



# About Turnaround for Children

March 2014

## Fast Facts:

**Founded:** 2002  
**Founder and CEO:**  
Pamela A. Cantor, M.D.  
**Staff:** 57  
**Board of Directors:** 22  
**Budget:** \$12 million  
**School Partners to Date:** 84

## Program Snapshot:

**2013-2014 School Year:**  
18 school partners, over 7,000 students, over 700 school staff, 7 community-based mental health partners  
**Average Annual Intervention Cost:** \$320,000/school  
**Average Intervention Length:** 3-5 years  
**Programs in Place:**  
New York City (10 schools); Newark, N.J. (3 schools); Washington, D.C. (5 schools)

**Overview:** Turnaround for Children is a nonprofit organization that partners with public schools to address the obstacles to teaching and learning that stem from the stress of poverty. Turnaround has designed a targeted intervention to mitigate the way this stress impacts student readiness to learn. In each partner school, Turnaround creates a student support system, trains teachers in proven classroom management and instructional strategies, and works with school leaders to build a high-performing culture. This fortified environment allows all children to develop the social, emotional, and academic skills to lift them to higher standards of performance that prepare them for college and career.

**The Challenge:** Today, one in four children in the United States is growing up in poverty. Poverty inflicts a traumatic form of stress on their developing brains. It interferes with learning. It impacts behavior. Children don't leave the circumstances of their upbringing at the schoolhouse door. The stress they experience shows up in the classroom. It causes them to be distracted, to tune out, to be nervous, and distrustful. It interferes with their ability to focus, interact with others, tackle rigorous academic material, and progress in school successfully.

Now imagine a whole school filled with children stressed this way – and there are tens of thousands of them. These schools share common challenges: children unready to learn, teachers unprepared to teach students with intense needs, and principals ill-equipped to act against such adversity. Collectively, these challenges pose a pattern of risk: risk to student development, risk to classroom instruction, and risk to school-wide culture, each capable of derailing academic achievement. Because this pattern is predictable, it is possible to design an intervention to address them.

It has been a mistake to assume that school leaders and teachers would simply figure out how to manage the challenges in high-poverty schools without specific training, preparation, and support. Children in these schools need more than reading, writing, and arithmetic. They need a *fortified*

environment that reduces stress, fosters positive connections with adults and peers, and promotes attributes common among all successful students, including motivation, self-regulation and resilience.

**How Turnaround Works:** Turnaround partners with public schools after a mutual selection process. Each school agrees to hire and pay for a full-time social worker and guarantees access to all of its teachers and top administrators, while Turnaround sets up a partnership with a community-based mental health provider. Turnaround then deploys a team consisting of a **Social Work Consultant**, **Instructional Coach** and **Program Director** to work intensively with a small cluster of schools for three to five years.

This team:

- (1) Builds a student support system that gets all children help, either in school or in partnership with a community-based mental health provider;
- (2) Trains teachers in proven classroom management and instructional strategies that foster a safe, engaging learning environment and strong student-teacher relationships; and
- (3) Works with school leaders to drive school-wide improvement, and create a high-performing culture that involves the entire school community.

Turnaround knows its partner schools are on track for success because its research and metrics team measures progress at all stages of the 3-5 year process of school improvement, from implementation to leading indicators to end outcomes. Early indicators of success include higher student and teacher attendance, fewer suspensions, and improved teacher practice. Partner schools with positive data for classroom effectiveness, reduced behavioral incidents and lower absenteeism are outpacing their peers on Math and English test scores.

**Turnaround has succeeded when** a school once marked by disruption, frequent calls to 911, high teacher turnover, low morale, and low achievement is transformed into a calm, effective, rigorous learning environment. All the teachers are prepared, inspired, and have high expectations for themselves and their students. All the students are healthy and resilient, with the motivation, desire and tools to learn, and the skills to perform well in the classroom and beyond.

Turnaround for Children is committed to helping all students, all teachers, and all schools fulfill the promise of public education.

For more information, please:

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