



Communities
In Schools

Kansas

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Testimony Before the
House Education Budget Committee:

By:

Terry Leatherman
Director of External Affairs
Communities In Schools of Kansas

Madam Chairperson and members of the Committee:

Thank you very much for this opportunity to address this Committee regarding our request for funding for Communities In Schools of Kansas. My name is Terry Leatherman. I am the Director of External Affairs for Communities In Schools of Kansas. Our organization respectfully requests this Committee appropriate \$611,398 to support our dropout prevention effort in Kansas.

Communities In Schools of Kansas has experienced significant and exciting growth in the past year towards its mission to 'surround students with a community of support, empowering them to stay in school and achieve in life.' To be impactful in our state, Communities In Schools of Kansas is targeting our dropout prevention activities in the ten school districts in our state that annually produce the highest number of students who decide to drop out of school. As a result, this requested appropriation would focus state resources where we can most effectively address the problem of students dropping out of school in our state. Specifically, the \$611,398, if approved, would permit Communities In Schools Site Coordinator

operations to be in place during the school year beginning in August, 2012 through May, 2013 in the following communities:

- In Kansas City, Kansas/Wyandotte County public schools, we would continue to provide Communities In Schools Site Coordinator programs at M.E.Pearson Elementary School and Whittier Elementary School and provide greatly expanded Site Coordinator programs at Central Middle School and Wyandotte High School.
- In Lawrence, we would have our first full year of Site Coordinator programs at Kennedy Elementary School and initiate a new program at Central Middle School.
- In Garden City, we would continue the program we initiated this past year at Garden City High School, which in terms of student population is one of the largest public schools in Kansas.
- In Topeka, we would initiate a new Communities In Schools Site Coordinator program in a new school in the USD 501 school district. In 2011, we began service for the first time at Highland Park High School and two elementary schools in the district.
- To support this expansion of services to all these new schools and communities in Kansas, along with support our long-standing programs in Wichita, Ottawa, and Ulysses, there will be funds dedicated to provide administrative support for our Kansas Communities In Schools network operation.

For the Committee's information, please consider the following regarding Communities In Schools.

STRUCTURED FOR SUCCESS: There is a structural reason why Communities In Schools is uniquely effective at helping children in danger of dropping out of school. Our organization has refined a process to bring needed community services into school buildings. Partnering with public school districts, Communities In Schools places Site Coordinators on a school campus to work each and every school day as a bridge between the children in that school and businesses, faith groups and not-for-profit agencies to mobilize local resources to provide a range of services. Those services include mentoring, tutoring, health care, after-school programs, family counseling, vocational learning, and much more. Site Coordinators work with teachers and administrators to identify students with needs. Next, they help those students address those needs so they can stay in school, successfully learn and become prepared for life.

Communities In Schools Site Coordinators deliver two forms of social services in the school buildings where they work everyday. First, the Site Coordinator develops programs that will benefit the vast majority of the student body. We call these "whole school" services, and they are important in amplifying critical issues for students. The second service form is "case management." Case management involves identifying students who have demonstrated behaviors that indicate they are heading towards dropping out of school, such as poor academic performance or truancy. The Site Coordinator then works with these students to develop and execute a case management plan to address the individualized needs of that student, producing outstanding results.

The effectiveness of the Communities In Schools Site Coordinator Model was the subject of a 5-year independent and comprehensive review by an organization called ICF International. Their review produced a glowing report that included the following:

- CIS is the only dropout prevention organization in the country proven to reduce dropout rates, increase on-time graduation rates, and increase proficiency in fourth-grade and eight-grade reading and math.
- CIS's Site Coordinator Model works everywhere. It is effective in rural and urban schools, effective in elementary and secondary school settings, and is effective with children of all ethnicities.

EXPERIENCED: Nationally, Communities In Schools has been helping children in danger of dropping out of school for more than 35 years. We have programs in 25 states and the District of Columbia, where nearly 1.3 million students benefit from Communities In Schools in more than 3,400 schools.

In Kansas, Communities In Schools was born more than 20 years ago when we began providing services in Wichita. Our Wichita program is our largest in Kansas, with programs in 18 Wichita schools. Besides Wichita, we have established programs in Ottawa, and Ulysses and maintain our state operations in Lawrence. Last year, our state headquarters also began providing direct oversight to local services. We opened new Communities In Schools programs at Garden City High School in southwest Kansas, in three schools in Topeka, and took over leadership of programs that have been operating under the Communities In Schools

banner in Kansas City, Kansas. In 2012, we are excited about expanding our program into Lawrence, at Kennedy Elementary School.

During the 2010-2011 school year, nearly 16,000 students in 53 Kansas schools benefitted from Communities In Schools programs. That included nearly 1,900 students receiving “case management,” which I will define in a few minutes. Those “case managed” students, who are students most likely to drop out of school and the students receiving the most intensive support from Communities In Schools, achieved the following:

- 98% stayed in school
- 86% of eligible Seniors graduated
- 80% improved academically
- 88% had demonstrated improvement in behavior

COMMUNITIES IN SCHOOLS REQUEST FOR FINANCIAL SUPPORT: As mentioned before, Communities In Schools of Kansas seeks \$611,398 in state financial support. This revenue will make it possible for our program to continue and expand vital Site Coordinator-model services at eight Kansas schools where students face challenging economic conditions. The state investment will touch more than 7,000 Kansas public school students with vital services, making the average “per student cost” only \$82. Please also note these dollars will lead to a minimum of 840 students receiving “case management” services.

Having Kansas students achieve in school to the point they leave our public school system ready for higher education or a career is a critically important public policy issue. Improving student performance in public schools will profoundly impact the state of Kansas:

- by improving the quality and number of workers in the Kansas workforce and thereby impacting economic development;
- by stoking the Kansas economy with individuals ready to perform more substantial work for higher wages and thereby churning more dollars into our economy, and;
- by helping so many young people attain a quality education and thereby break the chain of poverty that is holding so many young people down from being all they can be.

Communities In Schools is structured to successfully surround students with a community of support they need to achieve in school and in life. Thank you for considering our request. I would be happy to answer any questions.



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Communities In Schools: The Most Effective Dropout Prevention Organization in America

Largest and Most Comprehensive Evaluation of Dropout Prevention Programs Ever Completed

Communities In Schools, the nation's leading organization dedicated to empowering students to stay in school and achieve in life, recently released the results of a five-year comprehensive study by ICF International with great news: the Communities In Schools model resulted in the strongest reduction in dropout rates of any dropout prevention program that has been evaluated.

Communities In Schools affiliates are already reshaping the way we deliver services based on these results. The Total Quality System (TQS) was put in place when the midpoint of the study revealed the standards identified as having the greatest impact on student improvement. All Communities In Schools work in Kansas is building on this model.

Additional findings include:

- CIS has been proven through rigorous methods and multiple studies to have positive benefits on student- and school-level dropout rates, graduation rates, attendance, and academic performance
- CIS is unique in its ability to lower dropout rates and increase on-time graduation rates compared to other dropout prevention programs
- CIS helps students achieve proficiency in fourth- and eighth-grade reading and math
- The Austin randomized controlled trial demonstrated a reduction in student-level dropout rates that is nearly three times the What Works Clearinghouse's threshold for "substantively important" effects

Why Does CIS Work?

Presence of a Site Coordinator: Even within unstable school environments, CIS site coordinators are able to stabilize students and help them achieve positive outcomes

Strong Business Practices and Support: The implementation of sound business practices and the delivery of needed support across the CIS network translate into stable and sustained delivery of integrated student support services – and better student outcomes

It is Cost-Effective: The average cost of CIS is less than \$200 per student served

How Does CIS Work?

Intentionality: CIS is able to help students make progress relative to their peers during difficult transition periods (from elementary to middle school, from middle school to high school)

Continuity: Sustained engagement in CIS case-managed services (over consecutive years) results in consistently positive outcomes for students

In What Situations Does CIS Work?

CIS Works At All Grade Levels: CIS effectively addresses risk factors along the education continuum

CIS Works in a Wide Variety of Settings: The focus of the CIS model on delivering integrated student support services makes it work regardless of geography, grade level, and student demographics

The CIS National Evaluation is a five-year, external evaluation of the school and student-level impact of the CIS Model at the site level, and the contribution of the national, state and local organizations in support of this impact. The evaluation was conducted by ICF International, known for its high standards of rigor and comprehensive research designs.