

New York State Coalition for Children's Mental Health Services

ENHANCED FAMILY SUPPORT GRANTS HIGHLIGHTS



ENHANCED FAMILY SUPPORT GRANTS

Providing Needed Support to Families

The Enhanced Family Support Grants “Parent Partner Grants” recently awarded by the State to agencies throughout New York, are already helping the lives of families of children in need of residential mental health services. Importantly, the programs allow families to access increased advocacy and support to strengthen or maintain the relationship with their child(ren) receiving services. Enhancing the relationship between families of children receiving residential mental health services and the agencies providing that care is also a goal of the program.



The following highlights the unique aspects of just some of the Parent Partner programs being implemented.

Child and Family Services Programs in Erie County, Conners Children’s Center Residential Treatment Facility and the Lee Randall Jones Community Residence will fund the position of a Family Advocate who will be helping engage the family, provide support for the parents, advocacy as needed and most importantly connect them with family support services near their homes. The goal is to help families have a sustainable way of getting the support they need while they are with the program and after. The program believes that connecting families to the local network of family support will ultimately improve their ability to maintain their child in their home.

Families United Network/Parsons Child and Family Center will be working in partnership with the OMH residential programs in the Capital District area. Two full time Parent Partners will be hired to work with families as they begin the process of residential care and will see the families through 6 months after discharge to ensure service linkages occur. The Parent Partners will help orient the families to the residential programs, help with home visit planning and provide them with any support or advocacy they may need. The Parent Partners will also be integrated into the residential programs and attend the intakes, treatment reviews, clinical and staff meetings at the programs. Another responsibility will include developing ways for the families to network with each other and better understand their child’s mental health issues, medications, and learning strategies for managing their child at home. Providing feedback and training to staff at the residential programs to increase their sensitivity to family’s perspectives and how best to work together on behalf of the child or youth served is another goal of the Parent Partner positions.

Monroe County Residential Family Support Enhancement Project – A Multi-Agency Approach
Crestwood Children’s Center, Hillside Children’s Center, St. Joseph’s Villa and Better Days Ahead collaborated to receive the Parent Partner grant. Residential Family Advocates will assist residential programs by attending staff and management meetings to provide a family perspective in program deliberations and decisions. The Family Advocates will support family engagement in the residential programs and work to ensure that staff are knowledgeable about family engagement principles. The agencies will collaborate to provide training to all RTF staff, CR staff and Residential Family advocates; offer family support groups for families of children in a residential placement; and provide multi-family psych-ed groups. The grant allows for much needed increased staff resources. Examples of this include: **Crestwood Children’s Center** will be able to increase RFA hours from 15 to 25 hours per week to serve 18 families in the RTF program. **Hillside Children’s Center** will serve 42 families in the RTF program by doubling staff hours from 20 to 40 hours a week. **St. Joseph’s Villa** will provide RFA services to a 14 bed RTF and an 8 bed CR with a total of 25 hours a week.

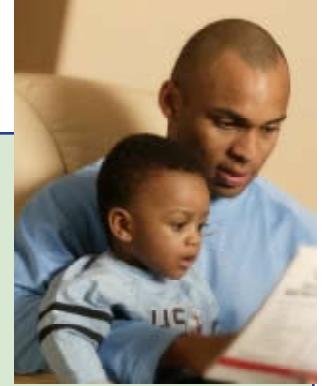
Rehabilitation Support Services, Inc. will be serving 15 families via a “Residential Family Advocate” in a program designed by RSS staff, The Family Empowerment Council in Orange County and the County Department of Mental Health. The goal of the program is to educate and empower families to become full partners with program staff in a family driven model of residential care. Achieving the goal is intended to result in swifter family reunifications where indicated, and decreased lengths of stay. Another aim of the program is to replicate elements of its success in other RSS programs serving children and youth.

SCO Family of Services has a long standing commitment to serving children, adolescents and families. In keeping with this commitment, the agency had a part time “Parent Advocate” for five hours per week. The “Parent Partner Grant” has permitted the agency to hire a full time Residential Family Advocate for its RTF and two community residences. The Family

Advocate will provide a full array of family support services. Its priorities are to establish relationships with families and the agency prior to admission to residential care, and ensure that obstacles that might limit family involvement in the treatment process are addressed. The family advocate will be a key member of the administrative team and will help to identify areas needed for staff training to ensure their awareness that the family occupies the central place in the child's life whether the plan is to return home or to a community residence.

The following excerpts attest to the value these programs have in the lives of families of children receiving residential mental health services.

Mr. Gary C. , father of daughter, "M", who has been at Hillside for 2 years and is preparing to enter adult services, wrote, "I am grateful for all of you who deal with the children day in and day out. I'm glad M will be able to live more independently but I will certainly miss seeing you all. I also want to extend my gratitude for the family advocate program. Our family has been touched and at times overwhelmed by the effects of mental illness since 1994. Often the discouragement and heartache seemed too much to bear, but praise for people like the Family Advocate, who seemed to call at just the right times. I was able to share with her my frustrations, fears and fatigue. But shines she, like the other family advocates, who has been impacted by mental illness in her own family, she readily could and did relate to my trials and hurt. **I cannot describe the joy, comfort and encouragement that the program provides me. It gave me the strength to keep going. How I encourage you to keep the advocacy program going! I know it will be a treasure to others as it was for me.**"



A Parent Partner wrote, "A child was encountering a problem that was inappropriate for him due to the severity and nature of his mental health and behavioral needs. I partnered with the mom while she clarified the issues that she encountered in working with the CR and its staff. We discussed different methods she could use to address her issues and she decided that a meeting with all the providers would be most effective. We talked prior to the meeting and I wrote down all her areas of concern. During the meeting, I helped her to stay on topic in an emotionally difficult situation. I provided the logistical support such as transportation and food, while her husband was in the hospital and she was homeless. I continue to support her as she attempts to find housing for her family. I am also working with the providers to ensure that their activities are coordinated and are focuses on the outcome that the family desires. The mom has expressed her gratitude that I am there for her. She sees me as someone that she can talk to and count on to understand her."



A Family Advocate said, "Serving as a Family Advocate in this RTF has been a great experience. The best part of the work has been the response of families. They are excited to come together to learn skills and to share experiences with one another. I really respect the courage it takes for parents to place their child in residential treatment."

And from Parent Partners Perspectives... "I love the opportunity to meet families and getting to know them. The thing I like best about this job is support and how we as an agency have incorporated this. Each family and youth that enter our agency is considered my 'family and my kids'. I love being able to help these families and kids."

Another family served is comprised of 10 adopted children and a 70 year old mom. A Parent Partner writes, "I have supported the mom by listening to her and being able to understand the life that she has led. As part of her life experience, she was physically severely hurt by the child who is currently in care. I spoke with the providers to give them a better perspective about the mom's feelings of the agency's position about the child's possible return home. They were understanding and taking steps to provide support for the mom and work with her and her child as they struggle with the OMH system. The mom was encouraged and empowered by the information that I gave her. She appreciates the work that I have been able to do to help the agency understand her fears and how it impacts on her relationship and actions with her child."

Clearly the Parent Partner Programs are making a positive difference in the lives of families of children receiving residential mental health services across New York State. It's a program well worth the State's investment and is already showing measureable returns.

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE Enhanced Family Support Grant Awardees

Astor Home for Children

Catholic Charities of Chenango County

Child & Family Services of Erie County, Inc.

Coalition for Hispanic Family Services

Green Chimneys

Hillside Children's Center RTF (St. Joseph's Villa & Crestwood Children's RTF)

Institute for Community Living

Parsons Child and Family Center (St. Catherine's & Vanderheyden Hall)

Pederson-Krag

Rehabilitation Support Services, Inc.

SCO Family of Services

New York State Coalition for Children's Mental Health Services

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