



## **A National Re-Enrollment Strategy**

*Every 11 seconds a high school student drops out.*

*\*\* (Based on calculations per school day 180 days of seven hours each)*

*The national discussion confirmed that America is failing to address a major educational crisis. Clearly, much work needs to be done to get millions of youth off the street and back in school and return to them their economic futures. The price of inaction will be increasing incarceration, welfare, high poverty rates among children, and healthcare costs for all U.S. taxpayers as dropouts and their families continue to fall through the cracks.*

*CEO Arne Duncan as National Education Secretary sets the stage for an exploration of strategies to reengage students who have already dropped out of high school. The nation cannot afford to neglect those who already made a decision to leave school. **Because of the widespread, pressing nature of the crisis and the large numbers of young people who have already dropped out, a national re-enrollment strategy should be a fundamental part of America's national education agenda.***

### ***Child First Drop-Out Recovery Program***

***Child First Drop-Out Recovery Program*** is an intensive family and community-based program that provides educational mentoring and academic support for inner-city African American boys ages 16 through 24. Its primary purpose is to provide alternative educational opportunities such as academic support, mentoring, and personal development services that will enable these boys to successfully complete junior and senior high school and enter into college or vocational programs.

Child First Drop-Out Recovery Program provides youth and their parents the tools to manage difficult situations. Child First shows youth how to develop constructive ways to cope with family, school and peer problems.

***Masters-level counselors*** provide case management services at the youth's home and community locations (e.g. school, recreation center). Counselors are available to the youth and his/her family 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

- **Child First caseworkers go to where the child is and are on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week.**
- **They work intensively with parents and caregivers to put them in control**
- **The caseworkers works with the caregivers to keep the adolescent focused on school and gaining job skills**
- **The caseworkers and caregivers introduce the youth to sports, recreational activities and cultural field trips as an alternative to hanging out.**

**Child First goals are to:**

- **decrease rates of antisocial behaviour and other clinical problems**
- **improve family relations and school performance**
- **achieve these outcomes at a cost savings by reducing the use of out-of-home placements such as incarceration, juvenile detention, homelessness, and reduces healthcare and welfare cost.**

It is estimated that 80 percent of youths sent to juvenile correctional facilities end up in adult prisons. Child First strives to break this cycle by keeping juvenile offenders at home, in school and out of trouble.

Increasing the parenting skills of caregivers and changing the behavior of at-risk youth is the foundation of the drop-out recovery program.

Unlike other prevention models where the troubled youth has no readily available support network, Child First caseworkers go to where the youth lives, hangs out and attends school. This is because there is overwhelming evidence that all the components in an adolescent's life—family, friends, school and neighborhood—contribute to serious anti-social activities.

Often, the caseworker meets with the family and other people in the youth's life much more than once a week. They are there when needed. And since problems don't have business hours from 9 to 5, caseworkers on the team are on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Such an intensive service is possible because caseworkers work with a limited number of families at any given time.

Traveling to the family overcomes the high dropout rates of other program services, which often occur because of the difficulty caregivers face getting the youth to appointments.

## **In the Home and the Community**

Out-of-home placements, such as juvenile detention, residential treatment, incarceration and boot camps, have proved largely ineffective in achieving positive and lasting results.

It's common sense why they are unsuccessful. The adolescent returns home to the same conditions that were there before he or she left, and returns to the old patterns of behavior —doing drugs, stealing, skipping school, staying out late or all night with other out-of-control youths. Added to this mix is that the juvenile offender probably picked up new criminal activities while in out-of-home placement.

**To break this cycle, Child First Drop-Out Recovery Program works to:**

- **increase the caregivers' parenting skills**
- **improve family relations**
- **involve the youth with friends who do not participate in criminal behavior**
- **help him or her get better grades or start to develop a vocation**
- **help the adolescent participate in positive activities, such as sports or school clubs**
- **create a support network of extended family, neighbors and friends to help the caregivers maintain the changes**

Family members collaborate with Child First caseworkers in designing an intervention plan. The plans make sense to the families and build on the strengths in their lives, which makes it more likely the family will be successful with the plans, both during and after intervention.

Child First views the youth as embedded within multiple interconnected systems

