of that hour.

Excused Absences

Excused absences are those that have been properly reported (see Reporting Procedures) and are legitimate reasons for being absent from school. In general, an absence is excusable only in the case of unavoidable circumstances, such as the following:

Illness serious enough to prevent the student from functioning at school; "just don't feel like going" is not an acceptable reason for being absent.

- Medical, dental, or orthodontic appointments that cannot be scheduled outside regular school hours. We encourage parents to make an effort to schedule these appointments for before and after school whenever possible.
- Family or personal emergency - This excuse is one of a personal nature and parents need only state "personal" when calling the attendance office to report a student's absence.
- College visitations for seniors- Advance arrangements must be made with the office and with all of the student's teachers.
- Funeral attendance
- Court appearance

Unexcused Absences

Unexcused absences may result in loss of credit for the work/quiz/test that was given on the date of the unexcused absence. Students are responsible for checking their attendance record on PARENT CONNECT each week to clear up possible errors. Teachers may deny credit to students who skipped class and/or who have an unexcused absence. Teachers will still provide the work and/or the learning opportunity for the students if they request it, but credit toward the marking period grade may not be granted. The kinds of absences that will be considered unexcused are as follows:

- Failing to properly report an absence
- Being absent without parental approval
- Leaving school without following the "sign-out" procedure
- Leaving a class without permission
- Transportation problems not caused by the school (car trouble, missed bus, etc.)
- Being more than 25 minutes late for class without a pass excusing the late arrival
- In the case of questionable absences, the principal will make the determination of whether an absence is excused or unexcused. In all cases, when it is discovered that a student was absent for a reason other than what was reported to the office, the absence will be considered unexcused and progressive disciplinary steps may be taken.

Olivet High School Policy for Attendance:

Truancy Procedure

First Violation

Parent notification; conference with student; and one lunch detention per scheduled class period.

Second Violation

Parent notification; 1 day Suspension or Saturday School.

Third Violation

Parent notification; 2 day suspension or Saturday School. Successful parent conference with administration before student is re-admitted to school. Counseling and other supportive agencies recommended.

Fourth Violation

Parent conference; truancy proceedings may be filed with the C.I.S.D. (Calhoun Inter-mediate School District) Attendance officer. 3-5 day suspension.

Fifth Violation

Parent notification; recommendation to the Board of Education for suspension for the balance of the semester.

Due-Process/Truancy Procedures

Due-Process procedures shall be followed prior to bringing truancy proceedings against a child's parent or guardian. Truancy proceedings may be implemented following the fourth truancy offense. School personnel shall refer truancy problems to the Calhoun Intermediate School District attendance officer. Excessive truancy shall be reported to the Board of Education and may result in possible expulsion.

While Potterville is very clear on what constitutes an excused or unexcused absence, Olivet does not define their excused versus unexcused absences. One strategy for the ECHT to consider for the second phase of the 2014 Action Plan is to offer technical assistance in directing Eaton County schools to one model policy for attendance and discipline. In-school suspension programs are model programs that have proven to decrease dropout rates, and may be a recommendation in the Eaton County Action Plan.

Anecdotally, but based on case studies over the past three years indicate technology contributes to truancy in several ways. First, school used to be the main method of socialization for you. Prior to internet, if a student did not attend school, they had no interaction with their peers. Even youth who didn't like school would at least attend for the social aspect. Now, with smart phones and iPad technology, students do not need to attend school to be in constant contact with their friends. From a purely social aspect, there is little reason to attend school.

Virtual and viral schools are another technological advancement that has pros and cons. The temptation to do online learning at home and log on anytime, even in the wee hours of the morning are very appealing to nontraditional students, as well as adult learners. But for students who have had attendance issues, learning disabilities, low academic success, and low self motivation, on-line learning is just another way for students to fail. While technology has been a very successful learning tool in the classroom and allowed global access for students, it limits students with special learning needs or those who cannot afford technology at home.

Part Five: What opportunities for collaboration exist in Eaton County?

When many of us adults were students, the entire neighborhood served as parents. If we skipped school and were spotted by a neighbor, our parents were informed before we even got home. Neighbors, business owners, police officers, recreational facilities, librarians, etc would all question a youngster seen in the community during school hours. Now, everyone minds their own business – no one questions youth on the streets during school hours. Families are so transient that students frequently report on the MiPHY a low attachment to neighborhoods. According to the Eaton County MiPHY results, only 35.5% of county youth self-reported they “know someone in their neighborhood who are proud when the youth do something well”, and only 34.3% of youth surveyed self-reported that they know people in their neighborhood who encourage them to do their best”.¹

Based on truancy cases in Eaton County over the past three years, parents frequently enable students to stay home from school, by either passively approving of absenteeism by calling in for a student, or even blatantly allowing school refusal by the student because parents have lost control of their teenage

1 | Michigan Profile for Healthy Youth, 2012, Michigan Department of Education, Eaton County Report

children. Chronic illness and family health issue account for some truancy, but students reporting they are depressed. MiPHY reports indicate that 31% of students 31.1% of county students felt “so sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks or more in a row and that they stopped doing some usual activities at some point in the past twelve months”.¹ Additionally, 16.3% of Eaton County high school youth self-reported they seriously considered suicide attempting during the past twelve months.¹

Access to mental health services for youth is critical. In Eaton County, Family Guidance Services via Community Mental Health as well as Wrap-Around intense family services are available on a limited basis. These resources are limited, however, and not always accessible to all families without a referral. The Eaton County Truancy Intervention Program does have a CMH therapist assigned strictly to truancy to provide counseling services for students. Community engagement and collaboration should be and will be an important part of future initiatives to impact the school-to-prison pipeline.

II. Establishing Goals for the Eaton County Home Team

While assessing the landscape of our truancy and dropout climate in Eaton County, it became evident that several issues came to the surface for further action. The Goals prioritized by the summit include:

1. *Align policies with emerging research and best practice models designed to encourage student success (Model Policies and Practices)*
2. *Increase the use of best practices by developing a strong continuum of behavioral interventions. (Which practices and programs have the greatest impact on the community, school district, or court and develop a plan for implementation. (Model Policies and Practices)*
3. *Ensure that the entire community, including students and families, are effectively engaged in the development of evidence-based policies and best practices, including (Capaci)*
 - Collaborate with schools, courts, law enforcement, community groups, students and families to develop and collect county-wide data aimed at better understanding the extent of school exclusion in your community.
 - Host a local school-community leadership forum aimed at raising awareness about the impact that school exclusion has on student success.
 - Establish an annual process (perhaps through orientation or parent-teacher conferences) to review school policies and procedures with students and families and solicit feedback on their effectiveness.

The specific goal areas Eaton County will address that have identified throughout this document include but are not limited to the following problem statements:

1 | Michigan Profile for Healthy Youth, 2012, Michigan Department of Education, Eaton County Report

Currently in Eaton County, not all absences are reported in a consistent and thorough manner, depending on individual district attendance policies.

- Number of students who have unauthorized absences annually
- Number of students reported as truant
- Number of students suspended/expelled and for how long
- How often are youth assigned to in-school detention or the behavior room
- Number of school-aged children referred to law enforcement or arrested
- What data is missing that is needed to better understand the issue(s)
- Are there particular schools, grades or classes where school exclusion is more prevalent

Currently in Eaton County, suspensions and expulsions occur inconsistently from district to district and demographics on these students are recorded inconsistently, or not collected as an aggregate.

- What are the gender and the racial/ethnic backgrounds of the students who have missed school due to 1) truancy, 2) suspension, and/or 3) expulsion?
- How many students with disabilities have missed school due to 1) truancy, 2) suspension, and/or 3) expulsion?
- Is there a disproportionate number of youth of color, students with disabilities, pregnant and parenting teens, children involved with the child welfare system, or lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT) youth who are excluded from school when compared with the general student population

Currently in Eaton County, Student Handbooks frequently penalize students for truancy, rather than addressing reasons behind truancy and engaging restorative practices.

- Re-entry meetings and developing re-entry plans for students coming off suspensions as an effective strategy
- How are referrals to law enforcement and arrests tracked? Are schools reporting this information to state and federal education officials?
- Are there procedures to reconnect a youth back into school once s/he is involved with the court?
- Are there particular schools, grades or classes where court referrals or school-based arrests are more prevalent?
- Direct County schools to one model policy for attendance and discipline and in-school suspension programs are model programs that have proven to decrease dropout rates

Currently, Eaton County does not have full capacity for addressing truancy, exclusion, and drop outs.

- Collaborate with the Eaton County Human Services Collaborative and engage local districts to increase capacity.
- Present plan to Eaton County Commissioners
- Establish Memos of Understanding where appropriate

Eaton County: Addressing the School-to-Prison Pipeline

In 2013, Eaton County accepted the Governor's challenge to develop a plan to address the disturbing trend of school drop outs, truancy, and exclusion from Michigan Schools. The Eaton County "Home Team" designees are Eaton County District Court Judge Julie Reincke, Eaton County DHS Director Kent Shulze, Grand Ledge High School Assistant Principal Sara Hamelink, Eaton Regional Education Service Agency Prevention Supervisor Sara Lurie, and Eaton County Truancy Program Coordinator Harriett Dean. The goals identified are initial goals; it is likely that once data is collected and analyzed, goals addressing the red flags found in the data will be developed and reflected in and updated logic model and implementation plan. This plan is, by design, a fluid document.

Goal areas identified in the Eaton County include:

1. **Capacity** –Ensure that the entire community, including students and families, are engaged in the development of evidence based policies and practices
2. **Data** – collection and analysis of county data on school attendance, graduation and delinquency rates from the 2013-14 school year through the 2016-17 school year (four years) Using trend data, consider measureable outcomes for reducing truancy , exclusion, and drop outs.
3. **Model Policies, Practices, and Programs**- Align policies with emerging research and best practice models to encourage student success. Increase best practices by developing a strong continuum of behavioral interventions.

Specific problem statements for Eaton County include:

Currently in Eaton County, not all absences are reported in a consistent and thorough manner, depending on individual district attendance policies. (Data)

- ✓ Number of students who have unauthorized absences annually
- ✓ Number of students reported as truant
- ✓ Number of students suspended/expelled and for how long
- ✓ How often are youth assigned to in-school detention or the behavior room
- ✓ Number of school-aged children referred to law enforcement or arrested
- ✓ What data is missing that is needed to better understand the issue(s)
- ✓ Are there particular schools, grades or classes where school exclusion is more prevalent

Currently in Eaton County, suspensions and expulsions occur inconsistently from district to district and demographics on these students are recorded inconsistently, or not collected as an aggregate. (Data)

- ✓ What are the gender and the racial/ethnic backgrounds of the students who have missed school due to 1) truancy, 2) suspension, and/or 3) expulsion?
- ✓ How many students with disabilities have missed school due to 1) truancy, 2) suspension, and/or 3) expulsion?
- ✓ Is there a disproportionate number of youth of color, students with disabilities, pregnant and parenting teens, children involved with the child welfare system, or lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT) youth who are excluded from school when compared with the general student population

Currently in Eaton County, Student Handbooks frequently penalize students for truancy, rather than addressing reasons behind truancy and engaging restorative practices. (Model Policies, Practices, and Programs)

- ✓ Re-entry meetings and developing re-entry plans for students coming off suspensions as an effective strategy
- ✓ How are referrals to law enforcement and arrests tracked? Are schools reporting this information to state and federal education officials?
- ✓ Are there procedures to reconnect a youth back into school once s/he is involved with the court?
- ✓ Are there particular schools, grades or classes where court referrals or school-based arrests are more prevalent?
- ✓ Direct County schools to one model policy for attendance and discipline and in-school suspension programs are model programs that have proven to decrease dropout rates

Currently, Eaton County does not have full capacity for addressing truancy, exclusion, and drop outs. (Capacity)

- ✓ Collaborate with the Eaton County Human Services Collaborative and engage local districts to increase capacity.
- ✓ Present plan to Eaton County Commissioners
- ✓ Establish Memos of Understanding where appropriate

The below work plan represents **Year One of the Eaton County Plan.**

Eaton County Year One Action Plan Addressing the School to Prison Pipeline

Goal 1: Capacity				
Problem	Key Action Steps	Timeline	Expected Outcome	Person/Agency Responsible
<p><i>Currently, Eaton County does not have full capacity for addressing truancy, exclusion, and drop outs.</i></p>	Present Plan to Eaton County Human Services Collaborative	May 2014	Increased awareness of County Plan, increased Collaboration	Harriett Dean, Sara Lurie, Home Team
	Present Plan to Eaton County Commissioners	June 2014	Resolution of support	Harriett Dean, Home Team
	Submit an article to the Eaton County Newspaper for publication	June 2014	Public Awareness	Harriett Dean, Holly Maakima
	Measurable Goal Setting, Logic model and Year Two Planning	January 2015	Logic Model complete and Year Two Plan developed	Sara Lurie, Harriett Dean, Human Services Collaborative members
	Conduct a resource assessment on current programming and or academic lessons in the county around truancy, Michigan Model, Bullying, Asset Building, and school climate	Summer 2014	Summary report of what is already being done in Eaton County on the local level	Harriett Dean

Goal 2: Data				
Problem	Key Action Steps	Timeline	Expected Outcome	Person/Agency Responsible
<i>Currently in Eaton County, suspensions and expulsions occur inconsistently from district to district and demographics on these students are recorded inconsistently, or not collected as an aggregate.</i>	Collect Eaton County data on attendance, graduation and delinquency rates for Grand Ledge Schools, Charlotte Schools, Potterville Schools, Eaton Rapids Schools, and Maple Valley Schools starting with the 2013-14 school year for three consecutive years	July-August 2014	Demographical county report	Sara Hamelink and local school superintendents
	Review and Analyze 2013-2014 school year data for planning and programming year two	Fall 2014-September and October	Identification of key indicators and "red flags" around first year data.	Home Team
	Utilize and Analyze the 2014 Michigan Profile for Healthy Youth Eaton County Data for risk factors contributing to drop out and truancy	Fall 2014-September and October	Summary report of Eaton County contributing factors	Anne Barna, Eaton County Health Department and Home Team
	Share data findings with community and key stakeholders in Eaton County, including Eaton County Commissioners, School superintendents, lawmakers, media	Fall 2014	Raising community awareness, involving community, advocating for change	Home Team, Key Stakeholders

Goal 3: Model Policies, Practices, and Programs				
Problem	Key Action Steps	Timeline	Expected Outcome	Person/Agency Responsible
<i>Currently in Eaton County, not all absences are reported in a consistent and thorough manner, depending on individual district attendance policies.</i>	Review and compare Eaton County local school district's definition and recording of all absences, tardies, and suspensions with model policy adapted by State of Michigan's recommended model policy	Begin immediately upon acceptance of State Recommendation	Aligned Policies County Wide	Sara Lurie, Harriett Dean, Sara Hamelink and local district members
	Offer technical assistance to districts needing assistance aligning current policies to recommended policies			