



## Kids in School Rule!

# MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

### **BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE**

In September of 2007, the Hamilton County Department of Job & Family Services (JFS), Cincinnati Public Schools (CPS) Hamilton County Juvenile Court (Juvenile Court) and Legal Aid Society of Greater Cincinnati (Legal Aid) executed a Memorandum of Understanding to plan, design, implement and evaluate a pilot project known as Kids in School Rule! (KISR!). KISR! is designed to improve education services and academic outcomes for targeted CPS students who are in the custody of HCJFS. The First Memorandum of Understanding for KISR! executed by the primary partners is incorporated by reference herein.

The driving force behind KISR! is an acknowledgement that educational opportunity and achievement are critically important to a child's long term future. The goal of KISR! is to improve educational stability and connections in order to strengthen school outcomes for students in foster care. In January of 2008, the KISR! pilot project was launched in twenty-two CPS schools, relying upon the cooperation of the four primary partners and participating stakeholders to maximize resources, implement best practices, and develop innovative practices.

In June 2011, the four primary partners agreed to seek funding to support a staged expansion of the KISR! Pilot project, with LAS serving as the lead agency and grant manager for the project. The project expansion contemplates multiple enhancements phased in over time: spread to all CPS schools; expansion of the target population to include youth subject to orders of protective supervision and Crossover Youth (dually involved and dually adjudicated youth in the child protection and juvenile justice systems); dedication of additional staffing resources to serve as CPS Individual School Liaisons and HCJFS Education Specialists; development and use of enhanced interventions and strategies designed to promote school stability and academic success, including the use of trauma-informed treatment services; training and technical assistance to create a culture in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems that prioritizes education and reflects compliance with the mandates set forth in the Fostering Connections Act; and use of third party contracts to assist with data collection, technical assistance, training, program evaluation and dissemination of successful elements of the KISR! practice model to other jurisdictions.

The parties agree to continue to refine the project design as set forth in the Project Description and to work in good faith to implement the agreed upon program.

## **PROFILE OF TARGETED CHILDREN**

If Hamilton County is awarded the HHS grant, KISR! will serve at least 175 CPS students during the funding period. It is projected that 62% of the youth served will fall within the age range of 10 to 17 years. The selected students will be school age children, K-12, who are in HCJFS custody or under HCJFS supervision. When we secure additional funding, we will expand to include students who participate in the Hamilton County Crossover Youth Practice Model (CYPM) supported by Casey Family Programs and the Center for Juvenile Justice Reform at Georgetown University.

## **TIMEFRAME**

The project partners are prepared to implement staged expansion and enhancement, and the partners commit to engaging in diligent efforts over the course of the funding period to develop a viable sustainability plan that promotes further expansion and enhancement to all children in agency custody.

## **REQUIRED PARTICIPANTS**

This second prepared Memorandum of Understanding shall be signed by representatives from the following agencies:

- Hamilton County Department of Job & Family Services
- Cincinnati Public Schools
- Legal Aid Society of Greater Cincinnati
- Hamilton County Juvenile Court

## **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

### ***LAS shall:***

#### **A. Project Management**

1. Identify a Project Coordinator (Legal Aid Coordinator) who will provide oversight and leadership for the project, function as a liaison to the other Project Coordinators, assist in meeting the grant reporting requirements, coordinate data collection and evaluation.
2. Serve as lead agency and grant manager for the project.
3. Convene, create agendas and facilitate KISR! Steering Committee meetings.
4. Participate in a collaborative partnership that will continue to work on the expanded design, development, implementation, evaluation and sustainability of this project.
5. Agree to fulfill all responsibilities described in the Project Description and Design
6. Agree to fulfill responsibilities and mandates required by funding sources that support KISR!
7. Maintain project momentum.

8. Coordinate collection of data and information, submit program and fiscal reports required for grant implementation, provide fiscal oversight and accountability for project funds, and ensure implementation of project by each partner.
9. Contract with third-parties pursuant to project description.

**B. Systems Collaboration**

1. Attend and participate in the Hamilton County Model Court Systems Collaboration meetings on a quarterly basis.
2. Maintain Legal Aid leadership and strengthen linkages to the multi-county, multi-disciplinary Collaboration for Education Success of Children in Foster Care, to share best practices, identify gaps and systemic improvements, and enhance communication between schools, courts and the child welfare system.
3. Develop and deliver training on education law and issues for caseworkers, project partners, parents/custodians, caregivers, service providers, mentors, GALs, CASAs and youth.
4. Organize kickoff and annual information sessions for CPS principals and Individual School Liaisons (CPS Liaisons).
5. Provide leadership to resolve challenges and problems as they arise.

**C. Communication**

1. Legal Aid will be proactive in communicating regarding a school's obligations and the child's educational needs or entitlements when representing a child on legal issues.

**D. Interventions/Strategies to Increase School Stability and Improve Academic Achievement**

1. Provide representation and advocacy for KISR! students who face barriers to enrollment or school discipline, who are entitled to interventions and supports, education evaluation, special education services, or who encounter other legal issues related to education.
2. Participate in presentations to help students understand that literacy, school achievement and a diploma are closely tied to future employment and stability.
3. Contract with third-party providers so that schools can access consultations for trauma-informed interventions and de-escalation strategies to help manage challenging KISR! students.
4. Contract with third-parties who will assist with data collection, training and technical assistance, and who will conduct a program and data evaluation.

## **E. Data and Evaluation**

1. Dedicate staff to participate in the design and implementation of a program evaluation.
2. Dedicate staff to assist with identification of data points, collection, exchange, and analysis, including collaboration with third-party technical assistance and evaluation.

## ***JFS shall:***

### **A. Project Management:**

1. Identify a Project Coordinator from JFS (JFS Coordinator) who will provide oversight and leadership for the project, function as a liaison to the other Project Coordinators, assist in meeting the grant reporting requirements, coordinate data collection and evaluation, and supervise the JFS Education Specialists who monitor educational progress and outcomes for children in the project.
2. Identify and select, pursuant to the plan for staged expansion, all children in agency custody, under agency supervision or participating in the CYPM who attend a school in CPS and meet eligibility requirements for the project.
3. Attend and participate in KISR! Steering Committee meetings.
4. Participate in a collaborative partnership that will continue to work on the expanded design, development, implementation, evaluation and sustainability of this project.
5. Agree to fulfill all responsibilities described in the Project Description and Design.
6. Agree to fulfill responsibilities and mandates required by funding sources that support KISR!

### **B. Systems Collaboration**

1. Dedicate the equivalent of two, full-time caseworkers to serve as the Education Specialists (JFS Education Specialists) for youth in the project.
2. Attend and participate in the Hamilton County Model Court Systems Collaboration meetings on a quarterly basis.
3. Strengthen linkage and JFS participation in the multi-county, multi-disciplinary Collaboration for Education Success of Children in Foster Care, to share best practices, identify gaps and systemic improvements, and enhance communication between schools, courts and the child welfare system.
4. Participate in the development and delivery of training for caseworkers, project partners, parents/custodians, caregivers and youth, including the annual information session for principals and Individual School Liaisons (CPS Liaisons).
5. Strengthen the connection and linkage between KISR! and the Higher Education Mentoring Initiative that includes prioritizing the assignment of mentors for youth in the project.
6. Strengthen the connection and linkage between KISR! and the CYPM.
7. Strengthen the connection and linkage between KISR! and the implementation and use of the Permanency Roundtables to achieve placement stability for youth in the project.

### **C. Communication**

1. Facilitate regular communication and collaboration between the JFS Education Specialists and the assigned JFS Caseworkers to ensure the exchange of timely and accurate information about education and school related issues along with placement/case planning.
2. Maintain current and accurate school information in JFS case files and in SACWIS.
3. Assist in developing protocols for confidentiality and information sharing, particularly for youth who are not in agency custody.
4. Attend team meetings when school/education issues are identified and attend school-based meetings/conferences for youth in the project.
5. Create seamless education transition plans, if a change in school placement occurs naturally or serves the child's best interest.
6. Generate Education Court Reports that include information regarding education, attendance, progress, services/interventions and achievements.

### **D. Interventions/Strategies to Increase School Stability and Improve Academic Achievement**

1. Secure enrollment in school within 72 hours of new placement and seek Legal Aid's assistance when barriers arise.
2. Engage youth and their caregivers in education planning.
3. Use strategies designed to promote school stability, including referrals for mediation if a foster care/kinship placement is at risk for disruption.
4. Schedule case plan services during non-school hours to avoid students missing class time, including taking steps to access evening and weekend appointments.
5. Create visitation plans that do not cause students to miss class time by accessing evening and weekend times for visitation at the Family Nurturing Center if a less restrictive visitation setting is not available.
6. Access supplemental education resources and pro-social services for youth in the project that include, but are not limited to mentoring, tutoring, extra-curricular activities, counseling and supportive educational services.
7. Collaborate with school teams to seek crisis intervention consultation for challenging students so that teachers have better skills to educate students who experience trauma.
8. Prioritize the use of evidence-based treatment, including but not limited to trauma-informed care, for students in the project.
9. Refer as needed to Legal Aid for legal representation and education advocacy.
10. Refer and collaborate with Project Connect to access McKinney Vento funds for transportation when possible.
11. Explore the use of performance-based contracts to create incentives for providers to increase the number of substitute care placements within CPS.
12. Engage in targeted recruitment efforts through the Everyday Heroes Campaign to build capacity to maintain a child's school placement at the time of removal or preserve a child's school placement if the child's living arrangement disrupts for any reason.

13. Develop protocols and policies that direct the Utilization Management/Utilization Review Division to prioritize school stability when identifying a substitute care placement for a child.

**E. Data and Evaluation**

1. Dedicate staff to participate in the design and implementation of a program evaluation.
2. Dedicate staff to assist with identification of data points, collection, exchange, and analysis, including collaboration with third-party technical assistance and evaluation.
3. House and maintain the data repository for KISR!

***CPS shall:***

**A. Project Management**

1. Identify a Project Coordinator from CPS (CPS Coordinator) who will provide leadership, oversight and accountability to support and sustain project outcomes, ensure implementation in individual schools, function as liaison to other Project Coordinators, assist in meeting the grant reporting requirements, and coordinate data collection/evaluation.
2. Attend and participate in KISR! Steering Committee meetings.
3. Participate in a collaborative partnership that will continue to work on the expanded design, development, implementation, evaluation and sustainability of this project.
4. Agree to fulfill all responsibilities described in the Project Description and Design.
5. Agree to fulfill responsibilities and mandates required by funding sources that support KISR!

**B. Systems Collaboration**

1. Attend and participate in the Hamilton County Model Court Systems Collaboration meetings on a quarterly basis.
2. Collaborate with partners to host and provide leadership for kick-off and subsequent annual meetings for principals and Individual School Liaisons (CPS Liaison) to build capacity and enthusiasm for project implementation.
3. Identify a KISR! CPS Liaison in each school. The CPS Liaison must have access to Power School and special education documents and be present in the school building at least 3 full days/week.
4. Create opportunities for administrators, teachers, CPS Liaisons, psychologists, and others to build capacity to work with students in the child welfare system and to learn strategies for educating students who have experienced trauma.
5. Strengthen linkage and CPS participation in the multi-county, multi-disciplinary Collaboration for Education Success of Children in Foster Care, to share best practices, identify gaps and systemic improvements, and enhance communication between schools, courts and the child welfare system.

**C. Communication**

1. Inform principals, CPS Liaisons and other relevant personnel about the staged expansion of KISR! to a district-wide initiative.
2. Inform school personnel about the staged expansion of the KISR! target population to youth under agency supervision and ultimately to Crossover Youth.
3. Assist in developing protocols for confidentiality and information sharing.

**D. Interventions/Strategies to Increase School Stability and Improve Academic Achievement**

1. Support initiatives that will enable KISR! students to stay in the same school or within CPS when a home placement changes. This includes coordination with Project Connect to utilize McKinney Vento funds for transportation when possible.
2. Maintain accurate and current school records for youth in the project and identify the JFS Education Specialist as the school contact for these students. When JFS is not the child's custodian, the JFS Education Specialist and the custodian will be identified jointly as the school contact for these students.
3. Facilitate transfer of school records within 10 days of notice when a student changes schools.
4. Facilitate regular communication between CPS Liaisons and JFS Education Specialists about any matter of importance connected to school success for KISR! students including attendance, achievement, discipline, or social/emotional problems. In addition, the CPS Liaisons play a key role within schools to support students and inform colleagues about special strategies and supports available to benefit students in the project.
5. Engage students to think about their futures taking into account that literacy, school achievement and a high school diploma are closely tied to adult employment, success and stability.
6. Request and utilize crisis intervention consultations to support school stability. The Hamilton County Mental Health and Recovery Services Board or another third-party will make available to teachers faced with challenging behaviors by a KISR! student short-term consultation and expertise regarding trauma-informed responses and de-escalation techniques.
7. Enroll students in school immediately when applicable court entry is provided, and build capacity within system so that relevant personnel in each school understand that school enrollment requirements are different for students in foster care than for other students.
8. If a student receives or should receive special education services, the process of implementing interventions, conducting an evaluation (ETR), or developing/revising an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or 504 Accommodation Plan will be in collaboration with project partners.



9. Communicate promptly with JFS Education Specialist when a student is absent from school without explanation, and collaborate to reduce additional missed school when student is truant.
10. Utilize positive school culture and the pyramid of interventions to strengthen academic achievement and/or promote positive, pro-social behaviors that enhance learning.
11. Ensure timely completion of special education evaluations and the provision of special education services to eligible students. Be proactive in providing interventions and services because a high proportion of students in the child protection and juvenile justice systems have an education disability and are entitled to services, but evade evaluation due to family instability and trauma.
12. Encourage participation in existing school-based services to strengthen education outcomes and promote student access to supplemental educational resources and social services such as mentoring, tutoring, extracurricular opportunities, and counseling.
13. Prepare students for emancipation and self-sufficiency through effective transition planning, including consideration of employment, vocational education and post secondary education options.

#### **E. Data & Evaluation**

1. Dedicate staff to participate in the design and implementation of a program evaluation.
2. Dedicate staff to assist with identification of data points, collection, exchange, and analysis, including collaboration with third-party technical assistance and evaluation.

#### ***Juvenile Court shall:***

##### **A. Project Management:**

1. Identify a Project Coordinator from HCJC (Juvenile Court Coordinator) who will provide oversight and leadership for the project, function as a liaison to the other Project Coordinators, facilitate magistrate review of the education court reports, ensure the use of the Judicial Benchcard for Education by the magistrates at review hearings for youth in the project, assist in meeting the grant reporting requirements and coordinate data collection and evaluation.
2. Attend and participate in KISR! Steering Committee meetings.
3. Participate in a collaborative partnership that will continue to work on the expanded design, development, implementation, evaluation and sustainability of this project.
4. Agree to fulfill all responsibilities described in the Project Description and Project Design.
5. Agree to fulfill responsibilities and mandates required by funding sources that support KISR!



6. Provide oversight and accountability for project initiatives in the context of court hearings for the youth in the project

**B. Systems Collaboration**

1. Attend and participate in the Hamilton County Model Court Systems Collaboration meetings on a quarterly basis.
2. Strengthen linkage and Juvenile Court participation in the multi-county, multi-disciplinary Collaboration for Education Success of Children in Foster Care, to share best practices, identify gaps and systemic improvements, and enhance communication between schools, courts and the child welfare system.
3. Participate in the development and delivery of training for magistrates, project partners, caregivers and youth, including the kick-off and annual information session for principals and CPS Liaisons.
4. Strengthen the linkage between KISR! and the Hamilton County CYPM.

**C. Communication**

1. Assist in developing protocols for confidentiality and information sharing, particularly for youth subject to orders of protective supervision or for Crossover Youth who are not in agency custody.
2. Provide partners with information concerning judicial determinations assessing costs for education to a school district and about docket schedules for students in the project.
3. Track and ensure judicial review of Education Court Reports from JFS and/or the GAL/CASA that include information regarding educational progress, services and outcomes.

**D. Interventions/Strategies to Increase School Stability and Improve Academic Achievement**

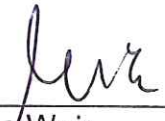
1. Generate entries with orders designed to facilitate immediate enrollment in school.
2. Engage students in education planning when they are present for court hearings.
3. Provide mediation services for referrals initiated by any project partner when a foster care/kinship placement is at risk for disruption.
4. Use Hamilton County Judicial Benchcard on Education at all review hearings to monitor school attendance, academic progress, interventions and school-related challenges for KISR! students.

**E. Data and Evaluation**

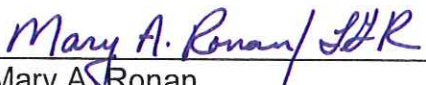
1. Dedicate staff to participate in the design and implementation of a program evaluation.
2. Dedicate staff to assist with identification of data points, collection, exchange, and analysis, including collaboration with third-party technical assistance and evaluation.

It is understood that this Memorandum of Understanding is an expression of intent only and the parties agree to proceed in good faith towards the expansion and enhancement

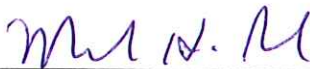
of KISR! but no party shall have any legal obligation to the other as a result of this Memorandum of Understanding.

  
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Moira Weir  
Director  
Hamilton County Department of Job & Family Services

7/21/11  
Date

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Mary A. Ronan  
Superintendent  
Cincinnati Public Schools

7/21/11  
Date

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Mark H. Reed  
Court Administrator  
Hamilton County Juvenile Court

7/21/11  
Date

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Mary Asbury  
Executive Director  
Legal Aid Society of Greater Cincinnati

7/25/11  
Date