

# Counties Response to School Attendance Concerns

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# State and Statutory Guidance

## **Failure to ensure education** [Minn. Stat. 260E.03, subd. 15(a)(4)]

“(4) failure to ensure that the child is educated as defined in sections [120A.22](#) and [260C.163, subdivision 11](#), which does not include a parent's refusal to provide the parent's child with sympathomimetic medications, consistent with section [125A.091, subdivision 5](#)”

**MN DCYF Screening Guidance:** Failure to ensure education means persons responsible for children’s care have not ensured they are enrolled in school, and attending school according to expectations of school districts; children are not in compliance with statutory requirements defined in Minn. Stats.120A.22 and 260C.163, subd. 11. Children’s absence from school is presumed to be due to parents’, guardians’, or custodians’ failure to comply with compulsory instruction laws [Minn. Stat. 260C.163, subd. 11 (a)-(b)] if:

- Children are under age 12, and
- School made appropriate efforts to resolve a child’s attendance problems, such as sending letters, phone, and in-person contact with child’s parents or guardian.

## **Habitual truant** 260C.007 Subd. 19.

"Habitual truant" means a child under the age of 17 years who is absent from attendance at school without lawful excuse for seven school days per school year if the child is in elementary school or for one or more class periods on seven school days per school year if the child is in middle school, junior high school, or high school or a child who is 17 years of age who is absent from attendance at school without lawful excuse for one or more class periods on seven school days per school year and who has not lawfully withdrawn from school under section [120A.22, subdivision 8](#).

# Counties Response

## Under 12- Educational Neglect

- In MN, neglect makes up approximately 62% of child protection (CP) cases
- In Minnesota, the role of child protection includes addressing concerns of educational neglect.
- Children 11 and under with 7 unexcused absences fall under the child protection statute.



## 12 and Over- Truancy

- Child welfare response
- Varying practice based on County structure and access to resources
- Frequent crossover from ed neglect to truancy



# Background

- Child protection response to school attendance concerns/educational neglect may be “too big of a response” and not most effective
  - MN is one of 35 states that include education neglect in the child protection system
  - Growing interest nationally and in MN to create alternative pathways to serve families where school attendance is a concern
- School attendance concerns linked to overrepresentation of BIPOC families in our CW system:
  - 2021 Educational Neglect Data: 82% were children from BIPOC communities, whereas they make up 36% of enrolled students
- Increased need for focus on providing earlier, more fitting interventions outside the child protection system to:
  - Address underlying causes such as basic needs, home stressors, cultural barriers, resource and referral connections
  - Provide an immediate, concrete action towards addressing disproportionality and reducing entry into our CP system

**IS THERE ANOTHER WAY? Yes!**

# Another Way – Olmsted School Community Partnership

- PACE Program- Parents and Children Excel: a diversionary program that allows BIPOC children and their families to be provided services outside the child protection system.
- **County-School District Liaisons**
  - Two social workers-One responsible for Elementary Aged and one responsible for Middle School Aged students
  - Work within and with schools to identify students early who have attendance or other worries getting in the way of their education
  - Facilitate a meeting with school, caregivers and student as early as 3 absences
  - Develop an Educational Action Plan with all parties to be reviewed in near future (approx. 30 days)
  - Liaisons can make referrals to mental health services, community resources, basic needs options, etc
  - Goals: identify students early and address the underlying worries; build partnerships between school and family early; avoid need for CW or CP services

## **Successes:**

- Schools state they appreciate liaisons ability to provide expertise on community or voluntary county services to offer families
- Schools routinely report they do not want to have to utilize CP to address school worries as it causes undue stress and conflict with families
- Families feel more supported, less judged; receive individualized services

## **Worries:**

- Despite early successes, only small portion of schools/students that would be eligible can access due to staffing and tentative funding
- Sustainability is in jeopardy; persistent problem with creative earlier intervention programs across the state without additional resources at a state and federal level.

# Another Way- Scott County Approach

**PASS Program  
(Promoting  
Attendance and  
School Success) for  
children under 12**

**PATH Program  
(Promoting  
Attendance  
Through Hope) for  
children over 12**

# PASS Prevention

- Enables school to make referral directly to community provider, St. David's, when a student (under age 12) has 3 unexcused absences
- St. David's engages the student and family and school to overcome barriers to school attendance and assist in linking family with needed supports/services (e.g., Family Resource Centers, Mental/Chemical Health services, etc.)
- Engagement across all Scott County School Districts

# PASS Diversion

- Schools make mandated report for educational neglect to child protection after student has 7+ unexcused absences and school intervention is not effective
- Scott County CP will screen report and, if appropriate, screen-out and divert it to community provider, St. David's.
- St. David's will engage student, family and school in addressing and overcoming barriers to school attendance and assist in linking family with needed supports/services (e.g., Family Resource Centers, Mental/Chemical Health services)
- Strong engagement and coordination between St. David's and local school districts
- If student/family refuses to engage in PASS Diversion, the case may be referred back to child protection

# PATH Program

## Partnership with TreeHouse and The Katallasso Group

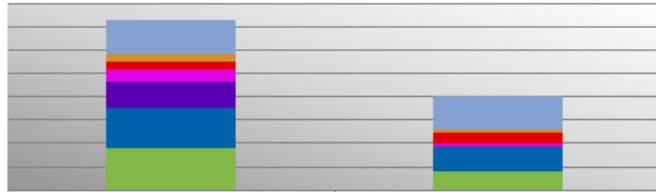
➤ [Home | Path Prevention](#)

- Schools make prevention referrals directly to PATH Prevention when they identify a student with unexcused absences
  - Schools can make truancy referrals to CAO after student (age 12+) has 7 or more unexcused absences and school intervention is not effective
- PATH will engage student, family and school in addressing and overcoming barriers to school attendance and assist in linking family with needed supports/services (e.g., Family Resource Centers, Mental/Chemical Health services)
- Strong engagement and coordination between PATH staff and local school districts
- If student/family refuses to engage in PATH diversion, the case may be referred back to County for formal truancy intervention



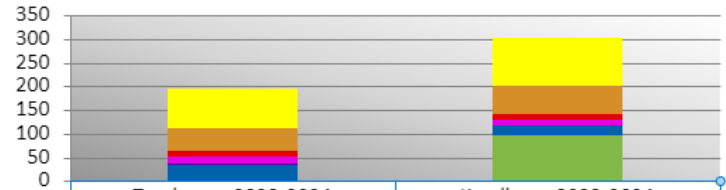
# Demographics of Students Served by PASS and PATH Programs

## PASS Referrals by Race and Ethnicity for School Year



	2022-2023	2023-2024
Hispanic (any race)	29	29
Pacific Island	1	0
Native Amer.	6	3
Multi Racial	7	9
Asian	10	2
Unknown	23	0
Caucasian	35	22
African Amer.	35	15
Total	146	80

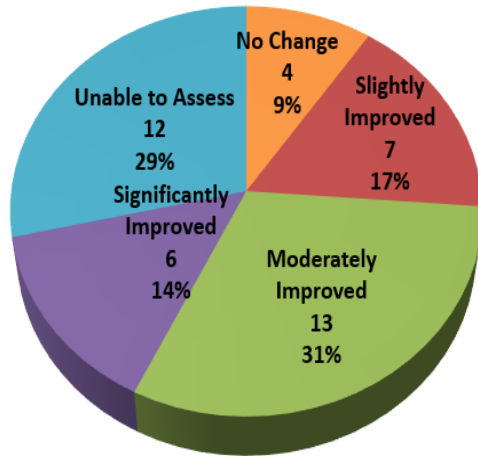
## Truancy Prevention Referrals by Race and Ethnicity for School Year



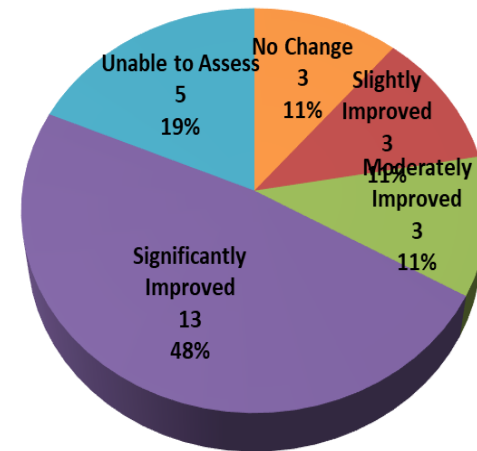
	Treehouse 2023-2024	Katallasso 2023-2024
Caucasian	84	102
African American	47	62
Native American	12	12
Asian	15	11
Pacific Islander	2	1
Hispanic	35	19
Unknown	0	97
Total	195	304

# PASS: Improved School Attendance

PASS Diversion Program: Improved Attendance  
for School Year 2022-2023

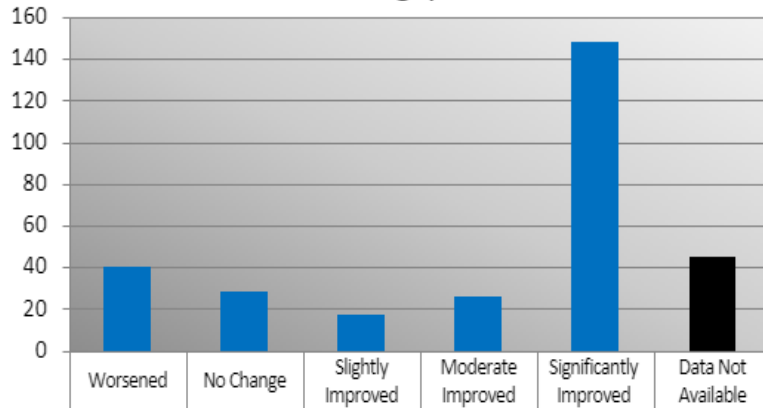


PASS Diversion Program: Improved Attendance  
for School Year 2023-2024



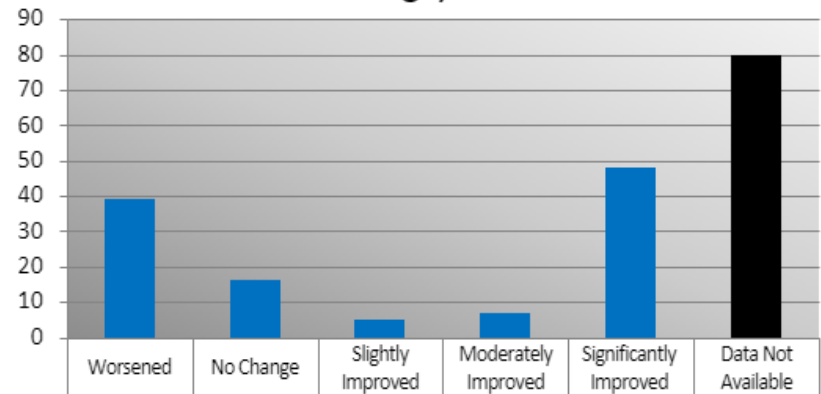
# PATH: Improved School Attendance

**The Katallasso Group: PATH Prevention Student Attendance Change, 2023-2024**



■ Students	40	28	17	26	148	45
Percent of Students with Known Data	15.4%	10.8%	6.6%	10.0%	57.1%	

**TreeHouse: PATH Prevention Student Attendance Change, 2023-2024**



■ Students	39	16	5	7	48	80
Percent of Students with Known Data	33.9%	13.9%	4.3%	6.1%	41.7%	

# Scott County/Shakopee Schools Partnership

Shakopee Schools and Scott County have been consistently working to improve attendance and targeted approaches to improving individual student attendance outcomes.

- Joint meetings were held throughout the 2023-24 school year and direct attendance meetings were held in the summer of 2024 to prepare for this school year.
- The School Board authorized agreement with Scott County for Attendance Specialist Services at the end of the 2023-24 school year = 100% funded by Scott County.



# Scott County/Shakopee Schools Partnership

- Improve student attendance = shared vision
- Continually enhance practices, and procedures that support increased student attendance.
- Develop direct connections of the impact that attendance practices and procedures have on students and families.
- Recognize any inequities of our current system of reporting absences and making referrals for programming.
- Strengthen the partnership with Scott County and the referrals process.
- Build greater understanding across the district of programs to support students who are chronically truant including PASS and PATH- prevention and diversion.



# What is a Family Resource Center?

Universal access point for education, supports, services, and community building.



**Safe, accessible place for families to connect with supports and services.**



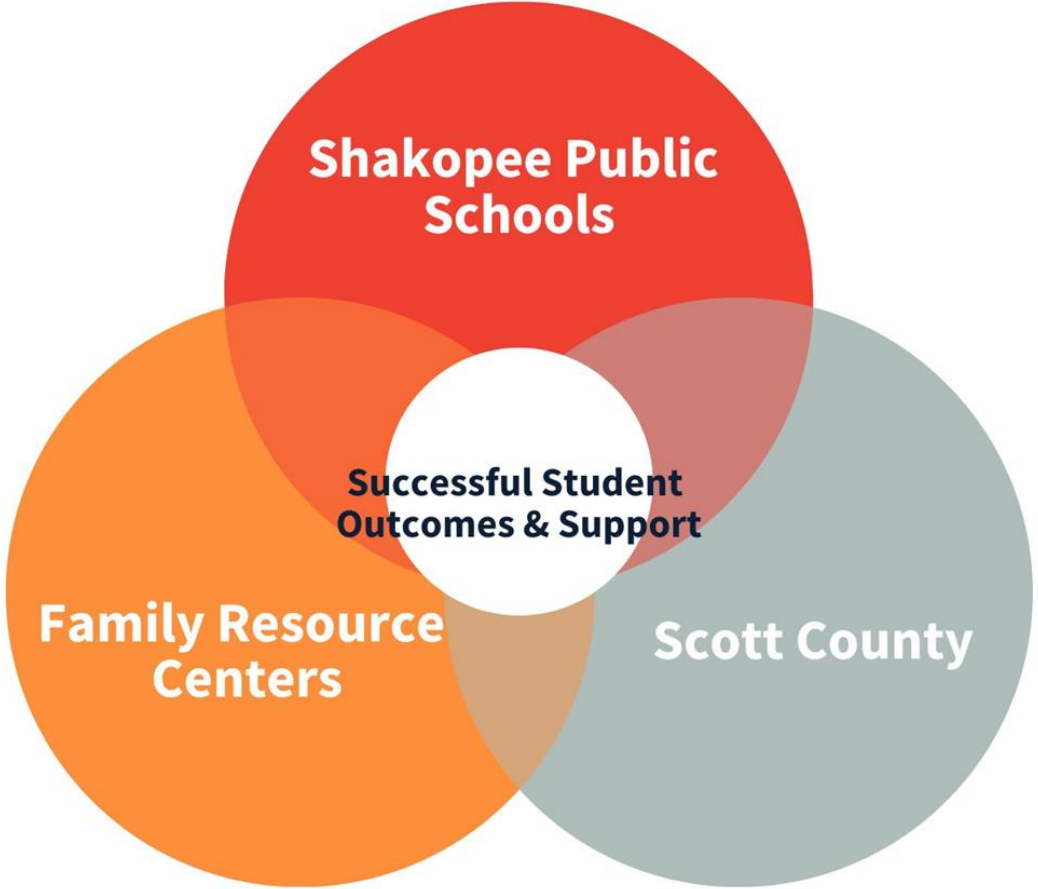
**Programs tailored to the culture and needs of the community they serve.**



**Core services focus on parenting education and skills, early childhood literacy, and access to concrete supports.**



**A place where individuals and organizations come together to help families thrive.**



**Shakopee Public  
Schools**

**Family Resource  
Centers**

**Scott County**

**Successful Student  
Outcomes & Support**

# Opportunities and Recommendations



**Amend the language** from statute 260E and MN Child Maltreatment Screening Guidelines that identifies educational neglect as a mandatory child protection response and amend language to allow a discretionary child welfare response, with a mandated offer of services or to enable a county to pilot an alternative response in partnership with a community provider to offer services to a family when school attendance concerns emerge.

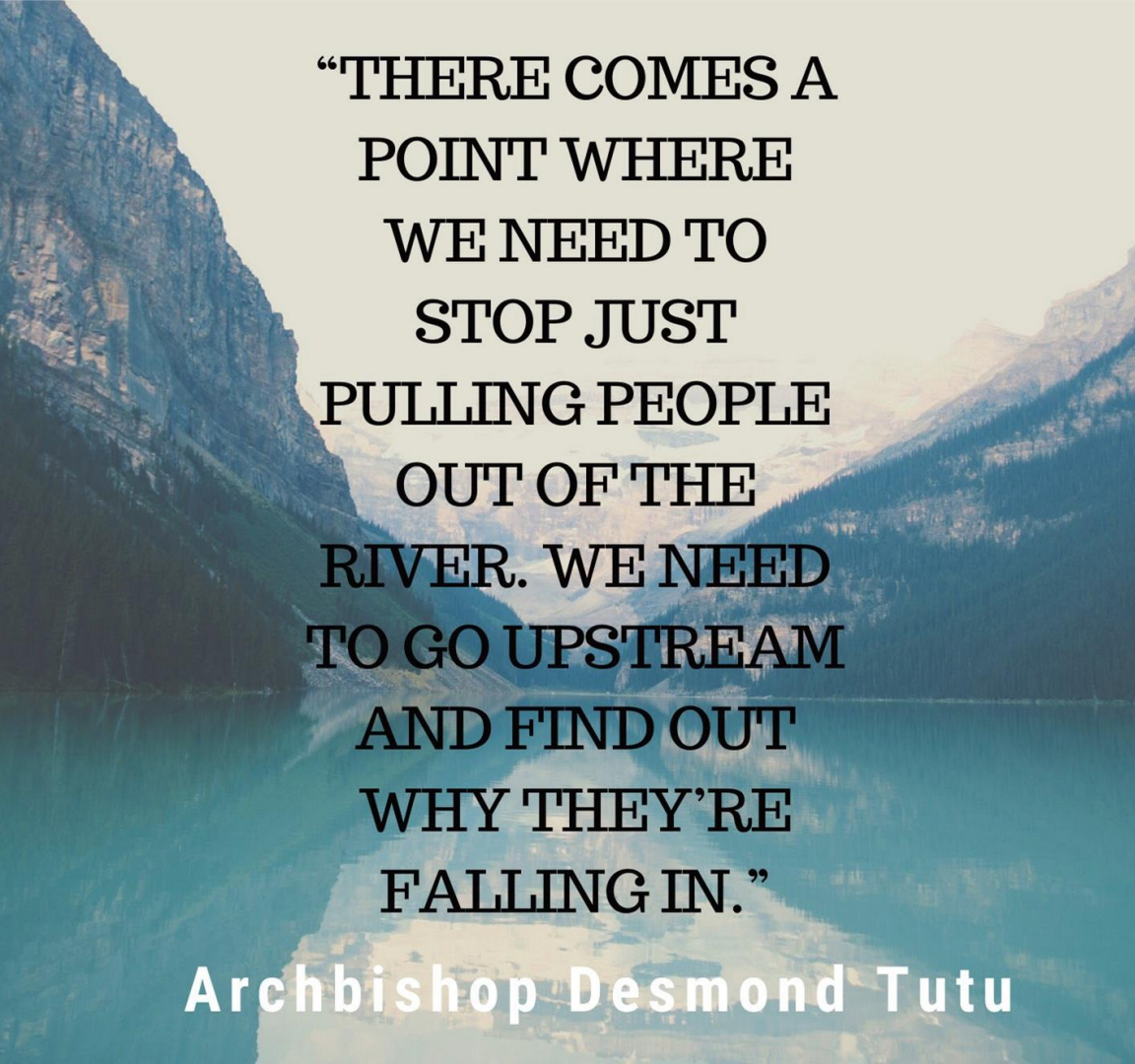


**Invest in and sustain community-based prevention efforts** and programming such as Family Resource Centers, full service community schools and other initiatives and programs with the goal of ensuring access to these supports throughout all counties. This aligns with the vision of community and culturally specific agencies taking on work with families in the community.



**Modernize and invest in data systems** that support the work





**“THERE COMES A  
POINT WHERE  
WE NEED TO  
STOP JUST  
PULLING PEOPLE  
OUT OF THE  
RIVER. WE NEED  
TO GO UPSTREAM  
AND FIND OUT  
WHY THEY’RE  
FALLING IN.”**

**Archbishop Desmond Tutu**

## Why Focus on Prevention?

- Government cannot do it all.
- Less Government intrusion, more community support, and more family choices.
- Try new things. Cannot get different results from the same programs.
- Minimize the deep-end county programs that are more costly and tend to have less positive outcomes for the community, families, and individuals.

Thank you