



## Kentucky should...

prioritize parent engagement to prevent educational neglect and system-involvement

The phrase 'it takes a village to raise a child' conveys the importance of having supportive people in a parent's life who can help create safe, healthy environments for their kids to flourish.

**Recent data indicates a rise in reports of educational neglect**, an issue that represents a small percentage of cases substantiated by the Department for Community Based Services (DCBS) and could be attributed to other challenges a family is experiencing, such as food or housing insecurity, medical issues, or unreliable transportation.

To help address these concerns, communities developed **Parent Engagement Meetings (PEMs)**, a strengths-based, non-punitive approach to preventing unnecessary involvement with the child welfare system.



**Parent Engagement Meetings are currently available in only 22 Kentucky counties.**

### Blueprint for Kentucky's Children Policy Solution:

Expand investments in Parent Engagement Meetings to connect families at risk of educational neglect with services and prevent unnecessary referrals to DCBS or the courts.

#### During the 2022-2023 school year, PEMs:

- Served more than **1,190 families**
- Consistently diverted **80% or more** of participating children from further systems involvement
- Diverted **84%** of families in Jefferson County and **87%** of families in rural counties

#### **How PEMs Work:**

- Serve students grade K-5, whose families do not have active DCBS cases.
- When a teacher has concerns about a child that could eventually require a report to DCBS if unaddressed, they can invite the parents to a PEM for support.
- In a confidential setting, parents meet with school staff and a PEM facilitator to develop an action plan that removes barriers to school attendance, connects the family with services, and strengthens the parent-school relationship.

Expanding a parent's "village" through Parent Engagement Meetings in all 120 Kentucky counties would ensure that every family with school-age children has access to this proven, preventative resource before challenges escalate into system-involvement.