

Bulletin



news from the division of mental hygiene

Child and Adolescent Mental Health is a Top Priority for Division

CHILD AND ADOLESCENT MENTAL HEALTH has become one of the top priority areas at the Division of Mental Hygiene—and it's an area with several important new initiatives now underway.

The Division is committed to taking a careful look at the continuum of treatment services available to children and adolescents—and working to ensure its quality and completeness. The Division also hopes to extend its focus to mental illness prevention and mental wellness promotion as well.

Major Federal Grant Received

DMH has received a grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) to improve the care of children with serious emotional and behavioral disorders. The grant will provide \$1 million in the first year and up to \$9.5 million over six years to fund the development of a “systems of care” initiative in New York City.

The initiative represents a new approach to meeting the needs of children and adolescents with serious emotional and behavior disorders, who typically receive services from a variety of separate care systems. These can include the mental health or substance abuse treatment systems, the juvenile justice system, the educational system, and the foster-care system. In a “systems of care” approach, the various agencies work together in an organized, collaborative way to provide more holistic care for the child. The idea is to work cooperatively to meet the range of the child's needs so that he or she can function well in all areas of life—at home, at school, and in the community. By better coordinating care, the program also seeks to ensure that the child can remain in his own community for treatment, rather than be sent to costly, out-of-community settings.

DMH already has a limited “systems of care” initiative in place known as the Coordinated Children's Services Initiative

(CCSI). The grant enables DMH to expand this program, placing coordinators, case managers, and parent advocates in each borough and serving more children in need. Under the new grant, DMH will also work to increase parent involvement in the program.

“By providing comprehensive, coordinated and individualized care, this new initiative should help improve the lives of New York City's seriously emotionally disturbed children and their families,” said Louis Josephson, Ph.D., Assistant Commissioner for Child and Adolescent Services. “We look forward to building on our previous experience with CCSI and to being able to reach even more families in need.”

School Screening Initiative

DMH recently spearheaded a project that screened hundreds of children in lower Manhattan schools for signs of lingering emotional stress related to 9/11. From late

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DMH Plays Key Role in Bioterrorism Preparedness

THE DIVISION OF MENTAL HYGIENE is playing an important role in the citywide effort to prepare for a potential terrorist attack. The Division is working hand-in-hand with Health colleagues in focusing on preparedness and response to potential emergencies and disasters. Examples of these efforts include organizing the City's voluntary smallpox vaccination effort, developing public education materials, and strengthening the City's overall surveillance and response capacities.

The Division's role in preparedness is key, since “the most prevalent consequences of a terrorist attack are psychological in

nature,” says Kelly Ryan, Director of Mental Health Disaster Planning. “That's why DMH has an important role to play in enhancing community and family readiness for, and resilience to, potential attacks.”

In all of its preparedness efforts, DMH is considering the special needs and concerns of people in the disability areas it serves. Contract agencies and other mental health professionals can expect to hear more about the Division's progress in the coming months. Information is available online at nyc.gov/health through New York City Aware, a program designed to help keep residents up-to-date about DOHMH preparedness efforts. ■

New Staff Join DMH

In January, two physicians joined the Division of Mental Hygiene to take on key leadership roles.

Hunter McQuiston, M.D. serves as Chief Medical Officer. Dr. McQuiston has a distinguished career in public-sector psychiatry and was most recently Medical Director of Project Renewal.

Myla Harrison, M.D. serves as Medical Director. Dr. Harrison, a child and adolescent psychiatrist with expertise in clinical performance assessment, was most recently Medical Director of the Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Outpatient Service at Mount Sinai Medical Center.

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January through Feb. 10, "The 9/11 School Recovery Initiative" screened students in 10 New York City middle and high schools south of Canal Street.

Overall, about 20% of the nearly 1000 children screened were found to have signs of emotional distress. These children were either provided with services at their school with parental consent or referred to a community-based counseling program.

The screenings were conducted on a school-by-school basis for students whose parents or guardians had signed consent forms. (Students who returned signed consent forms received a free Metrocard provided by The New York Times Foundation.) Participants completed a 41-item questionnaire developed by a panel of nationally recognized experts in traumatic stress.

In explaining the rationale behind the

screening, Executive Deputy Commissioner Lloyd I. Sederer, M.D., said: "Research has shown that children with lingering stress effects from a disaster can be difficult to identify. Most don't 'act out' with behaviors that can indicate what they're going through. Rather, they tend to suffer quietly. Through the screening, we identified students who needed assistance in their recovery process, and connected them with professionals who could help."

Needs Assessment/SPOA in the Bronx

DMH is overseeing two projects that focus on improving mental health services for children and adolescents in the Bronx.

In the first, DMH is conducting a needs assessment of outpatient mental health services for children and adolescents. The

assessment will determine whether there are enough service options to meet demand, and it will collect data that can be used to improve service planning for this population.

In the second project, DMH is overseeing the Single Point of Access, or SPOA, pilot project to improve the referral process for children's mental health care services. Under this program, a central office will manage the referral process for intensive treatment services, using a standardized screening tool to assess children and determine their needs. It will place children in open treatment slots and manage any waiting lists. DMH hopes to learn whether centralizing the process improves access to treatment and timeliness of referrals.

Both projects will produce important data that will illuminate the types of mental health problems among Bronx children, the need for intensive treatment, and the

New Board Members Appointed

Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg recently appointed 15 New Yorkers to serve on the Community Services Board, which advises the Department on mental hygiene issues. They are:

- James T. Curran, MSW, Dean of Special Programs, John Jay College of Criminal Justice
- Susan M. Essock, PhD, Professor, Department of Psychiatry, Mount Sinai School of Medicine
- Patricia Garlick-Lee, Parent Vice-Chair, Queens Council on Mental Retardation & Developmental Disabilities

- David Gibson, CSW, CASAC, Director of the Division of Substance Abuse Services, The Educational Alliance
- Wanda Greene, Parent Advocate, Bronx Parent Resource Center
- Philip H. Levy, PhD, President and Chief Operating Officer, YAI/National Institute for People with Disabilities Network
- Anthony Taiwai Ng, MD, Medical Director, Disaster Psychiatry Outreach
- Jim Normandy, DSW, Assistant Executive Director for Mental Health and Clinic Services, Lifespire
- *Laura Parsons, PsyD, child psychologist, private practice

- *Kenneth Popler, PhD, MBA, President/Chief Executive Officer, Staten Island Mental Health Society
- *Mary D. Redd, CSW, ACSW, President and CEO, Steinway Child and Family Services
- Jody Silver, MA, Director of Advocacy and Public Policy, Community Access
- *Giselle Stolper, EdM, Executive Director, Mental Health Association of New York City
- *Jane F. Velez, Chief Executive Officer/President, Palladia
- Linda Wilson, Executive Director, Staten Island Alliance for the Mentally Ill

* Denotes re-appointed Board member

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Office of Communications
 NYC Department of Health & Mental Hygiene
 93 Worth Street, Room 904
 New York, NY 10013

Michael R. Bloomberg
 Mayor

Thomas R. Frieden, MD, MPH
 Commissioner of Health and Mental Hygiene

Lloyd I. Sederer, MD,
 Executive Deputy Commissioner for Mental Hygiene

Sandra Mullin
 Associate Commissioner, Communications

Kelly Sobel, Editor

