



# **Lincoln Public Schools**

## **TRUANCY DIVERSION PROGRAM PARTICIPANT HANDBOOK**

**Administered by  
The Lancaster County Attorney's Office  
and  
Lincoln Public Schools**

**TRUANCY DIVERSION PROGRAM  
575 S 10<sup>th</sup> Street  
Lincoln, Nebraska 68508**

**TRUANCY DIVERSION PROGRAM  
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## INTRODUCTION

This handbook describes the components of the Lancaster County Truancy Diversion Program (TDP). It is designed to answer questions, address concerns, as well as to explain expectations for participants in the program and review general program information.

TDP is offered through the Separate Juvenile Court of Lancaster County and Lincoln Public Schools. It is on average a 6-10 month program of intervention and therapy for juveniles and their families.

Through screening and reviewing of school attendance youth are identified as eligible for TDP. Determination of entry into the TDP is made by Lincoln East, Lincoln High, Lincoln Northeast, Lincoln North Star, Lincoln Southeast, and the County Attorney's Office with final approval by the TDP Prosecutor. Youth are offered the opportunity to participate in the TDP in an effort to assist them in attending school on a regular basis. The truancy petition that has been filed in Juvenile Court will be dismissed upon successful completion of the program and all records pertaining to the filing in Juvenile Court will be sealed and not available to the public without a court order.

## PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The program was created for students and their families as an alternative to traditional court proceedings for truancy. The short-term goals of the program are to improve school attendance, grades and attitude toward school. The long-term goals are for the student to maintain consistent school attendance after completion of the program followed by graduation from high school.

The Lancaster County TDP program is a court-supervised, comprehensive program for students at Lincoln East, Lincoln High, Lincoln Northeast, Lincoln North Star, and Lincoln Southeast who have a truancy petition filed in Juvenile Court and are pending adjudication. Participants will have regular appearances before the designated TDP Prosecutor and Principal. Representatives from many agencies are included in the TDP team and have a common purpose in helping participants successfully complete the program with the goal of regular school attendance and, ultimately, graduation from high school. The team is comprised of the County Attorney's Office, Private Defense Attorney, Juvenile Court, Lincoln Public Schools, and Treatment Provider that are working together and committed to encouraging and supporting the youths' participation in healthy, pro-social activities and positive behavior in school through the TDP program.

Once the youth has agreed to participate in TDP, failure to comply with the program could result in sanctions being imposed. Participants will also be rewarded for positive progress in the program. Each participant should understand that he/she is accountable for his/her decisions and behavior, acknowledge when he/she makes appropriate decisions, demonstrates pro-social behavior, and accepts responsibility when he/she does not comply with program guidelines.

The Social Worker will be primarily responsible for supervising and implementing the terms and conditions of a youth's participation in TDP.

## SUPERVISION

All TDP participants, AND a parent/approved adult family member will be required to appear in TDP on regularly scheduled dates as designated by the TDP team. At each court appearance, participants will present

a report regarding his/her progress. The Prosecutor/Principal will also be given a progress report prepared by the Social Worker and treatment provider regarding school attendance, grades, treatment progress, behaviors, overall attendance and participation in TDP and school activities. The Prosecutor/Principal will ask questions about each participant's progress and discuss any specific problems he/she may be having. If guidelines are being followed and the youth is doing well, he/she will be encouraged to continue with the program and work with the TDP team toward success.

In addition, rewards may be given if the Prosecutor and Principal feel the youth has been doing exceptionally well as recognition of positive participation. If program violations are committed (i.e., failure to attend school, failure to attend individual or group counseling or to participate in a positive manner, failure to attend court hearings, misbehavior in school, etc.) the TDP may impose sanctions. With repeated violations of program conditions, and/or failure to progress satisfactorily, the TDP may impose the ultimate sanction of termination from the program and the case will be returned to Juvenile Court. If a student transfers to another school while in the program, he/she may be terminated from the program and return to Juvenile Court.

## **PROGRAM RULES**

All TDP participants will be required to abide by the following rules:

**1. ATTEND SCHOOL REGULARLY AND ON TIME**

School attendance and engagement is the focus of this program. In order to be successful in school, students need to attend daily. If you are not attending school due to illness, a parent must contact the Social Worker or attendance coordinator no later than 8:30 a.m. on the day the student is staying home. Attendance regarding illness will follow the protocols set by LPS.

**2. ATTEND ALL ORDERED TREATMENT SESSIONS.**

This includes program orientation, individual/family/group counseling, educational sessions, and support meetings. If unable to attend a scheduled session, contact must be made with the TDP Treatment Provider immediately.

**3. NO THREATS, VIOLENCE, OR DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR TOWARD OTHER PARTICIPANTS OR STAFF WILL BE TOLERATED. DO NOT POSSESS WEAPONS OF ANY TYPE.**

Possession of any type of weapon in Court, TDP affiliated facilities, or while participating in any TDP activities is inappropriate. This may result in removal from the TDP program.

**4. DRESS APPROPRIATELY FOR TDP AND TREATMENT SESSIONS.**

Participants will be expected to dress in clean, neat, and respectable attire. Shoes will be worn at all times. Clothing bearing, promoting, or advertising drug, alcohol, or gang-related themes are inappropriate. Sunglasses shall not be worn inside school or treatment center unless medically necessary. No hats will be worn during session. Any questions or assistance necessary regarding clothing should be addressed with the Social Worker. Students shall conduct themselves in an appropriate manner and not utilize electronic devices during sessions.

**5. PARENT (GUARDIAN) AND/OR ADULT RELATIVE MUST ATTEND SCHEDULED TDP SESSIONS.**

When unable to attend, the Social Worker must be advised in advance of a legitimate reason for absence, and alternative family members may attend with approval from the Social Worker. Participation of families is critical to TDP success and parent/guardians are considered a vital resource to helping the TDP participants progress successfully through the program.

## 6. ENGAGE IN SCHOOL AND TDP ACTIVITIES

While in the program, students are expected to engage in activities offered through the school and the TDP. Attendance at these events will be monitored.

## 7. ATTEND HOMEWORK SUPPORT

Students failing one or more classes will attend after school homework support as directed by the TDP Social Worker.

# TREATMENT PROCEDURES

TDP participant treatment will be provided utilizing a team approach with the combined resources of the Social Worker and the Omni Behavioral Therapist. If your student is already working with the therapist, we will need a signed release of information form so we can communicate with the therapist. The Social Worker and treatment provider will assess what level of treatment will best meet the needs of each individual youth. Treatment will be on an intensive outpatient basis. An individualized treatment plan will be developed which may include the following components:

- Functional Family Therapy
- Individual Therapy
- Family Support

# PROGRAM EXPECTATIONS

- Regular school attendance including being on time to all assigned classes
- Attend after school homework support if failing 1 or more classes
- Participant and guardian/approved adult attend TDP hearings as scheduled
- Regular contact with Social Worker
- Regular contact with Therapist, including individual and family therapy
- Develop treatment and educational plans
- Intensive treatment components
- Complete homework sheets as directed
- Demonstrate progress on educational goals
- Follow all terms and conditions of his/her individualized treatment plan
- Display a positive attitude toward family, school teachers, Social Worker and other treatment and school personnel
- Attendance at pro-social activities a minimum of 1 time per month
- Build self-sufficiency

# GRADUATION

Upon completing of the expectations of the program, a ceremony with a certificate of completion will be the culmination of this process. Family will be invited to join graduates as the Prosecutor and Principal congratulate them on successfully completing the TDP program. In addition, at the discretion of the Prosecutor and Principal, additional incentives may be rewarded and a formal ceremony may take place. **The truancy petition that has been filed in Juvenile Court will be dismissed upon successful completion of the program and all records pertaining to the filing in Juvenile Court will be sealed and not available to the public without a court order.**

## **FAMILY INVOLVEMENT**

Parents/guardians will be involved throughout the treatment process, beginning with the evaluation process by providing collateral information and concerns. Parents/guardians are expected to attend family session as identified by Social Worker and Therapist regarding client needs, concerns, and strengths.

## **INCENTIVES & SANCTIONS**

Throughout the duration of the TDP program, compliance with all aspects of the program will be emphasized. For those participants who choose not to comply, sanctions may be imposed. In contrast, incentives may be rewarded for positive progress and compliance.

Incentives are administered on an individual basis, and are provided in the form of congratulations and, when appropriate, other incentives such as; movie passes, gift certificates, etc. for those who have been compliant, and performed additional functions in the program. Sanctions are also administered on an individual basis. The team will review all issues of non-compliance and make recommendations to the TDP Prosecutor and Principal. It is at the team's discretion to order one or more of the following (does not reflect all sanctions):

- Writing of an essay on a selected topic
- Increased TDP hearings
- Increased participation in individual and/or group counseling sessions
- Increased attendance at activities
- Community service
- Extended program duration
- Lunch Detentions
- School Detentions/Suspensions/Referral to the Office of Student Services

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Participant identities and privacy will be protected consistent with Federal and State law. In response to these regulations, policies and procedures have been developed which safeguard participants' confidentiality. Parents/guardians and participants will be asked to sign a waiver authorizing the transfer of information between participating agencies.

**In accordance with the Nebraska Crime Commission grant for the Truancy Diversion Program, data on the student will be collected for the purposes of evaluation. Data will be kept on the Juvenile Case Management System of the Nebraska Criminal Justice Information System.**

## **\*Remote Learning/Zoom Conference Expectations\***

If Zoom conferencing, professionalism during Zoom conferences is expected from both the school professional and the student/family just as if the meeting was happening at school. Zoom conferences are not to be recorded. Even though the Zoom meeting will be conducted from a semi-private location, privacy and confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. For this reason discussing sensitive topics is discouraged.

Zoom conferencing with your LPS school counselor, school social worker, school psychologist, or psychotherapist is not therapy and should not be considered such. Internet connections can be unstable and cause difficulties. Anticipate that there may be problems connecting or maintaining a connection and that a Zoom conference might not be possible due to technical issues.

Students should try to ensure that Zoom conferences take place in a quiet, private location. If the school professional feels that a professional environment does not exist, he/she can end the Zoom conference...All staff and students must follow all LPS policies including those regarding computer use. (See Board Policies 6441.1 and 1105 for more details.)

As always, if the school social worker feels that the student is in danger of harm (including self-harm) or of harming someone else, appropriate reports will be made as required by law. If a student initiates communication with a staff member regarding a safety concern, staff will respond.

## **CONCLUSION**

Prosecutors, defense attorneys and school personnel who deal with truancies have recognized the need for an alternative way to address truancies and have provided their time to the Truancy Diversion Program initiative. Their participation and input in this collaborative process is what helps make this program work. Continued participation by the County Attorney's Office, schools, the Court, and treatment provider will enhance these efforts of treating and supervising youth.

The TDP program is a comprehensive approach to the needs of juveniles in Lancaster County. It requires communication and collaboration among the agencies who work with the juvenile justice system, and with the families of the participants. By providing input from qualified treatment staff, the judicial system, county attorney, educational representatives, family members and significant others we hope to address the entire individual in one contained program and not lose track of any aspect of their life.

We hope this Handbook has been helpful and answered any questions. If there are any additional questions or concerns about the TDP program, please feel free to ask any member of the TDP team. Important TDP telephone numbers have been listed on the last page of this Handbook.

## TRUANCY DIVERSION PROGRAM ADDRESSES & PHONE NUMBERS

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| <p><b>Lincoln East Truancy Diversion Social Worker</b><br/>Tami Rembolt</p>  | <p>Phone: 402-436-1302<br/>Email: <a href="mailto:trembol@lps.org">trembol@lps.org</a></p>  |
| <p><b>Lincoln High Truancy Diversion Social Worker</b><br/>Brady Tolle</p>   | <p>Phone: 402-436-1301<br/>Email: <a href="mailto:btolle@lps.org">btolle@lps.org</a></p>  |
| <p><b>Lincoln Northeast Truancy Diversion Social Worker</b><br/>Kirsten McGill</p>   | <p>Phone: 402-436-1303<br/>Email: <a href="mailto:kmcgill@lps.org">kmcgill@lps.org</a></p>  |
| <p><b>Lincoln North Star Truancy Diversion Social Worker</b><br/>Kennedy Hegert</p>  | <p>Phone: 402-436-1305<br/>Email: <a href="mailto:khegert@lps.org">khegert@lps.org</a></p>  |
| <p><b>Lincoln Southeast Truancy Diversion Social Worker</b><br/>Morgan Young</p>   | <p>Phone: 402-436-1304<br/>Email: <a href="mailto:myoung@lps.org">myoung@lps.org</a></p>  |
| <p><b>TDP Treatment Provider/Therapist</b><br/>Omni Inventive Care<br/>2300 S 13<sup>th</sup> St.<br/>Lincoln, NE 68502</p>  | <p>Phone: 402-474-3322, ext. 113<br/>Fax: 402-474-4668</p>  |
| <p><b>Deputy County Attorney/TDP Prosecutor - Chris Turner</b><br/>Justice and Law Enforcement Center<br/>575 South 10<sup>th</sup> Street, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor<br/>Lincoln, NE 68508</p> | <p>Phone: 402-441-7321<br/>Fax: 402-441-7336<br/>E-mail: <a href="mailto:cmturner@lancaster.ne.gov">cmturner@lancaster.ne.gov</a></p> |
| <p><b>Private Defense Attorney - Jon Braaten</b><br/>1630 "K" Street<br/>Lincoln, NE 68508</p>   | <p>Phone: 402-477-8800<br/>Fax: 402-477-8868<br/>E-mail: <a href="mailto:jbraaten@acwlaw.org">jbraaten@acwlaw.org</a></p>             |
| <p><b>LPS Student Services - Russ Uhing</b><br/>5901 "O" Street, Box 48<br/>Lincoln, NE 68510</p>  | <p>Phone: 402-436-1000<br/>Fax: 402-436-1686<br/>Email: <a href="mailto:duhing@lps.org">duhing@lps.org</a></p>                        |