



# PARTNERSHIP PRESS

A PUBLICATION OF THE CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY COMMUNITY SCHOOLS PROGRAM

## School-Based Mental Health: What's the Case?

by Jane Quinn

Mental health services represent the most common request from principals in current (and potential) Children's Aid Society community schools. Often these principals see three distinct but inter-related needs at their schools: assistance in helping students with behavior management, support for students being considered for special education referrals and



treatment (individual, group and family) of students with mental health problems.

The needs perceived by these principals are corroborated by city, state and national data indicating that children's mental health services are dramatically under-funded and, therefore, unavailable at the appropriate level. For example, according to the most recent Surgeon Gen-

eral's report on children's mental health (Report of the Surgeon General's Conference on Children's Mental Health: A *National Action Agenda*, 2001), one in 10 children and adolescents suffer from mental illness severe enough to cause some level of impairment; yet, in any given year, it is estimated that fewer than one in five of these young people receives needed treatment. This report outlined eight action steps, including increasing access to and coordination of quality mental healthcare services; and training front-line providers (such as teachers and other school personnel) to recognize mental health issues in children.

Other research supports the importance of locating needed mental health services in schools. This approach is much more cost-effective than referring children to mental health services in other locations—because the students actually receive the needed services. For example, a recent survey conducted by the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene in the Bronx (*Children's Mental Health Needs Assessment*, August 2003) found that only 43 of every 100 children referred to outside providers ever received any mental health treatment. By way of contrast, an external evaluation of Children's Aid's programs (*The Children's Aid Society's Community Schools Mental*

## School-Based Mental Health Funding and Advocacy Update

Children's Aid has long held that "service plus advocacy equals change," and this adage is implemented nowhere better than in our school-based mental health work. Children's Aid has been committed to doing this work and has pieced together the necessary funding since the inception of community schools in 1992. But alongside this direct service, we have worked as tireless advocates for increased public funding of school-based mental health, often working in close partnership with colleagues through city, state and national



coalitions. As a result of these collective efforts, several promising events are currently taking place:

- On May 8, the Mental Health in Schools Act was introduced in the U.S. Senate. The bill calls for expansion of comprehensive school-based mental health

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Mental health services represent the most common request from principals in current (and potential) Children's Aid Society community schools.

# Clinical Issues and Solutions in The Children's Aid Society's School-Based Mental Health Programs

by Rosa Bautista

The Children's Aid Society has provided school-based mental health services since 1984. As soon as we established community schools in 1992, mental health became a core component of our full service model. Today, we offer some type of mental health service at each of our 21 community schools. In this article I will focus on middle schools and draw heavily on my six years of experience as Community School Director at I.S. 218/Salomé Ureña Campus, and also on my more recent experience as the Director of Children's Aid's School-Based Mental Health Services.

At Salomé Ureña as well as at the Mirabal Sisters Campus (another community middle school campus in Washington Heights), we provide comprehensive medical, dental and mental health services.

From a clinical perspective, the five most common mental health needs of middle school students at these schools are: parent-child problems; attention deficit disorder (ADD/ADHD); depression;

oppositional defiant disorder and adjustment disorder. These diagnoses manifest themselves in family conflict, cutting class, faculty/student and peer group conflict, academic failure, anxiety, sadness and withdrawal. Particularly vulnerable groups are the immigrant children, especially recent arrivals, who often experience separation from family and social isolation.

Referrals to the clinic can be made by students, teachers, parents and, commonly, each school's Pupil Personnel Team. The forms of treatment offered by our well trained teams of professionals include individual psychotherapy, group and family counseling, psychiatric evaluations and assessments, medication therapy, play therapy, preventive services and emergency services and referrals.

The work of our community school and mental health staff extends beyond the clinic walls. We have offered support groups for parents with emotional disturbances, parent workshops on mental health

issues, an Adolescent Dropout Prevention Program, programming geared specifically for sexually active teens, conflict resolution workshops, trainings on mental health issues, consultations for classroom teachers and after-school staff and assistance in implementing school-wide interventions such as PBIS (Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports), designed to foster positive school climate. ■



## School-Based Mental Health: What's the Case?

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Health Services: Analysis of Progress in 4th Year of the New York State Education Department's VESID-Effective Practices Contract, conducted by Helene Clark and Robert Engle of ActKnowledge, November

2003) indicates both that children referred for mental health services in our community schools receive needed treatment and that these services are effective in helping students stay on track academically and developmentally.

In this special issue of *Partnership Press*, we explore how The Children's Aid Society is working with our education colleagues in community schools to provide

school-based mental health services that are designed to achieve several important goals:

- Minimize barriers to learning
- Overcome stigma and barriers to care
- Provide comprehensive on-site counseling services
- Promote healthy psychological and social development
- Create a positive school climate. ■

# A Day in the Life of a Community School Social Worker

by Hersilia Méndez

Gia Dardani is a former teacher driven to social work by the myriad of non-academic challenges faced by many of her students. Now one of four Children's Aid social workers at the Salomé Ureña de Henríquez Campus, she is assigned to M.S. 322, one of the three middle schools in the complex.

"There are many kids who cannot put emotional issues aside and be efficient students ... I'm now able to support them at a different level and help them figure out how to function successfully in the classroom; this has a positive impact on the whole class." She adds that her teaching background helps her relate to the teachers in a better way as well. "I have lots of respect for teachers; I didn't last."

Referring to Children's Aid's mental health staff, a Department of Education guidance counselor says: "I feel more secure with Children's Aid in the building. It's reassuring to know that clinically trained social workers are available, especially in a crisis and for the most troubled kids. I have never had a student refuse a referral to Children's Aid."

Gia's caseload is 20 students, with an-

other five or six that she is assessing. Her daily schedule is meticulously planned, but being school based means being open to crisis. Today she works 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Let's follow her:

**9:00** Catches up with paper work, reviews files for the students that she plans to see, checks messages, leaves messages for BS's guardian and PK's mother; this is one of her most difficult cases, because the family is uncooperative. She organizes the day's schedule – one of her biggest challenges – in order to comply with school mandates and her clients' best interests.

**9:30** Goes to get PK – he didn't come to school – Sees JM instead, because she couldn't see him yesterday.

**10:00 – 12:00** Attends PPT (Pupil Personnel Team) meeting with Roy Laird, her supervisor. They share with the team a behavior modification plan for MR; they also clarify that CM, another of her clients, is not only disruptive, as the school staff believes, but that in fact he is a very high functioning autistic child, who needs a special school.

**12:00 – 2:40** Sees clients back to back.

**2:50 – 6:00** Gia is writing progress reports when the guidance counselor

bursts in – a threatening note has been found on the desk of JP, one of her clients, a week after the Virginia Tech massacre. The school is really anxious. She interviews JP and, after consulting with her supervisor and a psychiatrist, assures the school that the note was written in response to a prank, that the student is not homicidal or suicidal. The school calls



Student Wellness Center bulletin board at I.S. 218.



School Social Worker Gia Dardani and supervisor Roy Laird speak with a student at M.S. 322 on the Salomé Ureña de Henríquez Campus in Washington Heights.

EMS anyway and JP is hospitalized. Her collateral work with the hospital and the family is a crucial piece of what she does on this day.

"Despite the challenges, this is a dream job for me," she concludes. ■

## Mental Health Funding and Advocacy

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programs. Children's Aid has contributed ideas to this legislation through our active participation in the National Assembly of School-Based Health Centers.

- The New York State Office of Mental Health is funding a new effort called Child and Family Clinic-Plus, which will provide mental health screening in middle and high schools across the city. The New York City Department

of Mental Health is collaborating with the New York City Department of Education to coordinate this work locally, and Children's Aid will participate by screening 1,000 students in three Washington Heights schools. According to Scott Bloom, Director of School Mental Health Service for the DoE's Office of School Health, "The program has the potential of reaching 120,000 students over the course of three years. We are very excited about implementing this crucial support service to help students overcome barriers to academic achievement."

- Children's Aid's Director of Quality Con-

trol and Improvement James Langford testified at the March 22 City Council budget hearings about the need to expand children's mental health services.

- Director of School-Based Mental Health Services Rosa Bautista testified on the mental health needs of young adolescents at the May 3 hearing of the City Council's Middle Schools Task Force.
- Finally, Children's Aid recently received licensing approval and funding to expand school-based mental health services in three Bronx middle schools (I.S. 98, I.S. 190 and the Arturo Toscanini Campus) as well as at Children's Aid's Bronx Family Center. ■

# The Children's Aid Society Community Schools At-A-Glance

The Children's Aid Society partners with the New York City Department of Education in 21 public schools called community schools. These public school partnerships combine the best quality educational practices with a wide range of vital in-house extended day, health and social services to ensure that students are physically, emotionally and socially prepared to learn. The Children's Aid Society also has a large number of important public and private partners to ensure that all children have access to high quality services in these schools. We gratefully acknowledge the support of New York City's Department of Youth and Community Development and its Out-of-School Time Initiative.

## MANHATTAN

### Manhattan Center for Science and Mathematics (Community High School)

280 Pleasant Avenue  
New York, NY 10029  
(212) 423-9630  
Fax (212) 423-1101  
CAS Director: Yalenis Cruz  
Principal: Corrine Vinal

### Mirabal Sisters Campus

21 Jumel Place at 168th Street  
New York, NY 10032  
(212) 923-1563  
Fax (212) 923-1859  
CAS Director: Maria Lopez  
Principal: Ysidro Abreu (M.S. 319)  
Principal: Janet Heller (M.S. 324)  
Principal: Pamela Russell-Glover  
(M.S. 321)

### P.S. 5 Community School

3703 Tenth Avenue at Dyckman Street  
New York, NY 10034  
(212) 567-5787  
Fax (212) 567-5966  
CAS Director: Carolyn Chin-Bow  
Principal: Wanda Soto

### P.S. 8 Community School

465 West 167th Street  
New York, NY 10032  
(212) 740-8655  
Fax (212) 740-7420  
CAS Director: Arnery Reyes  
Principal: Rafaela Landin

### P.S. 50 Community School

433 East 100th Street  
New York, NY 10029  
Phone (212) 860-0299  
Fax (212) 860-2845  
CAS Director: Jeanette Then  
Principal: Rebekah Marler-Mitchell

### P.S. 152 Community School

93 Nagle Avenue, RM 121  
New York, NY 10040  
(212) 544-0221  
Fax (212) 544-0244  
CAS Director: Claudia Mitchell  
Principal: Julia Pietri

### Salomé Ureña de Henríquez Campus

4600 Broadway at 196th Street  
New York, NY 10040  
(212) 569-2880  
Fax (212) 304-3427  
CAS Director: Migdalia Cortes-Torres  
Principal: June Barnett (I.S. 218)  
Principal: Bernadette Drysdale (I.S. 293)  
Principal: Erica Zigelman (M.S. 322)

### Community Schools National Technical Assistance Center

(212) 569-2866 Fax (212) 544-7609

### C.S. 61 Community School

**I.S. 190 Community School**  
1550 Crotona Park East  
Bronx, NY 10460  
(718) 991-2719/8023  
Fax (718) 991-7555  
CAS Director: Robin Fleshman  
Principal: Patricia A. Quigley (C.S. 61)  
Principal: Diana J. Santiago (I.S. 190)

### I.S. 98 Community School

1619 Boston Road  
Bronx, NY 10460  
(718) 842-2760  
Fax (718) 842-2793  
CAS Director: Jacquy Joachim  
Principal: Claralee Irobunda

### I.S. 166 Community School

250 East 164th Street  
Bronx, NY 10456  
(718) 293-3144  
Fax (718) 293-2870  
CAS Director: Jessica Rodriguez  
Principal: Lauren Reiss

### Fannie Lou Hamer Freedom High School

### Fannie Lou Hamer Middle School

1001 Jennings Street  
Bronx, NY 10460  
(718) 861-0521  
Fax (718) 861-0619  
CAS Director: Tim Henderson  
Principal: Nancy Mann (High)  
Principal: Lorraine Chanon (Middle)

## STATEN ISLAND

### Community School I.S. 61

445 Castleton Avenue  
Staten Island, NY 10301  
(718) 727-8481  
Fax (718) 447-2112  
CAS Director: Lester Feuerstein  
Principal: Richard J. Gallo

## THE CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY

**PARTNERSHIP  
PRESS**

The Children's Aid Society  
105 East 22nd Street, New York, New York 10010

**C. Warren Moses**, Chief Executive Officer

**William Weisberg**, Associate Executive Director

**Jane Quinn**, Assistant Executive Director for  
Community Schools

**Richard Negrón**, Director, Community Schools

**Alma Whitford**, Associate Director, Community Schools

**Myrna Torres**, Assistant Director, Community Schools

**Robin Fleshman**, Assistant Director, Community Schools

**Hersilia Méndez**, Asst. Dir., National Technical Assistance

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## THE BRONX

### Arturo Toscanini Complex (Community Middle Schools)

1000 Teller Avenue  
Bronx, NY 10456  
(718) 293-2728  
Fax (718) 293-2797  
CAS Director: Denise Santana Montes  
Principal: Robert Hannibal (J.H.S. 145)  
Principal: Patrick Kelly (M.S. 325)  
Principal: Dorald Bastion (M.S. 328)