

MY BROTHER'S KEEPER

Community Challenge

DALLAS COUNTY, TEXAS



✓ **Step 1 – ACCEPT THE CHALLENGE**

- September 27, 2014: Dallas County Judge Clay Jenkins accepts the challenge to participate in My Brother's Keeper

✓ **Step 2 – LOCAL ACTION SUMMIT**

- Friday, October 8, 2014: Local leaders, judges, county staff convene to discuss which of the six building blocks fit the needs of minority male youth in Dallas County and which resources we have to fill the need

✓ **Step 3 – REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Thursday, May 7, 2015: Committee reconvenes to announce recommendations

✓ **Step 4 – LAUNCH A PLAN OF ACTION**

- Monday, May 11, 2015, Dallas County will announce its plan to mentor and train young men through two programs:
 1. GRAD (Grade Recovery + Attendance = Diploma) Court
 2. Male Diversion Court

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Policy Review & Recommendations



✓ **Step 3 – Recommendation 1**

Dallas Independent School District (DISD), the state's second largest public school system, has been working for the last two decades to increase the district's Average Daily Attendance to ensure that students receive maximum instruction allowed and are prepared to advance to the next grade, on to graduation, and are ready for the careers that await them.

Dallas County began operating a centralized truancy court system in 2003 after special legislation was created to hear and adjudicate cases filed by participating school districts relating to alleged violations of Texas Education Code Section 25.093. As the only entity that sees students from every DISD high school with attendance issues, the Dallas County Truancy Courts are poised to identify students needing intervention for grade recovery and mentoring.

The Dallas County Truancy Courts operates three courts. The Central Court hears Failure to Attend School (FTAS) cases from seven DISD high schools: W.H. Adamson, James Madison, Moises Molina, L.G. Pinkston, W.W. Samuell, Sunset, and F.D. Roosevelt.

The attached details on the high schools filing truancy cases support the need for an innovative program in this target to area to achieve MBK Milestone 3- Graduating from High School Ready for College and Career.

The following are the average identifying factors of this cohort of schools whose students are seen in Central Truancy Courts:

- The schools are overwhelmingly majority minority: African-American 27.4 %, Hispanic 70.9 %
- Almost a quarter of the students are Limited English Proficient: 20.6 %
- Less than ten percent of the students are identified as Talented & Gifted: 8.6 %
- Only three of the schools meet the district's target for the percentage of students who graduated in four years
- None of the seven schools met the district's target for percentage of first-time ninth graders on track to graduate.

- Most of these schools are located in communities with low and fixed incomes
- These schools are located in communities consisting of single parent/ multi-generational households

Students in this cohort of schools who currently have attendance issues would benefit from specialized character building programs and mentoring to ensure that truancy does not become a gateway habit that leads to more detrimental behavior.

Recommendation 1: Dallas County will focus on Milestone 3 of MBK – Graduating from High School Ready for College and Career by doing the following:

Male students from the Central Truancy Court with excessive non-attendance issues should be diverted to the My Brother’s Keeper Program through GRAD (Grade Recovery + Attendance = Diploma) Court to be placed in tutoring, mentoring, and career development programs to assist individually and collectively with grade promotion and graduation goals.

✓ **Step 3 – Recommendation 2**

The Dallas County Juvenile Department is one of the largest juvenile departments in Texas, with over 1,000 employees and nearly 7,000 youth between the ages of 10 and 17 entering the formal juvenile system annually. Youth receive rehabilitative services from one of our programs, school campuses and many community partnerships. Facilities and probation services are registered and follow standards set by the Texas Juvenile Justice Department and/or the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services.

The Juvenile Department partners with the Annie E. Casey Foundation and its Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative, to deliver youth-centric, data-driven decisions. Youth are appropriately identified for a variety of treatment and social services provided by the Dallas County Juvenile Department and its partners. The Dallas County Juvenile Department works alongside the family to provide the best solutions for court-involved youth while maintaining community safety.

One of the new initiatives of the Juvenile Department is the Diversion Male Court (DMC). The goal of this program is to reduce the disproportionate representation of minority male youth in the Juvenile Justice System by diverting these youth from the court process by providing community-based alternatives that promote positive empowerment to the youth and family.

This process is done by diverting the minority males from becoming involved in the Juvenile Justice System, by providing opportunities and guided alternatives. At any given time, approximately 45 male youth are enrolled in DMC and provided with mentors to:

- Assist minority males and their families by encouraging positive interactions within the structure of the home;
- Address the needs of the target population by providing wraparound/family services (if needed), which includes Probation Officer supervision utilizing home and school visits, and electronic monitoring if needed;

- Utilize available community-based resources first and Department services as needed, ensuring clients have access to supervision, clinical services, medical care, and substance abuse services. The family can continue to access community resources after discharge from the Diversionary Program;
- Increase family involvement by providing support services for the family as well as the youth; and
- Assist minority males and provide them with additional skills in order to ensure more positive roles in the community and society.

The intervention occurs at the pre-adjudication point to address problem areas quickly and without further Juvenile Court intervention. Students are provided with an exit plan for success after diversion to ensure character development and skills and behavior strategies learned during the program remain in place.

Recommendation 2: Dallas County will focus on Milestone 6 of MBK – Reducing Violence and Providing a Second Chance

- ✓ Students who meet the eligibility of Male Diversion Court will be enrolled in My Brother's Keepers. By preventing disproportionate minority contact within the juvenile justice system, we also will address and lower the rate of disproportionate minority confinement while strengthening the field of juvenile justice.

MY BROTHER'S KEEPER *Community Challenge*

Dallas County, Texas
Action Plan submitted May 11, 2015



Recommendation 1: Dallas County will focus on Milestone 3 of MBK – Graduating from High School Ready for College and Career through GRAD (Grade Recovery + Attendance = Diploma) Court

Recommendation 2: Dallas County will focus on Milestone 6 of MBK – Reducing Violence and Providing a Second Chance through Diversion Male Court

Tracking Data

1. GRAD Court – As students appear before the judge for confirmed, excessive unexcused absences, minority male students will be evaluated by the presiding judge for participation in the MBK GRAD Court initiative. Approximately 30-40 students will be diverted into this no cost program to determine the underlying causes of truancy and any academic deficiencies that exist. For the duration of their 180-day court order, students will be tracked individually and collectively for: school attendance, participation in GRAD Court Mentoring Sessions and Programs; any new juvenile offenses.
2. Diversion Male Court – In order to qualify for the DMC, the juvenile must have a pending charge alleging an offense other than truancy or runaway, and has not previously been adjudicated on any charge. The juvenile is found to be appropriate for supervision through a deferred prosecution program. The juvenile and their family must agree to participate in the program. By preventing disproportionate minority contact within the juvenile justice system, we also will address and lower the rate of disproportionate minority confinement while strengthening the field of juvenile justice. The program monitors each juvenile's attendance in school, their behavior at home and their progress in therapy and/or community based services.

Benchmarks

1. GRAD Court – Dallas County will provide one mentor for each student enrolled. Participants will be monitored weekly for school attendance and achieving the following objectives for the duration of their court order:
 - a. No more than five unexcused absences

- b. No new case filings for unexcused absences
 - c. No additional offenses of the Juvenile Code.
2. Diversion Male Court – The Juvenile Department will provide one mentor for each student enrolled. Participants will be monitored weekly for the following objectives for the duration of their court order:
- a. Consistent school attendance
 - b. Improved behavior at home as reported by their probation officer
 - c. Progress in therapy and/or community based services.
 - d. No additional offenses of the Juvenile Code

Timeline

1. GRAD Court – Students will be placed in MBK GRAD Court in June 2015 with monthly school monitoring to begin in August. Progress reports will be presented quarterly beginning in December 2015.
2. Diversion Male Court – This court is already operational. Progress reports will be presented quarterly beginning in December 2015.

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Dallas County, Texas
Program Contacts



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