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NYS OMH Funds Public/Private Effort to Link Pediatricians, Primary Care MDs with Child Psychiatrists, Child Mental Health Experts

To support the critical role that pediatricians and primary care physicians play in the early identification and access to treatment for emotional disturbances in children, the New York State Office of Mental Health (OMH) is funding a collaborative effort of State and County governments with medical providers designed to link pediatricians and primary care physicians with child mental health experts across New York State.

Project TEACH (Training and Education for the Advancement of Children's Health) will provide specialized training, consultation and linkage with mental health treatment for primary care physicians statewide. It is a collaboration of OMH with the Department of Health (DOH), Conference of Local Mental Hygiene Directors, American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and the New York State Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP).

OMH Commissioner Mike Hogan, Ph.D. said, "Pediatricians and family physicians are the 'go-to' professionals for children's health problems, and mental health issues are often a top concern. Project TEACH will support doctors, improve care, and help children succeed at home and in school."

"Project TEACH encourages mental health treatment of youth in the primary care setting by facilitating consultation and training to primary care providers," said Stewart Gabel, M.D., Medical Director for OMH's Division of Children and Families Services. "This model of care envisions expanded and collaborative roles for both child and adolescent psychiatrists and primary care providers."

Under Project TEACH, consultative support - primarily related to diagnostic and psychopharmacologic concerns - will occur mainly by telephone, but in some cases through telemedicine and in-person. When more than an initial intervention is needed, referral and linkage will assist families and primary care providers to access community mental health and support services such as clinic treatment, case management or family support. Educational-based trainings for physicians who provide primary care to children will also be held regularly on a variety of topics related to children's social and emotional development.

"Linking pediatricians with psychiatric consultation and mental health treatment in the community is a significant step to providing access to screening and treatment to children and adolescents," said Philip R. Endress, LCSW, ACSW, Erie County Commissioner of Mental Health and Chairman of the New York State Conference of Local Mental Hygiene Directors.



“This OMH initiative is especially good news for children and families in those parts of the state where the shortage of child psychiatrists is most severe.”

“The American Academy of Pediatrics, NYS is delighted to be working with the State Office of Mental Health and our academic and service partners across New York to design and implement a children's mental health training and psychiatric services support program to help primary care pediatricians meet some of the mental health needs of their patients,” said Henry Schaeffer, MD, FAAP, District Chair. “Our members look forward to playing a central role in delivering appropriate levels of mental health services in the pediatric office setting to thousands of children who so desperately need these services.”

“We are very enthusiastic about working with our university and service partners across the state to help meet the needs of thousands of children with mental health challenges”, said Danielle Laraque, MD, FAAP, Vice Chair. “Many of us have been working on small local projects for several years. The opportunity to take our work to a larger scale is very exciting. We believe that working together with our state, academic and psychiatric partners we can -and will - significantly improve access to quality mental health services for thousands of New York children.”

Project TEACH services will be available statewide, provided by the University Psychiatric Practice (UPP) and Four Winds Foundation. The UPP, under the University of Buffalo, represents an innovative and unprecedented partnership of academic medical centers from around the state to support this initiative: the psychiatry departments from the University of Buffalo, University of Rochester, Columbia University, SUNY Upstate Medical University in Syracuse and LIJ/North Shore University Health System, in conjunction with the Resource of Advancing Children's Health (REACH) Institute, will support the training component. Consultation and training will be based out of these academic centers and available to physicians in their respective geographic regions.

Drawing from their knowledge and experience providing the Child & Adolescent Psychiatry Education and Support (C.A.P.E.S.) program, the Four Winds Foundation will continue to provide consultation and educational support for primary care clinicians to the Northeastern and Upper Hudson River Region of the state, based out of their Saratoga campus.

Project TEACH will begin to work with their partners in April 2010. For more information about the program, contact Joseph Rosczak, OMH Telepsychiatry Coordinator, at (518) 402-4774.

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