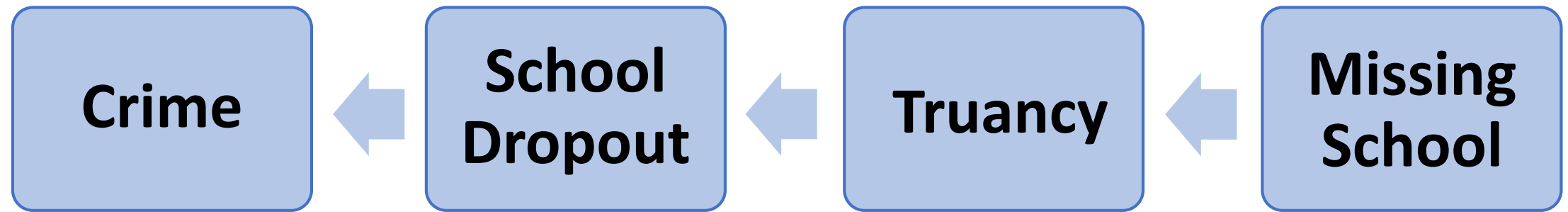


# Public Attitudes and Juvenile Justice Policy Reform in Connecticut: A Survey on Truancy and Status Offenses

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Workgroup

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**“School-to-Prison Pipeline”**



# “School-to-Prison Pipeline”

- Over 7 million students missed 15 or more days from schools in 2015-16 school year. That’s about 1 in 6 students (Department of Education, 2019).
- There are 87,900 petitioned status offense cases handled by U.S. juvenile courts and 61% are for truancy in 2017 (OJJDP, 2019).

# What Is Truancy?

- A legal term
- Defined by each state
- A status offense in most states
- Designated numbers of unexcused absence from school over a month or a year

In Connecticut, a truant means someone who,

- between the ages of 5 to 18
- is enrolled in a public or private school
- has 4 unexcused absences from school in one month or 10 in a school year

# Consequences of Missing School

## 1. Possible Short-term Adverse Outcomes

- Poor school performance (Hunt & Hopko, 2009)
- School dropout (Henry et al., 2012)
- Early justice system involvement (Bennett et al., 2017; Vaughn et al., 2013)

## 2. Possible Long-term Adverse Outcomes

- Enhance the chances that negative outcomes will extend into adulthood
- Being unemployed, in less stable relationships, and engaging in crime as adults (Flaherty et al., 2012; Nolan et al., 2013; Henry, 2007; Meyer & Goldman, 2015)

# Decriminalization of Truancy and Other Status Offenses in Connecticut

- In 2016, CT eliminated truancy and defiance of school rules referrals from court interventions (effective on August 15, 2017; Public Act 16-147 ).
- In 2018 and 2019, called for the removal of all other status offenses from the juvenile court jurisdiction (effective on July 1, 2020; Public Act 17-2 & PA 19-187).

# Administrative Advocacy Efforts

- Include public voices after the laws were put in place
- Better inform the relevant parties around policy implementations

Comprehend Connecticut adult residents' awareness and recommendations on the legislation of status offense and truancy preventions.

# Research Questions

1. What are the experiences of parents and non-parents in CT have with truancy?
2. How are parents and non-parents in CT informed about school attendance policies and the changes in status offense policies?
3. What are believed and recommended interventions for truancy by parents and non-parents in CT?
4. What are the recommended parties in preventing truancy?



# Methodology

***Survey Research:*** Online questionnaire via Qualtrics.

***Sampling Frame:*** Adults in Connecticut from the top four cities that had the highest numbers of truant cases reported in 2016-17: Bridgeport, Hartford, New Haven, and Waterbury.

***Sample:***

- A convenience sample (n=796) from the Qualtrics panel
- Included 56.7% parents and 43.3% non-parents
- Included 30.8% males and 68.5% females

# Demographics

	Sample	Parents	Non-parents	Sig.
Average age	38.2	43.7	30.9	***
Female	68.5%	67.9%	68.9%	
Non-Hispanic White	58.9%	57.6%	60.7%	
Undergrad degree	40.3%	39.6%	41.2%	
Never married	50.1%	27.2%	80.8%	***
Average # of children	--	2.4	--	--
Engage with minors daily	43.2%	59.6%	22%	***

\* Significant at .05 level, \*\* significant at .01 level, and \*\*\* significant at .001 level.

# Experience with Truancy

	Parents	Non-parents	Sig.
Self-engagement in truancy	10.2%	11.8%	
Child-engagement in truancy	9.8%	--	--
Know someone has engaged in truancy	55.1%	64.2%	*

\* Significant at .05 level, \*\* significant at .01 level, and \*\*\* significant at .001 level.

# Self-reported Knowledge about Policies

	Parents	Non-parents	Sig.
Read 2018-19 school policies	35.6%	14.7%	***
Read 2018-19 student handbook	38%	15.9%	***
Familiarity with school policies	Slightly & Not at all (45.8%)	Slightly & Not at all (64.4%)	***
Familiarity with SO policies	Slightly & Not at all (60.2%)	Slightly & Not at all (74.8%)	***

\* Significant at .05 level, \*\* significant at .01 level, and \*\*\* significant at .001 level.

# Tested Knowledge about Polices

	Parents	Non-parents	Sig.
Know school days per year	24.2%	21.5%	
Know school hours per day	31.8%	18.0%	***
Truancy: Know unexcused absences per month	18.0%	12.8%	*
Truancy: Know unexcused absences per year	10.0%	7.8%	
Truancy: Know decriminalization	22.4%	22.3%	
Defying school rules: Know decriminalization	50.0%	61.6%	**

\* Significant at .05 level, \*\* significant at .01 level, and \*\*\* significant at .001 level.

# “What are...?”

		Parents	Non-parents	Sig.
Current interventions for truancy	School	79.8%	75.7%	
	Community	29.6%	28.0%	
	Court	50.2%	43.1%	*
	Out of home placement	17.8%	17.1%	
	Detention/Incarceration	19.1%	21.7%	
Recommended interventions for truancy	School	83.3%	78.0%	
	Community	45.8%	42.5%	
	Court	39.1%	37.9%	
	Out of home placement	14.2%	15.9%	
	Detention/Incarceration	18.2%	22.3%	

# “Who is responsible for truancy prevention?”

	Parents	Non-parents	Sig.
Parents or guardians	99.1%	98.3%	
Teachers	50.9%	47.4%	
School administrators	56.0%	50.6%	
School resource officers	48.9%	35.0%	***
Community members	29.6%	27.2%	
Other youth/peers	30.9%	33.5%	

\* Significant at .05 level, \*\* significant at .01 level, and \*\*\* significant at .001 level.

# Key Findings

1. Among people who are influenced the most, they were poorly informed about school policies and status-offense-related policies in CT.
2. Parents have higher intent of learning policies that related to youth. While parents are not more knowledgeable than non-parents in these policies, except in micro level knowledge.
3. Nearly half of participants still think the court interventions are possible in addressing truancy
4. Almost all participants agree that parents and guardians are responsible in preventing truancy
5. More community-based approaches are recommended to prevent truancy.





# Thank you and Questions?



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