Communities In Schools
North Carolina

NEWS RELEASE

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Five-Year Comprehensive Evaluation Ranks Communities In Schools as the Most Effective Dropout Prevention Organization in America

WASHINGTON D.C. – Communities In Schools (CIS), the nation's leading organization dedicated to empowering students to stay in school and achieve in life, Friday released the results of a five-year comprehensive longitudinal evaluation, conducted by ICF International, one of the nation's foremost social science evaluation firms.

After five years of detailed evaluation underwritten by The Atlantic Philanthropies, ICF concluded that Communities In Schools' model resulted in **the strongest reduction in dropout rates of any existing fully scaled dropout prevention program that has been evaluated**; that Communities In Schools is unique in having an effect on both **reducing dropout rates and increasing graduation rates**; and that the Communities In Schools model is **effective across states, school settings, grade levels and student ethnicities**. Importantly, analyses indicate that the more fully and carefully the model is implemented, the stronger the effects.

"Tough economic times surely mean tough decisions when it comes to K-12 education," said Linda Harrill, President and CEO of Communities in Schools of North Carolina (CISNC). "To turn around North Carolina's dropout problem and increase North Carolina's cohort graduation rate—plus reduce much of the spending our state would face from a single high school dropout—we cannot, we must not, take the focus off of K-12 education, especially as it pertains to our youth who are at risk of dropping out of school. The success and well-being of our entire community hinge on the quality of our public schools and their ability to graduate students ready to participate in our workforce. Among all the dropout prevention models out there, CIS is the only one proven to work. With limited dollars, investing in a rigorously evaluated model like CIS—one that can boast a proven return—simply makes good business sense."

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CIS works inside school systems with superintendents, principals, educators, graduation coaches and other personnel, and forges community partnerships that bring resources into schools and help remove barriers to learning. **CISNC is able to bring about needed changes in schools and in the lives of students through the implementation of the CIS model.**

Specific findings of the ICF study include:

- Providing high-risk students with case-managed services is contributing not only to **keeping kids in school, but also to improvement in school**.
- **CIS is unique in its ability to lower dropout rates and increase on-time graduation rates**, compared to all other existing dropout prevention programs.
- It is the **effective implementation of the CIS model by a trained school-based site coordinator** that correlates more strongly with positive school-level outcomes, compared to uncoordinated provision of services alone.
- **The higher the level of fidelity to the CIS model, the greater the effects**, which validates the power of strong business and programmatic practices in place across the CIS network.
- Positive effects on student- and school-level dropout rates, graduation rates, attendance and academic performance hold up **across states, settings (urban, suburban, rural), grade levels and ethnicities.**

The results from the evaluation are already being translated into improved service delivery by CIS local affiliates. Based on results mid-way through the longitudinal study, Communities In Schools codified a set of program and business standards—called Total Quality System (TQS) standards—that the research revealed had the greatest effect on student improvement, and then drove those practices back into the network through an accreditation process. Approximately 108 affiliates have been accredited or are in the process, with all affiliates on track for accreditation by 2015. North Carolina is the country's leader in national TQS accreditation, with 11 local affiliates having achieved this standard of excellence: CIS of Charlotte-Mecklenburg, CIS of Clay County, CIS of Cleveland County, CIS of High Point, CIS of Lincoln County, CIS of Montgomery County, CIS of Moore County, CIS of Randolph County, CIS of Robeson County, CIS of Rowan County and CIS of Thomasville.

"The research findings have fueled an even greater sense of urgency within our network—a commitment that we need to bring the strongest, most evidence-based and rigorously evaluated practices to the young people we serve, and that we need to do it immediately," said Daniel Cardinali, President of Communities In Schools.

For more information, visit www.communitiesinschools.org. Specifically,

- For the press announcement published by CIS National on Friday, February 25, visit www.communitiesinschools.org/media-center/resource/five-year-evaluation
- For a copy of the final ICF evaluation report, visit www.communitiesinschools.org/about/publications/publication/five-year-national-evaluation-summary-report
- To watch the official press conference, held Friday, February 25, at the National Press Club in Washington D.C., visit www.vimeo.com/20379283

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Communities In Schools of North Carolina is part of the national CIS group, the nation's leading dropout prevention organization, and the only one proven to both decrease dropout rates and increase on-time graduation. During the 2009-2010 school year, the CIS network in North Carolina worked with 140,000 youth and their families across the state, empowering more than 98 percent of its high school students to remain in school. For more information, please visit www.cisnc.org or call 1-800-849-8881.

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