

Carlton County: Enhancing Protective Factors and Preventing and Addressing ACEs

This case study highlights the Summer Credit Recovery program, one of the Preventing Adverse Childhood Experiences (PACES) initiatives in Carlton County. It is intended to supplement the Carlton County PACES community video (2023) linked with the MDH PACES data dashboard.

As part of their mission to initiate strategies and programs that strengthen and support the community, the Carlton County Community and Family Initiatives Department (CFID) developed the Summer Credit Recovery (SCR) program. The SCR program began during the COVID-19 pandemic in summer 2021, when the department noticed rising rates of both chronic absenteeism (i.e., excused and unexcused reasons including health reasons and suspension) and truancy (unexcused absences) in Carlton County, leading to students falling behind academically. Chronic absence and truancy pose challenges for youth during childhood, adolescence, and later in life. Missing school directly leads to poorer academic grades, decreased likelihood of graduation, lower overall educational attainment, and is indirectly associated with other negative outcomes. In many communities, there are not enough options or resources to help youth obtain education once they have missed it.

The SCR program in Carlton County provides students with an opportunity to recover academic high school credits by taking skills-based summer school classes designed as camps to provide a fun and engaging experience. Students can earn a quarter of a credit for completing 24 hours of class time. The camps help youth learn and earn credit in math, English, science, health, and electives. So far, the camps offered have been Advocacy and Resilience Camp, Build-A-Picnic Table Camp, Dog-Training Camp, Fidgety Fairytales Theater Camp, Health Hacks Camp, Musical Robotics Camp, Podcast/Webcast Development Camp, Pollinator Bee Camp, and Sailing Camp. Besides helping youth stay on track academically, the camps teach them valuable life skills such as cooking, carpentry, coping with anxiety, and even about ecology and how to sail a boat.

The CFID department is now working on its third year of the program, collaborating with Cloquet Area Alternative Education Program (CAAEP) and REACH Youth-Adult Partnerships, a local youth mentoring organization. Carlton County CFID staff and CAAEP faculty report that their program has been very successful. They note that some students who had dropped out of school started taking SCR courses and then re-enrolled in school. A few students who would not have otherwise been able to do so, earned the credits they needed and graduated. Teachers who are not yet involved with SCR have also begun to voice interest in developing additional camps for the program.

Carlton County CFID staff and CAEEP faculty underscore that their AmeriCorps are essential to enhancing the program's success. Staff and faculty note that the AmeriCorps workers do a great job of engaging with youth, building relationships, and encouraging youth who struggle to come to school.

Visit <https://www.co.carlton.mn.us/298/Community-Family-Initiatives-Department> to learn more about the Summer Credit Recovery program, efforts to prevent and address Adverse Childhood Experiences, and enhance youth resilience.

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