

"THE PARTNERSHIP"



CAYUGA COUNTY SAFE SCHOOLS/
HEALTHY STUDENTS PARTNERSHIP

Key Findings from the Independent Evaluation

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EARLY EVALUATION FINDINGS REVEAL BROAD AND DEEP IMPLEMENTATION OF PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

INTRODUCTION

Youth violence and related risk behaviors are front-page, front-burner issues of concern across all sectors of U.S. society. No community, whether rich or disadvantaged is immune to their debilitating effects. While officially reported youth violence, overall, has receded from the epidemic rates seen in the late 80's and early 90's, youths' confidential reports about their violent and other high risk behaviors (e.g., substance and alcohol abuse) have remained alarmingly high.

Youth violence and high-risk behaviors are not intractable problems, however. Research clearly demonstrates that proven (i.e., evidence-based) prevention and intervention programs delivered in a coordinated and cohesive way within a community can be effective in dramatically reducing these problems.

The Cayuga County Safe Schools/Healthy Students Partnership initiated in the Spring of 2000 is a comprehensive, community-wide collaboration dedicated to fostering the healthy development of children and youth in Auburn, Port Byron, and Cayuga-Onondaga BOCES School Districts—from infancy through secondary school. It involves public education, mental health, human services, health, and local law enforcement agencies that will act in close consultation with a Community Advisory Board comprised of parents, students, and community-based organizations.

The Partnership is funded through a grant from the federal Departments of Education, Health and Human Services, and Justice on an annually renewable basis for up to three years. Early on, it identified a number of evidence-based programs and services to implement across participating schools and community agencies, and their deployment is the focus of this first issue of *The Partnership*, which will periodically update audiences on the activities and impacts of this initiative.

ABOUT THE EVALUATION...

The evaluation of the Cayuga County Safe Schools/Healthy Student Partnership is being conducted by MAGI Educational Services, Inc., an independent consulting firm located in White Plains, NY. This three-year study will involve a number of complementary quantitative and qualitative data collection procedures to gather information from schools, service providers, Advisory Committee members, and Partnership staff regarding school and community safety, youth violence, substance abuse and mental health issues, and Partnership formation and sustainability. The primary data collection strategies used to report the findings presented in this newsletter are focus group and individual interviews with the key program and service providers.

Subsequent issues of “*The Partnership*” will focus on the role and effect of School Resource Officers; the development and functioning of the Partnership—its advisory and decision-making structures; key stakeholder perceptions of the Safe Schools/Healthy Student initiative; and the impacts on targeted children, youth, and families.

DEPLOYMENT OF THE PARTNERSHIP’S PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

To what extent: 1) have staff been selected, 2) staff training occurred, 3) programs implemented, and 4) targeted youth and their families engaged?

This is the key question that the evaluation of a multi-program, multi-year initiative must first address. Data from interviews with various partnership and program staff were combined and analyzed to answer this question. If two independent sources of interview data confirmed that the deployment task was fully completed, it was assigned a “●”. If less than the full task was completed, it was assigned a “◐”. If it was expected to be completed in Year 1 as planned, it was assigned a “◑”. Finally, if there was no indication the task would be completed in Year 1, it was assigned a “○”. Early results are presented graphically by program in **Table 1** and discussed in the paragraphs that follow.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS IN SCHOOLS (OASIS)

OASIS is an early-intervention, summer program for students entering grades 1 through 4. This intensive program prepares students who are struggling academically for the skill demands of the next grade level, thus reducing the number of retentions and, over time, decreasing the drop-out rate.

Operating for 5 weeks—9:00 AM 12:00 PM each day—the program focuses exclusively on language arts and

math skill development needed at the next grade level. Findings revealed

- ◆ Teachers were selected with strong backgrounds in language arts and math, and with many years of experience in early childhood education;
- ◆ The training program was helpful to the selected teachers, allowing flexibility to individual teachers to implement activities and lessons in ways consistent with their teaching styles.
- ◆ OASIS curricula was seen as aligned with the school districts’ early grades’ curricula.

SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS

School Resource Officers (SROs) are specially-trained police officers engaged in school-based community-oriented policing focused on the prevention of violence, criminal and delinquent behavior in around school campuses. SROs have been trained in, and are providing, mental health referrals, preventive policing, juvenile mentoring, and conflict resolution methods. Finding showed

- ◆ A majority of the Auburn and Port Byron patrol forces applied for one of the 9 SRO positions. Officers were selected with experience in youth activities, conflict resolution, and placed in each of the participating district schools. Each was assigned to a participating school.
- ◆ To date, seven training sessions have been provided to these officers, including sessions in mentoring, mental health, tactical responses to school violence, critical inci

The Cayuga County SS/HS Partnership identified a number of evidence-based programs and services to implement across participating schools and community agencies.

dent stress debriefing, and prosocial behavior.

- ◆ SROs are actively involved in the life of these schools, teaching classes, mentoring youth, resolving conflicts between teachers and students and students and students, and referring students in distress for additional services.

- ◆ A multi-faceted SRO database has been constructed to document incidents of school safety violations, criminal activity, and mis-behavior occurring in participating schools. Computers have been deployed in nearly all the schools and SROs have been trained to use the database. The flexible reporting feature of this software allows data to be communicated in a variety of ways and formats.

**TABLE 1
DEPLOYMENT OF EVIDENCE-BASED PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION PROGRAMS
IN THE CAYUGA COUNTY SAFE SCHOOLS/HEALTHY STUDENTS PARTNERSHIP IN
YEAR 1**

PROGRAM	STAFF HIRED	YEAR 1 TRAINING COMPLETED	PROGRAM IMPLEMENTED (IN ALL SETTINGS)	TARGETED YOUTH AND FAMILIES INVOLVED
Opportunity for Academic Success (OASIS)	●	●	●	●
Primary Mental Health Program	●	◐	◐	◐
Second Step Violence Prevention Program	●	●	◐	◐
Educational Karate	●	●	●	●
BRIGHT Healthy Relationships Program	●	●	●	●
Cooperative Communication Between Home and School	●	○	○	○
Every Person Influences Children (EPIC)	●	◐	◐	◐
School Resource Officers	●	●	●	●
Mobile Outreach Service Team (MOST)	●	●	●	●
Home-based Nurse Visitation	●	◐	◐	◐
Intensive Supervision Conditional Discharge Program	●	●	●	●
Functional Family Therapy	●	●	●	●
Multi-systemic Foster Care	●	●	●	●
Family Group Conferencing	●	●	●	●

● Fully Completed
 ◐ Partially Completed
 ○ Planned
 ○ Will Not Be Completed in Year 1

PRIMARY MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAM

Primary Mental Health Program (PMHP) is a school-based early detection and prevention program for young elementary school students. The program—targeted to operate at Casey Park and Genesee Elementary Schools for students in kindergarten and 1st grade—addresses social, emotional, behavioral and adjustment problems that interfere with effective learning. Students at risk receive services through an individualized program involving parents, teachers, trained classroom associates and mental health professionals from Cayuga Counseling Services. The evidence showed

- ◆ Teachers, parents and counselors have been selected to conduct the program at Genesee Elementary School.
- ◆ 12 students have been identified to participate and services are being offered.

SECOND STEP

Second Step helps children change the attitudes and behaviors that contribute to violence. The curriculum teaches social and emotional skills to reduce impulsive and aggressive behavior in children and increase their level of social competence. Current research links academic success with these skills. Second Step school and family components are important parts of any comprehensive plan to improve children's social skills and reduce violence. Findings revealed

- ◆ Middle school teachers have been selected and trained in the strategies of the program and how to utilize the rich teaching resources and lesson plans.
- ◆ A number of teachers across some schools in Port Byron and Auburn have implemented lessons in a variety of subject areas.

EDUCATIONAL KARATE

The Educational Karate Program (EKP) helps students learn respect, self-control, violence prevention strategies, as well as anti-abduction techniques. EKP promotes non-violent problem solving by exploring the idea of peace with oneself and others and by emphasizing the importance of both physical and mental well-being. Validated by the NYS Education Department, this program has been widely replicated in school districts across New York.



- ◆ School Resource Officers were selected and trained to implement the program.
- ◆ Targeted for implementation at the Port Byron, East, and West Middle Schools, the program has been operating at each of these sites since December.

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS IN GREAT HARMONY TOGETHER (BRIGHT)

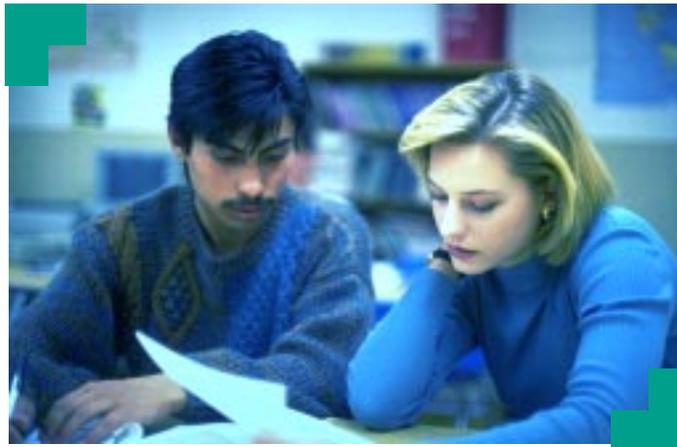
The primary objective of BRIGHT is to help teens develop a model of healthy strategies for handling anger and conflict in dating relationships. While the curriculum focuses on coercive behavior between dating partners, the issues raised in this curriculum lend themselves to other important topics such as peer aggression, sexual coercion, conflict resolution, and anger management. The Partnership has targeted 11th and 12th grade students to participate in the program via the school health curriculum. Implemented by the Partnership, this program will be integrated into high school health curricula and available beginning in the 2000-2001 school year

- ◆ To date, school counselors and school health educators have been trained in the Port Byron and Auburn City High Schools.
- ◆ A variety of lessons have been delivered at both high schools at each grade level.

COOPERATIVE COMMUNICATION BETWEEN HOME AND SCHOOL

Cooperative Communication Between Home and School increases communication and enhances conflict resolution skills for elementary school parents and teachers. It also assists schools to promote more effective parent involvement in the education of their children, which is linked to better school achievement. Cooperative Communication has been offered by several hundred urban, suburban, and rural schools, and is validated by the NYS Education Department.

- ◆ A variety of community volunteers have been recruited and selected to work in all elementary schools in Auburn City and Port Byron.
- ◆ Training sessions for the volunteer staff is scheduled for the spring with program implementation to begin this school year.



EVERY PERSON INFLUENCES CHILDREN (EPIC)

EPIC is a community- and school-based workshop program designed to enhance parental involvement in the educational lives of their children. Participants meet in supportive discussion groups that address parents' concerns and help improve parenting skills and communication among children, their parents, and school personnel. By exploring parenting issues and sharing concerns, participants increase their knowledge and become more self-confident as parents.

- ◆ A program coordinator has been recruited and selected to oversee the program implementation in the 3-targeted middle schools.
- ◆ Turnkey training of community facilitators

(volunteer parents and school staff) to conduct workshops has begun with additional training scheduled for March.

- ◆ Workshops have been initiated in all middle schools

NURSE - FAMILY PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

A proven program to enhance parent-child attachment and parent skills for young at-risk mothers, the Nurse - Family Partnership Program (NFPP)

reduces the chances of child abuse and neglect, increases the likelihood of families' self-sufficiency, and lowers the rates of subsequent substance abuse and criminal behavior by parent and child alike. The program involves home visits beginning during pregnancy and continuing up to the child's second birthday. These visits are conducted by a registered nurse (RN), under the auspices of the Cayuga County Department of Health and Human Services.

- ◆ A program coordinator and two registered nurses with extensive experiences in pre- and post-natal care have been recruited and hired.
- ◆ NFPP requires extensive training. Program staff attended an initial 5-day training program at the University of Colorado. Program staff have also completed six days of training in the Nursing Child Assessment Satellite Training (NCAST) System, an observational tool that explores the mother-infant relationship.
- ◆ 11 expectant mothers are currently enrolled in the program and receiving services; 1 more is scheduled for admission in March.

MOBILE OUTREACH SERVICE TEAM (MOST)

The MOST Team is comprised of clinicians trained to assess mental health and substance abuse problems and to provide school-based preventive and interventive treatment and follow-up services for students.

- ◆ Four counselors experienced in mental health and substance abuse prevention and intervention services have been recruited and hired to work across all the schools in the Partnership.
- ◆ Coordination and cross-training with school resource officers has occurred; additional training is scheduled.
- ◆ 84 referrals have been made to MOST through February, 2001; 52 are currently receiving services from a Team clinician; over 10 have been referred for case coordination due to complexity of needs.
- ◆ Weekly case review of students and services is underway.
- ◆ A comprehensive student database—the Children At-Risk Interagency system (CHARI)—is being developed by the Partnership to log an extensive array of data on each youth identified for prevention/intervention services. This tool will help provide Partnership staff with the needed information to carefully coordinate individual student programs and services and to chart progress over time. Other organizations and SS/HS Partnerships from around the country have expressed interest in learning about this software.



program for children aged 18 and under who are at risk of placement in a youth detention facility or jail. A team of mental health professionals and caseworkers work with the identified youth and their families toward the goal of reintegration into pro-social settings at school, home and the community. The Partnership funds this program, which was implemented in the summer of 2000 by the Cayuga County Family Court, the Auburn City Court, Cayuga County Department of Health and Human Services, the Cayuga County Community Mental Health Center, and Partnership staff.

- ◆ Two case managers and 3 therapists with experience in the Cayuga County court system and/or youth at-risk service delivery, respectively, were selected to staff the program.
- ◆ Training on the criminal justice process and on the computer-based data collection system has occurred; in addition, weekly clinical supervision focused on individual cases has been initiated.
- ◆ Currently, the program is enrolled at maximum capacity (15 youths), with referrals coming from both the Cayuga County Family Court and Auburn City Court.

FUNCTIONAL FAMILY THERAPY

This validated, strength-based program is designed to improve problem-solving skills for families with school-age children. This in-home program decreases at-risk behaviors and bolsters mental health for both students and parents.

- ◆ The Cayuga Home for Children has been engaged to deliver this program to targeted families and youth.
- ◆ One full- and two part-time therapists were

INTENSIVE SUPERVISION/CONDITIONAL DISCHARGE

The Intensive Supervision/Conditional Discharge program is a community-based rehabilitation

trained during a three-week session on this innovative program; additional training is provided by the model developer vis-à-vis supervised visits to observe the sessions and provide feedback.

- ◆ The program is currently at a maximum enrollment of 18 families, with 7 cases on a waiting list.

MULTI-SYSTEMIC FOSTER CARE

Multi-systemic Intensive Foster Care is an enhanced foster care program for pre-adolescent children at risk of being placed in residential settings. The program has been shown to be therapeutically effective and to reduce juvenile delinquency. This model of foster care involves specialized training and support services for selected foster care families. The program is being implemented by the Cayuga County Department of Health and Human Services, in conjunction with the Safe Schools Partnership.

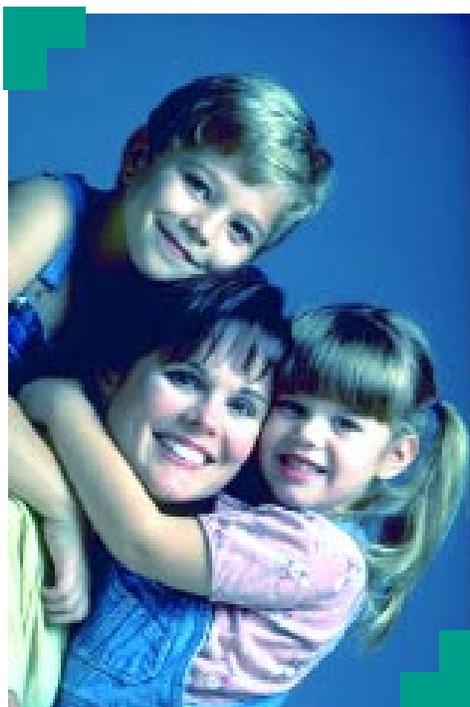
- ◆ An experienced social worker was recruited and hired to conduct this innovative program.
- ◆ Training in therapeutic foster care and multi-risk assessment has been provided.
- ◆ A maximum case load of 11 youngsters has been reached, and services are being delivered within the context of the foster and biological families.

FAMILY GROUP CONFERENCE

Family Group Conferencing is an intervention designed to support and guide families, including extended family members, to provide their own resolutions when there is a risk of foster care placement. The model focuses on a family's strengths,

resources, culture and relationships to encourage family members to assume more responsibility in providing care and protection for their children.

- ◆ A program coordinator and case workers of the Cayuga County Department of Health and Human Services have been engaged to conduct this program.
- ◆ Initial training in Family Group Counseling and weekly clinical supervision has been offered.



IN SUMMARY...

Overall, this early assessment of core program implementation within the Cayuga County Safe Schools/Healthy Students Partnership is extremely positive. It suggests that the large majority of selected research-based programs have been deployed in a sensible, deliberate fashion: qualified staff hired, training provided, program activities initiated, and targeted youth and families engaged. These are non-trivial accomplishments that have

occurred in less than one year since Partnership start-up. While these programs and services will confront on-going challenges to their operation and effectiveness, the progress they have made thus far should prove critical to the overall success of the Safe Schools/Healthy Students Initiative.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION...

about the independent evaluation of the Cayuga County Safe Schools, Healthy Students Partnership please contact
Dr. Thomas Kelsh at
(518) 427-9840.



“The Safe Schools/Healthy Students project is an important initiative in comprehensive programming. We look forward to supporting the program and reaping its benefits.”

— Ralph Standbrook, Chairman,
Cayuga County Legislature

“We spend a great deal of our time with the students serving as a mentor and helping them develop effective problem solving skills that they can apply in day-to-day situations.”

—School Resource Officers

“The OASIS program is flexible. This flexibility allows teachers to integrate other skill sets that are important when identifying and meeting the needs of the students. Families are grateful for the additional assistance provided to their children through our program.”

— Martha Harris, OASIS Teacher

“The Nurse Home Visitation Program uses many resources to assist parents develop necessary parenting skills. We have had great success using a comprehensive tool that assesses mother and baby interaction. We have the opportunity to assess the parent and child during their interaction, determine the effectiveness of the parenting skills and provide guidance to the parent.”

—Joan Knight, Nurse Family Partnership Program



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