

# San Francisco Chronicle

## Alameda County Truancy Court won over angry mom

Brenda Payton

Published 4:00 a.m., Sunday, April 22, 2012

When Antrel Price walked into the [Alameda County Truancy Court](#), she had an attitude.

"I was mad I had to go," she recalled. She was referred to the court because her son was perpetually late for kindergarten. She "went off" on the counselors at the [Lincoln Child Center](#) family services organization. "I felt like they were trying to make me out to be an unfit parent."

Price, the 37-year-old mother of three, was caring for an elderly relative at night; she would get home at 6:30 a.m. and fall asleep.

"I'd wake up at 8 and rush to take him to school. I didn't take being on time seriously; if he was five or 10 minutes late, I thought it was OK, as long as he was there."

At the Truancy Court, she learned the importance of those first few minutes of school, when students receive their instructions for the day. If her son missed them, then he had to play catch-up.

By her third visit to court, she was no longer angry.

"I realized what the program was about. I actually liked going to court, hearing other people's stories, seeing their progress, hearing the judge's mini-lectures." She was shocked to learn the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation looks at the third-grade truancy rate to determine how many prison beds it will need.

She changed her schedule, and now her son is on time every day. She also mentors other parents about the importance of getting their children to school.

"If I call someone during the day and their teenager answers the phone, I ask their parents why they're at home," she said. "I explain how important it is for them to go to school and tell them they don't want to have to go through what I went through."

She said she knows a lot of parents who don't think it's such a big deal if their young children miss school.

She's one of the parents who is likely to hug Alameda County deputy district attorney [Teresa Drenick](#) at her June graduation.

"She's wonderful. I love her. They worked with me around my work schedule. They are willing to work with the parents. I'm happy they have a program like that."

Read more: <http://www.sfgate.com/opinion/article/Alameda-County-Truancy-Court-won-over-angry-mom-3498518.php#ixzz24rfzr6bn>

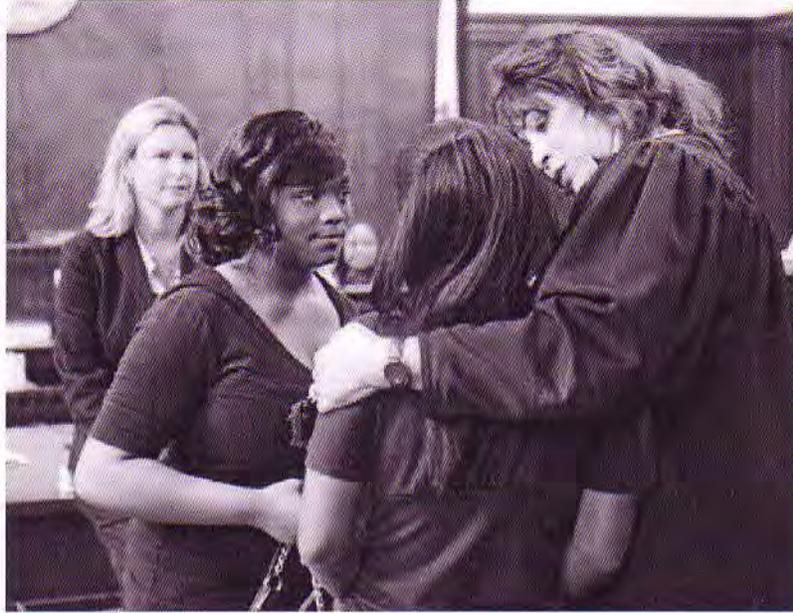


Teresa Drenick, Deputy District Attorney and founder of the truancy program, gives a hug to Amia Herrera, 9, one of the young graduates, during the truancy court graduation at the Renee C. Davidson Superior Courthouse in Oakland, Calif. on Friday, June 22, 2012. The Alameda County Court truancy program, which penalizes parents for their children's truancy, holds this annual event as a celebration of the children's accomplishments in improved attendance and school performance as well as acknowledging the work of parents or guardians. (Laura A. Oda/Staff)

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Judge Gloria F. Rhynes congratulates May Watts,13, left, and Antoinette Watts,11, upon exiting the truancy program with successful improvements in attendance and school performance as Teresa Drenick, Deputy District Attorney and founder of the program, looks on during the annual truancy court graduation at the Renee C. Davidson Superior Courthouse in Oakland, Calif. on Friday, June 22, 2012. The Alameda County Court program, which penalizes parents for their children's truancy, holds this annual event as a celebration of the children's accomplishments in improved attendance and school performance as well as acknowledging the work of parents or guardians toward better attendance. (Laura A. Oda/Staff)

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Amia Herrera, 9, right, is congratulated on much improved attendance as well as her improved academic success along with her sister, Talia Tevaseu, 6 1/2, held by mom, Carmila Garlow, during the annual truancy court graduation at the Renee C. Davidson Superior Courthouse in Oakland, Calif. on Friday, June 22, 2012. The Alameda County Court program, which penalizes parents for their children's truancy, holds this annual event as a celebration of the children's accomplishments in improved attendance and school performance as well as acknowledging the work of parents or guardians toward better attendance. (Laura A. Oda/Staff)