



Madera County Probation Department
Stop Truancy Opportunity Program
Annual Performance Report
2004-2005

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**Madera County
Probation Department
Stop Truancy
Opportunity Program
(STOP)**

**Annual
Performance
Report**

07/01/04 – 06/30/05

Summary

The Stop Truancy Opportunity Program (STOP) completed its fourth year of operation, beginning on July 1, 2004 and ending on June 30, 2005. Eight participating Madera County Schools included Dairyland Elementary, Enterprise Secondary, Liberty Middle School, Martin Luther King Junior High, North Fork Elementary, Oak Creek Intermediate, Thomas Jefferson Junior High and Wilson Middle.

I. Participant Demographics

By the end of the 2004-2005 school year the total student population tracked by STOP was reported at 226 participants, a 28% increase from the 177 participating students reported at mid-year. Students from Martin Luther King and Thomas Jefferson combined made up about half of the STOP population, while smaller schools such as Dairyland accounted for less than 10% of the population.

**Table 1.
Participants by School**

Participating Schools	Mid-year	Percent	Year-end	Percent
Dairyland Elementary	2	1.1%	12	5.3%
Enterprise Secondary	7	4.0%	14	6.2%
Liberty Middle School	7	4.0%	7	3.1%
Martin Luther King Jr. High	48	27.1%	61	27.0%
North Fork Elementary	15	8.5%	15	6.6%
Oak Creek Intermediate	27	15.2%	28	12.4%
Thomas Jefferson Jr. High	45	25.4%	51	22.6 %
Wilson Middle	26	14.7%	38	16.8%
Total	177	100.0%	226	100.0%

During the 2004-2005 performance period a majority of the 226 STOP participants were Hispanic (50.9%) or Non-Hispanic Whites (40.2%). Eleven students (4.9%) did not disclose their ethnicity. Fifty-four percent of participants were males and 46% were females.

**Table 2.
Ethnic Background of Participants by School**

Participating Schools	African American	Asian	Hispanic	Native American	Non – Hispanic	Not Reported	Total
Dairyland	0	0	7	0	5	0	12
Enterprise	2	0	8	0	4	0	14
Liberty	0	0	4	0	3	0	7
Martin Luther King	4	0	46	0	10	1	61
North Fork	1	0	1	2	11	0	15
Oak Creek	0	0	1	0	26	1	28
Thomas Jefferson	0	0	35	0	9	7	51
Wilson	0	0	13	0	23	2	38
Total	7	0	115	2	91	11	226
Percent	3.1%	0%	50.9%	0.9%	40.2%	4.9%	100%

**Table 3.
Gender of Participants by School**

Participating Schools	Female	Male	Total
Dairyland	2	10	12
Enterprise	6	8	14
Liberty	3	4	7
Martin Luther King	29	32	61
North Fork	6	9	15
Oak Creek	12	16	28
Thomas Jefferson	27	24	51
Wilson	19	19	38
Total	104	122	226
Percent	46%	54%	100%

II. Program Statistics

The program placed seven participants on probation for truancy offenses this past year. These participants made up 2% of the total participant population (n = 226). Three of the seven participants (0.43%) violated their terms of probation, and one participant was successful in completing their probation.

Under restitution and community service, one participant was given court ordered community service.

Participants who did not proceed with the program left due to reasons shown in Table 6.

**Table 4.
Probation Status by Semester**

	Mid-Year		End-Year		Annual	
	Number	Rate	Number	Rate	Number	Rate
Placed on probation for truancy offense	0	0%	7	3.1%	9	4.1%
Violated terms of current probation	0	0%	3	1.3%	3	1.3%
Completed probation	0	0%	1	0.4%	1	0.4%

n = 226

**Table 5.
Restitution and Community Service Status by Semester**

	Mid-Year		End-Year		Annual	
	Number	Rate	Number	Rate	Number	Rate
Given court ordered restitution	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Successfully completed restitution	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Given court ordered community service	0	0%	1	0.4%	1	0.4%
Successfully completed community service	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%

n = 226

**Table 6.
Reasons for Leaving the Program by Semester**

	Mid-Year		End-Year		Annual	
	Number	Rate	Number	Rate	Number	Rate
Moved to another city or state	4	8.3%	9	18.8%	13	27.1%
Transferred to another school	7	14.6%	6	12.5%	13	27.1%
602 W & I, wards	4	8.3%	15	31.3%	19	39.6%
Other	3	6.3%	0	0.0%	3	6.3%
Total	18	37.5%	30	62.5%	48	100.0%

n = 48

The program annually tracks participants' arrest, incarceration and probation violation rates, while specifically identifying if a participant's arrests, incarcerations, or probation violation occurred before or after referral for STOP participation. Tables 7 and 8 show participants' annual arrest and incarceration rates grouped by semester.

The increase in the arrest and incarceration rates can be attributed to the intensified supervision of the participants by program officers as the school year progressed. The arrest and incarceration rates are low in comparison to rates at the County level. The increase in these rates for post-referral STOP participants can be viewed as the results of positive intervention and prevention services being administered to deter further truancy and crime among this group of juveniles.

Table 7.
Arrest Rates Prior to and After STOP Referral By Type of Offense

Offense Type	1 st Semester		2 nd Semester		Annual	
	Number	Rate	Number	Rate	Number	Rate
Arrested prior to STOP referral						
Status offense	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Felony offense	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Misdemeanor offense	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Total	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Arrested after STOP referral						
Status offense	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Felony offense	3	1.3%	7	3.1%	10	4.4%
Misdemeanor offense	0	0%	5	2.2%	5	2.2%
Total	3	1.3%	12	5.3%	15	6.6%

Table 8.
Incarceration Rates Prior to and After STOP Referral By Type of Offense

Offense Type	1 st Semester		2 nd Semester		Annual	
	Number	Rate	Number	Rate	Number	Rate
Arrested prior to STOP referral						
Status offense	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Felony offense	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Misdemeanor offense	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Total	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Arrested after STOP referral						
Status offense	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Felony offense	3	2%	5	2.2%	8	3.5%
Misdemeanor offense	0	0%	2	0.9%	2	0.9%
Total	3	1.3%	7	3.1%	10	4.4%

STOP utilizes a step sequence to determine students' level of truancy. At **Step 1** (students' initial *STOP* referral) the student has 1 to 3 unexcused absences and a letter is sent to the parents notifying them of the student's truant behavior. **Step 2** indicates that the student incurred a fourth unexcused absence, at which time another notification is mailed to the parents. A meeting between the probation officer, the parents, and a school official soon follows. **Step 3** indicates a fifth unexcused absence occurred and a third letter of notification is mailed to the parents by the District Attorney. A compulsory Truancy Mediation Team Meeting is scheduled for students and parents to attend. **Step 4** indicates a sixth unexcused absence occurred and a School Attendance Review Board (SARB) meeting is held. **Step 5** (the final step) indicates that a seventh unexcused absence occurred. The student is referred to court as a habitual truant and formal probation is requested.

Table 9 shows the number of participants reaching each step sequence by mid-year and year-end. All participants in *STOP* were truant at enrollment and were at least Step 1 participants.

Figure 1.
Percentage of Students at Each Truancy Level at Mid-Year

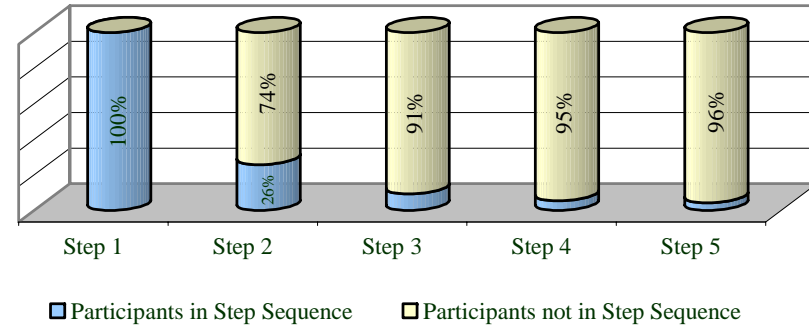


Figure 2.
Percentage of Students at Each Truancy Level at Year-End

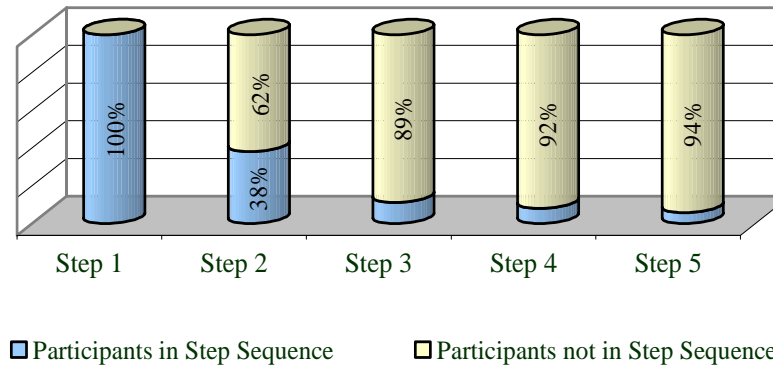


Table 9.
Participants at Each Truancy Level

Steps	Mid-Year		Annual	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
1	177	100.0%	226	100.0%
2	47	25.8%	86	38.1%
3	17	9.3%	25	11.1%
4	10	5.5%	18	8.0%
5	7	4.4%	9	5.8%

III. School Statistics

At the time of this annual report, 226 STOP participants were on file. However, academic and attendance data were not available for all participants due to the movement of participants in and out of program schools. Of those participants with data available at both mid-year and year-end, school attendance rates ($n = 126$) for Fall 2004 were 88.7% while Spring 2005 rates declined to 84.3%. Grade point averages (GPA) for STOP participants ($n = 121$) was 1.74 during Fall 2004 and 1.54 during Spring 2005. (Note: Participant data were matched at mid-year and year-end to include only those participants that had GPA and/or attendance rates for both the Fall 2004 and Spring 2005 semesters. Therefore, the **STOP Mid-Year 2004-2005 Report** reflects different GPA and attendance rates at mid-year when compared to the **STOP Final 2004-2005 Report**.)

Table 10.
Mean Grade Point Averages (GPA) and Attendance Rates per Semester by School

Participating Schools	Mean GPA				Attendance Rate			
	Sample Size	Mid-Year	Year End	+/-	Sample Size	Mid-Year	Year-End	+/-
Dairyland	$n = 2$	1.51	1.17	-0.34	$n = 2$	87.0%	88.0%	+1.0%
Enterprise	$n = 2$	2.25	2.13	-0.54	$n = 2$	99.5%	77.5%	-22.0%
Liberty	$n = 5$	1.40	1.38	-0.02	$n = 5$	92.6%	97.4%	+4.8%
Martin Luther King	$n = 37$	1.54	1.44	-0.10	$n = 39$	87.9%	76.2%	-11.7%
North Fork	$n = 13$	2.85	2.54	-0.31	$n = 15$	91.5%	92.1%	+0.6%
Oak Creek	$n = 15$	1.37	1.07	-0.30	$n = 17$	84.7%	77.8%	-6.9%
Thomas Jefferson	$n = 32$	1.69	1.45	-0.24	$n = 32$	90.8%	71.3%	-19.5%
Wilson	$n = 15$	1.82	1.67	-0.13	$n = 14$	87.8%	81.1%	-6.7%
Total	$n = 121$	1.74	1.54	-0.20	$n = 126$	90.2%	84.3%	-5.9%

To measure STOP participants' behavior, the program tracked the number of students suspended and the total days of suspension during Fall 2004 and Spring 2005. Only those students that were enrolled in STOP schools during the entire year ($n=141$) were included in this analysis. A total of 40 students were suspended in Fall 2004 with the highest percentages of students from Martin Luther King (30%) and Oak Creek (25%). Students were suspended for a total of 170 days during the Fall, making the average length of suspension per suspended participant 4.25 days. In Spring 2005, a total of 37 students were suspended, a 7.5% decline from Fall 2004 semester. These students averaged 6.43 days of suspension per suspended participant, for a total of 238 days during the Spring semester. Schools with the highest percentages of suspended participants during Spring were Oak Creek (31.2%) and Thomas Jefferson (20%).

The total number of participants suspended decreased from Fall to Spring while the total days of suspension increased. Previous investigations revealed that some suspended students were placed on extended suspension because school administration had deemed the student ready for school expulsion. However, only the school board had authority to approve expulsion of a student. Since the school board convened infrequently, some students facing expulsion were placed on continued suspension, remaining at home until expulsion procedures were completed thus increasing the total numbers of suspended days.

Table 11.
Number of Students Suspended and Total Days of Suspension per Semester by School

Participating Schools	Sample Size	Fall 2004 Suspensions		Spring 2005 Suspensions	
		Number of Students	Number of Days	Number of Students	Number of Days
Dairyland	$n = 2$	1	1	0	0
Enterprise	$n = 2$	0	0	1	2
Liberty	$n = 6$	4	16	1	7
Martin Luther King	$n = 39$	12	30	17	112
North Fork	$n = 15$	3	17	2	11
Oak Creek	$n = 26$	10	53	6	18
Thomas Jefferson	$n = 33$	5	34	6	61
Wilson	$n = 18$	5	19	7	27
Total	$n = 141$	40	170	37	238

IV. Participants' Background

Family dynamics can be an important factor in a student's behavior. STOP attempts to better understand the behavior of truant students by investigating the home environments of individual students. However, this investigation was conducted on a self-report basis and at the students' discretion, so this information may not be fully reliable.

Table 12 shows the count of STOP participants' family members that were incarcerated, on parole, and on probation. Fifty-nine participants (26.1%) had family members who had entered the criminal justice system.

Table 13 shows STOP participants' involvement with other programs and services. Of the 226 STOP participants, 202 students (89.4%) were involved in one or more of these services. One hundred and twenty-six participants (55.8%) were eligible for free and reduced lunches, while 133 of the students' families (58.8%) had received assistance from the Child Protective Services (CPS) due to events related to complaints or intervention.

Table 12.
Number of Family Members Involved in the Criminal Justice System by School

Participating Schools	Family member incarcerated	Family member on parole	Family member on probation	Annual Total
Dairyland	2	2	4	8
Enterprise	1	0	3	4
Liberty	0	0	1	1
Martin Luther King	0	2	1	3
North Fork	2	0	1	3
Oak Creek	3	0	2	5
Thomas Jefferson	2	3	13	18
Wilson	5	3	9	17
Total	15	10	34	59
Percent	6.6%	4.4%	15.0%	26.1%

Table 13.
Number of Students Participating in Other Programs and Services by School

Program / Service	Dairyland	Enterprise	Liberty	MLK	North Fork	Oak Creek	Jefferson	Wilson	Total	Percent
Eligible for Free/ Reduced Lunch	9	7	3	38	3	5	34	27	126	55.8%
Cal-Learn	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0.4%
ESL	2	1	0	0	0	1	6	2	12	5.3%
Previous Therapy	1	4	1	7	2	7	8	7	37	16.4%
Referred to New Hope Clinicians	0	0	0	0	15	14	0	0	29	12.8%
Referred to Madera Co. Clinicians	0	6	1	13	0	0	19	1	40	17.7%
Referred to STOP Tutoring	0	0	0	0	0	20	0	0	20	9.2%
Family History with CPS	8	11	5	36	4	14	31	24	133	58.8%
Referred to B & G Club	0	0	0	0	0	27	0	0	27	3.5%

V. Conclusion

The 2004-05 school year was quite different compared to the past three years of the program's existence. The program has had marked success at curbing the trend of truancy that was very evident prior to the implementation of the STOP program in 2001. However, this year the program encountered impediments due to several personnel and staffing problems. Two probation officers assigned to STOP suffered from medical conditions resulting in their taking medical leave. As the Probation Department had previously suffered numerous staff losses, it was impossible to temporarily fill the two STOP positions. The remaining STOP probation staff assisted with the unattended STOP caseloads; however a decline in attendance and GPA was witnessed in these caseloads by the end of the school year. In addition, the Behavior Health Services Clinician assigned to the STOP program was reassigned to another position within Behavioral Health Services Department, resulting in a disruption of the counseling program services for some of the STOP participants. The position was back filled with a Caseworker position. Furthermore, the STOP tutoring program was not offered during the school year, as there was a problem staffing the tutoring component of the program.

However, due to the previous success of the program, it is anticipated that STOP will rebound and continue to be productive and successful at changing the lives of the youth and reestablish their relationships with the school. The program is fully staffed for the 2005-06 school year and the tutoring program has been reinstated with tutors from the local high school.

On a positive note, at a recent meeting of the STOP Multidisciplinary Team, the Madera Unified School District Attendance Officer/SARB director reported a remarkable decline in the truancy rates for children in the middle schools in the Madera Unified School District.

He directly attributed the decline to the success of the STOP program and the intervention by the probation officers, the Behavioral Health Services staff, and school personnel.

A review of the statistical data continues to indicate the effectiveness of the program. After the initial contact with the STOP probation officer and the STOP caseworker, most of the participants remained at STEP one or STEP two of the program's continuum of steps. This represents a curtailing of the truant behavior at the initial stages of the program. As indicated in previous annual reports, the tangible success of the program cannot be measured only by statistical data, but rather by the evident changes observed in the lives of the youth and the families the program serves. Each year the program staff has the privilege of assisting families in the realization of their value and dignity, and that their lives can be meaningful through active participation in the community, which most certainly and importantly includes their schools.

Probation Officer Page, who is assigned to the STOP program and services Martin Luther King Middle School, recently said she has learned to approach truant students differently than she had in the past. She has observed many of these students come to school disheveled and lacking concentration. She has come to appreciate that the central issues affecting these students usually run deeper than truancy. Previously, she concentrated on questioning the child about his or her lack of school attendance. She has since changed her approach and now asks what is happening with them personally and in their homes. This thoughtful approach has been much more successful in understanding the difficulties wayward students experience in their lives. As a program, we have learned that truancy is most often a symptom of a problem and that solutions are as varied as the individual students we encounter. We believe we are making an impact; one student and one family at a time. The STOP program is successful and we look forward to helping those in need redirect their lives and become the young men and young women they have the potential to be.

*Madera County
Probation
Department*

*Stop Truancy
Opportunity
Program*



The Probation Department appreciates the Madera County Board of Supervisors' continued support of the program. Collaboratively, the Board, the Behavior Health Services Department, the Probation Department, the county schools, the District Attorney's Office, the Harry H. Baker Boys and Girls Club, and the Department of Social Services have made this program successful. Our partners in this endeavor are integral constituents in the triumph over truancy in the eight schools STOP services in Madera County.

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