

October 6, 2006

## **Memorandum**

To: All Juvenile Probation Staff

From: Kevin Hickey, DCPO  
Advocacy Division

**RE: ESTABLISHMENT OF THE NEW EDUCATIONAL ADVOCACY UNIT**

### **Introduction:**

On behalf of the Advocacy Division, I am very pleased to announce that the new **Educational Advocacy Unit (EAU)** is now open and accepting referrals to serve children with significant school related problems. The unit's supervisor is Donna Neal. Currently, there are three Advocates assigned to the unit: Probation Officers Carmen Acevedo, Lisa Poczatek, and Anthony Schillaci. This memo will highlight the criteria and requirements for referring a case to the unit, and explain the roles and duties of the Educational Advocates.

### **Services Provided by the EAU:**

The EAU will provide supplementary case management services for clients facing a wide range of school related problems. Providing these services often proves to be difficult and time-consuming for Field Probation Officers. EAU staff will accept referrals from any officer seeking additional assistance and guidance in addressing educational issues. The services of the EAU do not necessarily have to be court ordered. The case shall remain on the geographical calendar.

Recognizing that a majority of the children involved in the court may have school problems, the unit can only formally assist cases with the most serious issues. Therefore, the unit will provide two types of assistance: technical and formal. Technical assistance, which can be provided over the telephone, includes suggestions and guidance for officers who are having difficulty navigating the school system, accessing resources, or understanding school policies and procedures. Formal assistance will be direct assignment of a case to an Educational Advocate.

### **Referral Process:**

Field Probation Officers may consider making a referral to the EAU when any of the following circumstances exist:

- A significant history of out-of-school suspensions.
- A current or pending school expulsion.
- Indication that the student may have a disability and has not received services from the school.
- The school is not providing necessary special educational services to the student.
- The school is failing to implement the Individualized Educational Plan.

When contemplating a referral to the EAU, please call either **SPO Donna Neal (ext. 6731)** or **DCPO Kevin Hickey (ext. 7859)** to screen the case. At that time a decision will be provided for either technical assistance or formal case assignment.

**(OVER)**

To make a referral to the EAU, please submit the completed Advocacy Referral Form and all relevant records in the Field Probation Officer's possession, including a social investigation, case plan, YASI wheel, all school records, psychiatric hospital records, significant medical records and agency records. **If the Field Probation Officer encounters difficulty obtaining these records, the Educational Advocate will assist him/her in requesting whatever additional information is necessary. In extremely urgent circumstances, such as a pending expulsion, referrals can be initiated while the officer continues to complete the Social Investigation.** The Advocacy Referral Form is currently being revised and will be forthcoming.

**Educational Advocate's Role and Duties:**

The Educational Advocate's role will be to provide services to clients and families who are experiencing significant problems with a school district. The Advocate will be limited to providing services to resolve the educational issues. The Field Probation Officer will continue his/her regular case management duties. When the Advocate has recommendations outside of school issues (i.e. substance abuse treatment), he/she will inform the Field Probation Officer who will make the case management decisions. The Field Probation Officer remains the primary worker on the case, and the Advocate's services are meant to supplement the officer's work.

Upon acceptance of a referral to EAU, the Advocate will complete a comprehensive **Educational Report** that may be used in court proceedings, and with consent, released to the school district. The Advocate will identify educational problems that need to be addressed and prepare an **Educational Case Plan**. The Advocate will conduct a meeting with the referring Probation Officer and family to review the Educational Case Plan. If all parties concur with the plan, the Advocate and parent/guardian will enter into a **Written Agreement**. The Advocate will work with the family and Field Probation Officer until the plan is fulfilled or it is determined that the plan can not be achieved.

The Advocate will provide monthly **Caselogs** and a **Termination Summary** to the referring Field Probation Officer. Regular communication between the Advocate and Field Probation Officer is imperative to the success of the initiative.

The Advocate's responsibilities will also include appearing on behalf of the client at all school meetings and court hearings. If the Advocate is unable to appear in court, he/she will provide a written report to the parties. Whenever possible, Field Probation Officers are encouraged to attend school meetings with the Educational Advocate.

If the Educational Advocate is unable to resolve issues, he/she may refer the family to legal services, either within or outside the Department.

**Family's Rights and Responsibilities:**

In order for educational advocacy services to be provided, the parent/guardian will need to be in agreement. The Educational Advocate will not seek educational guardianship for any child. The parent/guardian will have the right to terminate educational advocacy services at any time.

A key service provided by the unit will be educating parents about their rights and providing them with skills and opportunities to advocate for their children. The Advocate will use resources within the court and community in order to accomplish this goal

**Conclusion:**

The new Educational Advocacy Unit will provide an opportunity to focus on the significant educational needs of our clients and enhance the services already given by the Field Probation Officers. Please call **SPO Donna Neal ext. (6731)** or **DCPO Kevin Hickey (ext. 7859)** to make a referral or with any questions about the Educational Advocacy Unit. Thank you for your support of this new program.