



Helping Families Initiative

What is Helping Families Initiative?

The Helping Families Initiative (HFI) is a collaborative effort involving the District Attorney's Office of Calhoun and Cleburne Counties, your local school system, and United Way of East Central Alabama. This initiative aims to tackle chronic absenteeism and truancy through a supportive framework, offering wrap-around services for students and their families, as well as crisis intervention and case management. Our ultimate mission is to enhance student achievement, increase graduation rates, and foster family stability, while simultaneously decreasing dropout rates, substance abuse problems, and juvenile arrests.

Why Would I be Contacted by HFI?

If a child presents chronic absenteeism the HFI Case Officer will contact the child's parent/guardian in an effort to help students and families. This assistance may be with truancy issues, identifying behavior issues, or providing access to other services that may be needed. This is done with family assessments that identify the root causes of these behaviors or lack of attendance. HFI connects families to resources and aims to improve student behavior and academic engagement before families encounter the Early Warning Truancy Program.

What is Crisis Intervention?

Within HFI, the Crisis Intervention Specialist plays a vital role, serving as a resource for families and schools. The Crisis Intervention program is designed to help students, families, or school staff dealing with crises, including mental health concerns or self-harm. Once a connection is established, the intervention will proceed with follow-up services, which may include referrals, appointments, and mentoring sessions as necessary.

Who May Contact You:



Becky Cox
Case Officer
256-453-6517

Pleasant Valley Schools,
White Plains Schools
& Cleburne County Schools



Grady Lacher
Lead Case Officer
256-342-1867

Alexandria Schools, Saks Schools,
Wellborn Schools,
Oxford High, Oxford Middle & CE Hanna



Teresa Simmons-Ross
Crisis Intervention
Specialist



Marci Hall
Case Officer
256-239-6560

Ohatchee Schools,
Weaver Schools,
Coldwater Elementary,
DeArmanville
Elementary & Oxford
Elementary



UNITED WAY
East Central Alabama



Helping Families Initiative

What is The Early Warning Truancy Program?

The Early Warning Truancy Prevention Court Program requires students and their parents/guardians, after the fifth unexcused absence, to attend a meeting at the courthouse where Juvenile Probation Officers, HFI staff, and Attendance Officers from Calhoun County Schools explain to parents and students their legal responsibilities and the risks associated with truancy. Early Warning Court's goal is to keep students and their parents/guardians from getting to seven unexcused absences which can result in an arrest warrant for the parent/guardian and/or a juvenile petition for students 13 or older.

First Unexcused Absence:

Parents/guardians have three days to submit an excuse following the student's absence and return to school.

Notification of the Alabama School Compulsory Law is sent by letter to parents/guardians from the school following the first or second unexcused absence.

Third or Fourth Unexcused Absence:

Parents/guardians receive an attendance alert letter and/or phone call from the District Attorney's Helping Families Initiative (HFI) staff. HFI staff is available to assist with any wraparound services that may be needed.

Fifth Unexcused Absence - Early Warning Truancy Court:

Parents/guardians and students, if age 13 or over, are referred to attend the Early Warning Truancy Court Program sponsored by the Calhoun & Cleburne County District Attorney, the Juvenile Probation Office, and your School System. HFI Case Officers will attend Early Warning Truancy Court to offer any support that may be needed.

After Early Warning Truancy Court:

HFI Case Officer will work with the family to devise a plan and provide community resources that may assist the family and prevent further truancy issues. If the student continues with unexcused absences (7 or more total), a Court Petition may be filed by the Calhoun & Cleburne County District Attorney's Office or the School System against the parent/guardian and/or the student. Parents/guardians and/or students could face jail time, court fees, probation, or conviction of truancy on their record. HFI exists to prevent these things from happening, so we encourage you to work with the HFI Case Officers.

HFI Collaborative Partners:



UNITED WAY
East Central Alabama

