



# Mid Year Report 2015-16

## Executive Summary

The Youth Opportunity Center Mid-Year Report serves as a snapshot of the work thus far, highlights lessons learned, and offers a roadmap to deepen and expand its impact in 2016-17, working toward a future where all students have the skills and resources they need to succeed.

The Orleans Parish School Board (OPSB) and the Recovery School District (RSD) have partnered to **proactively serve students who are at risk of disengaging from and dropping out of school**. In New Orleans, 18 out of every 100 young people aged 16-24 are neither in school nor working.\* Identifying and intervening with these students before they drop out is key, and requires coordination among systems such as schools, social services, the courts, and law enforcement.

### Students at Risk

One of the key indicators for student disengagement and school dropout is **chronic absenteeism or truancy**. According to the Louisiana Department of Education, in 2014-2015, more than 6,800 students missed at least 20 days of school. OPSB and RSD are addressing this issue through the Youth Opportunity Center (YOC). The YOC serves as the **citywide safety net** for students at risk of disengaging from and dropping out of school. Its major role is to connect those students and families to the services they need to be successful in school, serving as the link between schools, families, and social service agencies.

The YOC also operates the city's **truancy center**. All students picked up by the New Orleans Police Department for truancy are returned to school or are dropped off at the YOC, where case managers perform assessments to determine the underlying causes of truancy for each student.

### Early Indicators for Disengagement

- ◆ Truancy/chronic absenteeism
- ◆ Housing instability
- ◆ Trauma
- ◆ Mental health needs
- ◆ Severe and/or chronic behavioral issues
- ◆ Juvenile/criminal justice involvement
- ◆ Pregnancy
- ◆ Running away from home

### YOC Identifies High Needs Students

The YOC **vastly expanded pathways** to referral to identify the most at-risk students via partnerships with schools, families, courts, law enforcement, and community social service and mental health providers. Thus far, the YOC has served 1,294 students, including 97 receiving intensive case management services.

### YOC Bridges the Gap

The YOC **connects families** with needed services and **provides coordination** among families, schools, service providers, and courts if applicable. Case managers have made 92 referrals to community agencies, and have worked with 36 schools whose students receive intensive case management and 61 schools whose students receive low-level case management in Municipal Court or Juvenile Court.

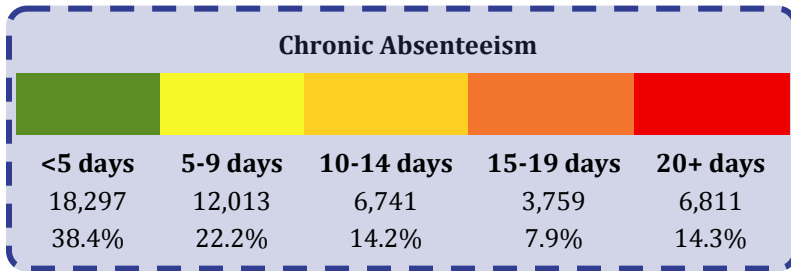
### YOC Tackles the Toughest Cases

Case managers work with families to **break down barriers** to school engagement and achievement and to build the family's **sense of agency**. Of thirteen cases that have been closed, 100% of parents reported that the student's attitude toward school had improved since the Case Manager got involved, and 100% of parents reported feeling comfortable asking the school to provide the services that are best for their students.

\* Sims, Patrick. March 2015. Reconnecting Opportunity Youth: Data Reference Guide. Cowen Institute.

[http://www.coweninstitute.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Cowen\\_OY\\_Data\\_Guide\\_2015.pdf](http://www.coweninstitute.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Cowen_OY_Data_Guide_2015.pdf)

# Students at Risk



All data provided by Louisiana Department of Education, SY 2014-15

## Behavioral Issues & Justice System Involvement

- Student Hearing Office (SHO) conferences: 520
- Multiple SHO conferences: 31
- Out-of-school suspensions: 5,211 (10.9%)
- Multiple out-of-school suspensions: 1,969 (4.1%)
- Average length of suspension: 4.1 days
- Re-entry, adjudicated settings: 38
- Re-entry, detention: 22

# YOC Identifies High Needs Students

The YOC identifies the students **most at risk of disengaging** from school via established referral gateways. When immediate **crisis intervention** is required, a case manager stabilizes the family prior to intake and assessment. A Case Opening Review is conducted to determine the student's **level of need**, which is measured by the presence of risk factors for school dropout. Risk factors fall into the following domains: school attendance, academic and behavioral performance, suspensions and expulsions, family relations, finances, physical and mental health, substance use, peer relations, and risky behaviors.

- ⇒ **Level 1** cases are sent back to the referring agency with an option to resubmit with additional information. The exception is Municipal Court cases, where families receive case management via the YOC's Municipal Court liaisons. The liaisons help families **navigate the system** and ensure they know what is expected of them.
- ⇒ **Level 2 and 3** cases are assigned a case manager, who conducts an **assessment** with the family to determine the urgency of the student's needs. Cases meeting this level of need are characterized by children whose needs cross multiple systems. The case manager works with the family to create a prioritized **service plan** to break down barriers to school attendance and achievement. The case manager coordinates with the school, service providers, and courts if applicable, and meets with the family in person at least once a month for Level 2 cases or twice a month for Level 3 cases.

Need Level	Number of Cases
Municipal Court	89
Level 1 - Carryover	5
Level 2	53
Level 3	39

*Level 1 - Carryover (from SY 2014-15), Level 2, and Level 3 are assigned a case manager*

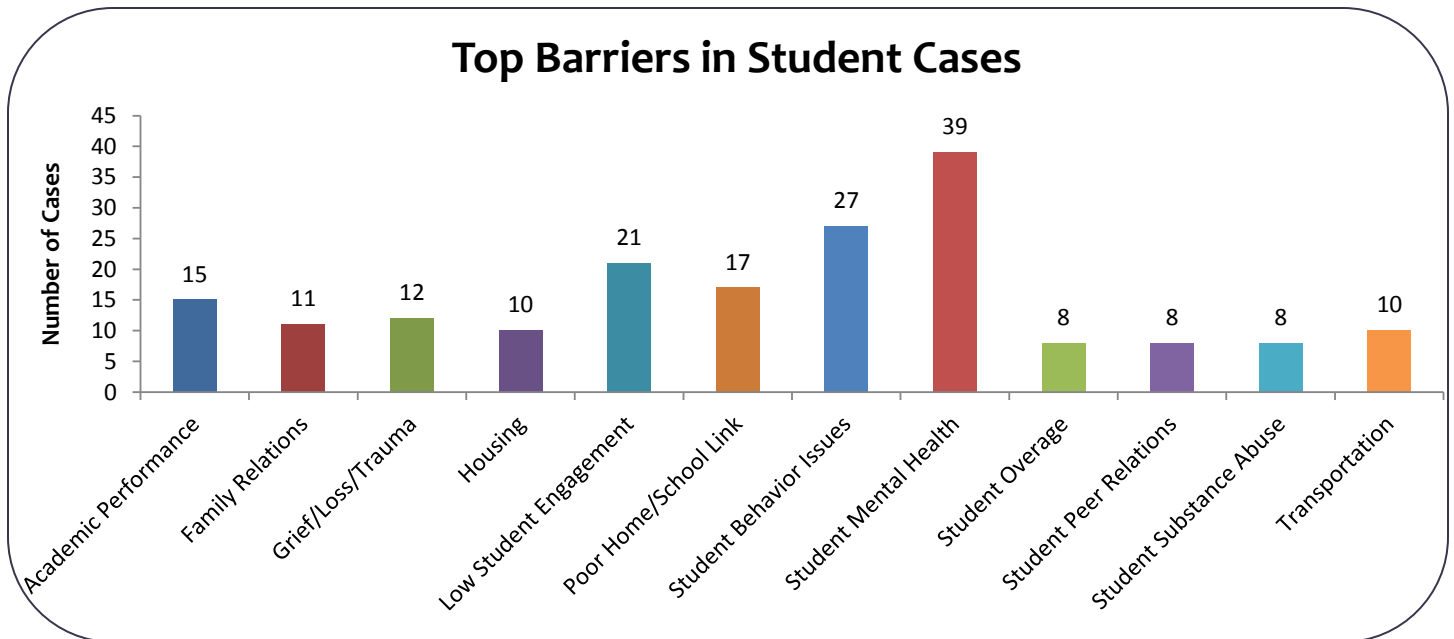
# YOC Bridges the Gap

The YOC's model enables case managers to serve as the **strongest bridge** connecting students and families, schools, and service providers. Prior to the launch of the YOC, the burden of addressing attendance and behavior challenges fell solely on schools, who often do not have the capacity or resources to address the **underlying barriers** keeping students out of school. There was no formal mechanism for identifying students who need interventions beyond those the school is able to provide, or for coordinating services for these vulnerable populations. YOC case managers **coordinate existing services and make referrals** to community agencies to provide the family with necessary services and interventions. They facilitate communication and ensure alignment of goals among all parties. Case managers have provided 92 referrals to community agencies. The most common referral types are captured in the chart at right. Case managers have spent far more time than anticipated coordinating existing services and following up on prior referrals for which services were never received. These coordination activities are not currently reflected in the data; the YOC has updated its systems to accurately capture this type of work.

Linkages to Community Agencies	Families Referred
Mental Health	29
Mentoring	8
Food Assistance	8
Financial Assistance/Counseling	6
Parenting Resources	5
Employment Training/Counseling	4
Legal Advocacy	4
Pro-Social Activities	4
FINS	4
Municipal Court	4

# YOC Tackles the Toughest Cases

A YOC case provides a student and family with a clear path to **school engagement and achievement**. At the resolution of a case, the student will be **attending school regularly**, and the student and family will be **empowered to advocate** for their best interests. This is accomplished through a focus on **eliminating barriers** to school attendance, whether those barriers are driven by the student, parent/guardian, or external forces. The YOC has identified twenty-five common barriers, ranging from transportation to child care needs to grief/loss/trauma.



Given the challenging nature of the family's circumstances, and the lack of existing communication among community agencies, case managers often spend a great deal of time at the beginning of a case attempting to establish lines of communication and obtain needed information from the student, family, school personnel, and service providers. The

"Your support has been valuable, especially in regard to home/school link!"  
- School Social Worker

YOC's case managers are **extremely persistent** and exhaust every available resource to contact the family and to establish rapport with all involved parties.

Once the case manager and the family have established a relationship and have worked together to create a service plan, the case manager begins working with the family to break down barriers to school attendance and achievement. The case manager connects the student and family with the tools and resources they need to **identify and solve problems** and to **advocate for themselves** so that the family is well-positioned to continue supporting their student after the case is closed.

The two Municipal Court liaisons have provided case management to 257 families, while the Juvenile Court liaison has provided case management for three students re-entering school from secure care and has facilitated communication between schools and court for 157 students. The five special population case managers have provided intensive case management to 97 families. Each special population case manager has an average of 18 open cases at any given time, evenly split between Level 2 and Level 3 cases. Of the twelve Level 2 or Level 3 cases closed so far, case managers spent an average of 16-18 weeks working each case. The total time spent ranged from four hours for a more straightforward case to thirty hours for a case with an extremely complicated set of student and family needs.

"[The case manager] provided the instruction and the guidance needed to help [the student] with his behavior problem. She was very informative with matters of school also."  
- Parent

# Lessons Learned & Ongoing Priorities

- ⇒ YOC learned that student behavior and attendance issues often have their roots in **complicated family dynamics and circumstances**, thereby necessitating YOC case management services beyond what was initially anticipated. As such, YOC will **expand its level of need categories** to include a “critical need” level category. Cases meeting criteria for this category will be eligible for services beyond 4 months.
- ⇒ YOC learned that there is a pronounced **lack of coordination** among service providers, and between service providers and schools. Therefore, the YOC will prioritize establishing an **Interagency Service Coordination Team (ISC)** and host a citywide meeting to provide **guidance around coordinating services**. In addition, YOC case managers are developing robust service plans and liaising with providers to ensure **continuity of care**. Our case managers **facilitate strong connections**, both for new referrals and for agencies with which the family has already been linked. They work with providers to determine which services a family is receiving, or is in need of, and ensure collaboration exist among the group of providers.
- ⇒ The YOC learned that the quality of available services is **inconsistent** across need areas and that **gaps in services** exist for key need areas (i.e., adolescent substance abuse, mentoring, and after-school programs). Many families face transportation challenges in traveling to receive services or to participate in extracurricular programs. Thus, case managers are working to **evaluate the services provided** by various community agencies and identifying those agencies that provide quality services and additional supports for families in need.
- ⇒ The YOC learned that schools have **different policies and protocols** for responding to truancy and to behavior challenges. The YOC is working with NOPD to champion **policy alignment and reform**, and is working with Juvenile Court judges and FINS to pilot a **Truancy Recovery and Assistance Court Program**, which will serve as an additional intervention diverting families from more formal judicial proceedings. The YOC has published **guidelines for schools** around Municipal Court and FINS referrals and will continue to build its library of resources and best practices for schools. The YOC asks that schools make referrals to FINS and to Municipal Court as appropriate, and provide any records requested by the courts in a timely manner.
- ⇒ The YOC learned that police officers have brought **far fewer students than anticipated to the truancy center** and have inconsistently submitted documentation of truancy-related activities. The YOC is working with district commanders to **increase awareness** of the truancy center and to emphasize the **need for YOC interventions and documentation**. Police should transport any truant student to the truancy center or to the school of attendance, which can be verified by calling the school or the YOC, and should submit documentation of Juvenile Warning Citations and Municipal Court Summonses to the YOC.
- ⇒ The YOC learned that many community members are aware that truancy is a problem but **do not know how to address** it. The YOC is launching a **community engagement campaign** encouraging citizens to call the truancy center if a truant student is spotted. The YOC truancy officer is also **working with business owners**, asking them to report and refuse to serve students attempting to patronize the business during school hours.



# Appendix: Data

All data are as of 1/15/2016.

## Referrals by Gateway

Referrals by Gateway	Truancy Center	Behavioral Health	Mental Health	Re-entry: Secure Care	Re-entry: Detention Facility	Re-entry: Hospital	Student Hearing Office	Municipal Court	Juvenile Court	EnrollNOLA	Total
<b>Total Referrals</b>	25	22	4	6	0	3	15	257	157	805	1,294
<b>Cases Receiving Intensive Services</b>	4	14	3	3	0	1	10	56	0	6	97

Note: EnrollNOLA refers all students discharged from school rosters for non-attendance, including those who are no-shows for the first five days of the school year. The vast majority (799) of these were Quick Connects, for which only a brief touch point is provided. For 40% of calls, case managers were able to reach the family and gathered information about the student's enrollment status. The case manager performs a Case Opening Review if the situation warrants it, as was the case for 7 students, 6 of whom scored Level 2 or 3 and therefore received intensive case management services.

## Contacts by Case Managers (only for cases receiving intensive case management)

Contacts by Case Managers	Truancy Center	Behavioral Health	Mental Health	Re-entry: Secure Care	Re-entry: Detention Facility	Re-entry: Hospital	Student Hearing Office	Municipal Court	Juvenile Court	EnrollNOLA	Total
<b>Phone or Text</b>	107	98	35	54		19	83	668		84	1,148
<b>Email</b>	30	27	5	16		9	29	175		34	325
<b>Home Visits</b>	28	20	9	5		12	33	157		35	299
<b>Meetings at School</b>	12	21	8	10		4	25	122		19	221
<b>Placement Visits</b>		1						2			3
<b>Collateral Contacts (Non-School)</b>	80	16	13	3		7	19	159		4	301
<b>Other In Person (e.g. Court)</b>	16	7	4	8		5	10	95		7	152
<b>Linkages to Community Agencies</b>	13	6	6	2		2	17	41		5	92

## Linkages to Community Agencies (new referrals)

Linkages to Community Agencies	Families Referred
Mental Health	29
Mentoring	8
Food Assistance	8
Financial Assistance/Counseling	6
Parenting Resources	5
Employment Training/Counseling	4
Legal Advocacy	4
Pro-Social Activities	4
FINS	4
Municipal Court	4
Housing/Utilities Assistance	3
Individual Counseling	3
Family Counseling	2
Tutoring	1
Vocational Training	1

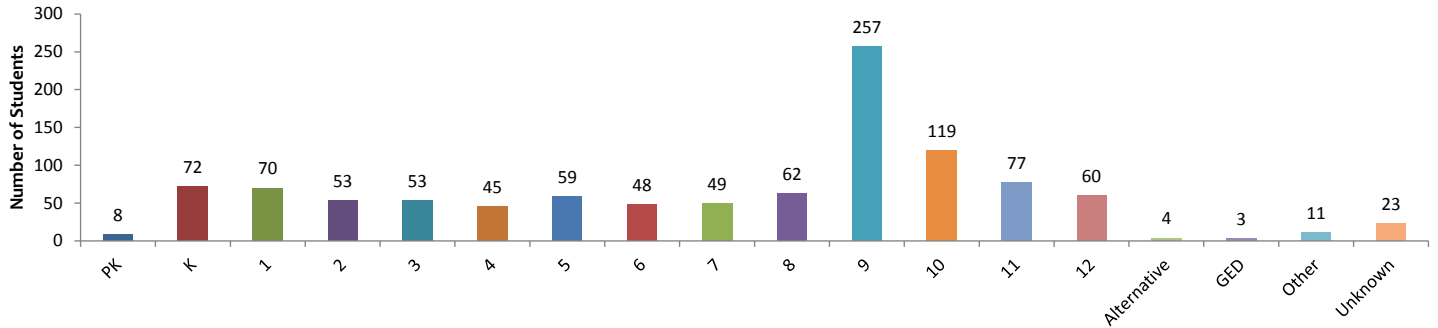
## Barriers in Case Management Cases

Barriers	# of Cases
Student Mental Health	39
Student Behavior Issues	27
Student Low School Engagement	21
Poor Home/School Link	17
Student Academic Performance	15
Grief/Loss/Trauma	12
Family Relations	11
Housing	10
Transportation	10
Student Overage	8
Student Peer Relations	8
Student Substance Abuse	8
Financial	6
P/G Mental Health	6
Student Not Receiving SPED Services	6
Parenting	4
Child Abuse	3
P/G Physical Health	3
Child Care	2
Safety Concerns	2
Student Physical Health	1
Immigration Status	0
Language Barrier	0
P/G Substance Abuse	0
Student Pregnancy	0

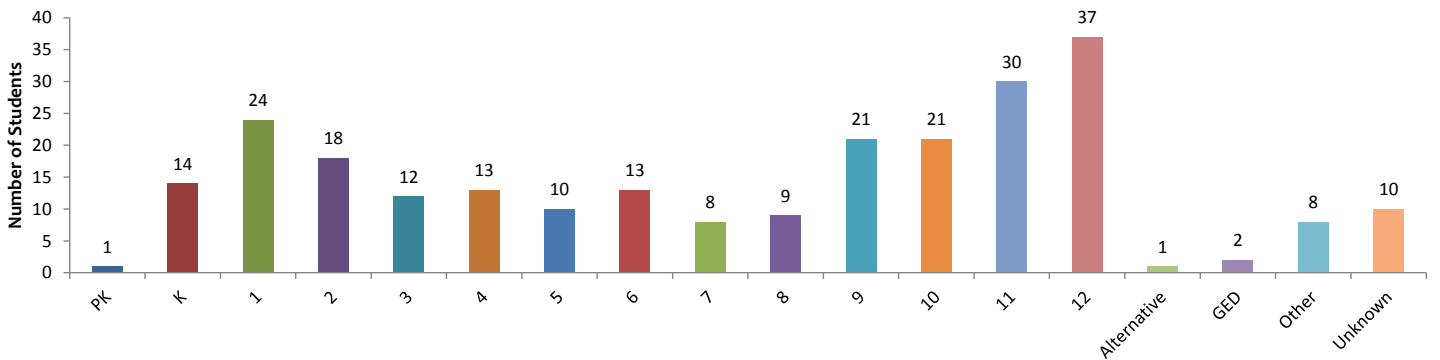
# Appendix: Data

All data are as of 1/15/2016.

### Total Referrals by Grade



### Municipal Court Referrals by Grade



### Case Management Cases by Grade

