

# The Thomas J. Long Foundation Supports Lincoln Initiative to Fight Chronic Absenteeism in Contra Costa County

*Contra Costa District Attorney's Office and the Office of Education Partner with Lincoln to reduce truancy.*

OAKLAND, CA, UNITED STATES, August 4, 2016 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [Lincoln](#), a nonprofit headquartered in Oakland, announced today it has launched a second [School Engagement Program](#) (SEP) in close partnership with the Contra Costa County District Attorney's Office and the Office of Education.

Responding to community needs for addressing truancy, Lincoln first launched SEP in Alameda County in 2010, delivering intensive case management and behavioral health services and an array of supports to students and families struggling with chronic absenteeism and required to attend Parent Truancy Court. The [Thomas J. Long Foundation](#) has generously provided a three-year, \$590,000 start-up grant to expand Lincoln's program into Contra Costa. Lincoln has partnered with Contra Costa County's Behavioral Health Services to sustain the program.

The need for a program like SEP arose when in fall 2015, the Contra Costa

County District Attorney's Office, in partnership with the Superior Court and school districts, launched the first Parent Truancy Calendar to combat chronic absenteeism in elementary and middle schools. In less than a year, approximately 100 cases were referred to the District Attorney's Office by school districts throughout the County.

"The launch of Lincoln's School Engagement Program in partnership with the Contra Costa County District Attorney's Office and Office of Education—and made possible through the generous investment of the Thomas J. Long Foundation—is the next step in our efforts to cut absenteeism and put more students on the road to school and life success," said Christine Stoner-Mertz, Lincoln's



President and CEO.

“We believe strongly in the power of Lincoln’s School Engagement Program to ensure that young people have the education they need to succeed, which is critical to their future success,” said Long Foundation Senior Program Officer, Aimee Sueko Eng. “But you can’t learn if you don’t come to school. That’s why the Thomas J. Long Foundation is excited to support this important initiative in Contra Costa County.”



“We want all of our students to excel and become successful adults, and good attendance will help them reach that goal,” said Lindy Kahn, Director of Innovation & Support of Student Programs and Education Services at Contra Costa County Office of Education. “We are working hard to reduce chronic absenteeism, and see our exciting partnership with Lincoln and the Contra Costa District Attorney’s Office as furthering our ongoing efforts to address this critical issue.”

“Children who are chronically absent kindergarten through third grade are far more likely to be absent later in life,” said Laura Delehunt, Deputy District Attorney for the County’s Parent Truancy Court in Martinez, which started in October to help the county’s truants, age 12 and under. “Through this unique partnership, we will reverse the school-to-prison pipeline flow fed by habitual truancy, low student achievement and higher dropout rates.”

### Data Shows High Cost of Truancy

Data from a recent California study finds that children who are chronically absent in kindergarten and 1st grade are far less likely to read proficiently at the end of 3rd grade. Lacking an education, these children are more likely to be unemployed and at risk of becoming involved in crime, both as victims and as offenders: research shows that if a child is not at reading-level by the end of third grade, they are four times more likely than other students to be a high school drop-out. More than 80 percent of the prisoners in the country are high school dropouts, which suggests a direct correlation between public education and public safety. In Contra Costa County, police have reported that 60 percent of juvenile crime occurs between 8 a.m. and 3 p.m. on weekdays, when children should have been in school.

### Initiative Tackles Chronic Absenteeism

Contra Costa County’s Parent Truancy Calendar focuses on the root causes of chronic absenteeism and seeks to resolve those issues and return children to the classroom. Recognizing the devastating impact of this truancy crisis in our County, Judges Rebecca Hardie and John Laettner of the Contra Costa County Superior Court, devote considerable time to hearing cases of chronic absenteeism and demonstrate tremendous compassion as they coach parents to prioritize education. In the majority of cases, a child’s truancy is a symptom of larger economic and social and emotional barriers and families are in desperate need of social services that they cannot afford.

During Lincoln’s SEP’s pilot year in Contra Costa County (2016-17), secured funding from the Thomas Long Foundation will support dozens of students who face an array of obstacles that lead to

chronic absenteeism, such as poverty, the lack of adequate resources to navigate school policies related to attendance, and the lack of transportation to and from school. Lincoln's SEP staff will meet the majority of participants at Parent Truancy Court, with youth and families referred to the agency by the District Attorney's Office. Similar to the successful program in Alameda County, Lincoln's SEP staff will develop an individualized plan based on the needs of the students and the family and to address the issues contributing to significant truant behaviors. Services during this time may include individual and family therapy, family coaching, care coordination, transportation, and resource linkage to other service providers and community-based resources.

The Thomas Long Foundation's generous contribution will ensure that parents are educated about the life-long importance of school attendance and that they receive the support they need to implement successful strategies at home.

#### About Lincoln

Founded in 1883 as the first racially integrated orphanage in Northern California, our mission remains timeless: Lincoln disrupts the cycle of poverty and trauma, empowering children and families to build strong futures. Today, Lincoln impacts more than 4,000 children and their families in the most underserved communities of the greater San Francisco Bay Area through a continuum of academic achievement, family strengthening, and well-being programs. An innovative approach, providing comprehensive school, community, and family-focused services, combined with a unique team-based delivery and sound fiscal management, has established Lincoln as a leading regional provider of children and family services. With Lincoln, kids attend school, learn to read, and stay with their families where they do best. For more information and stories, visit [LincolnFamilies.org](http://LincolnFamilies.org).

Kirsten Melton  
Lincoln  
510.273.4700 x4321  
[email us here](#)

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