



of Somerset County

Eric Harris

Executive Director

The requests for services for clinical services for lower income at risk youth (and their families) has increased greatly in the past two year here at Family and Community Services of Somerset County. Many of these youth have experienced abuse and/or neglect or have witnessed violence in their home. The stressors on families and children have increased a great deal in the past few years. Many of these children are suffering from major anxiety, depression, or other emotional difficulties as well as behavioral difficulties. Requests for services have increased while paradoxically traditional funding has decreased leading to longer waiting lists.

The Children's Hope Initiative, a Committee of Friends of Somerset County, has provided F@CS with a \$4,000 grant in 2016 to help increase the level of services to lower income youth who have been traumatized by abuse or parental neglect or by witnessing domestic violence. This funding has been targeted towards this vulnerable population by increasing the hours of our part-time clinician who works specifically with children and adolescents by two hours per week and also by increasing the hours of our advanced practice psychiatric nurse by two hours per month. This has led to a decrease in our waiting period for counseling services from an average of 5 weeks (2 to 8 weeks) to an average of 3 weeks (1 to 5 weeks). Children and families experiencing emergency needs are often prioritized and seen as soon as possible. In addition the waiting period for our clients who need supplemental services from our child psychiatric nurse practitioner has decreased from a minimum of 6 weeks to usually 4 weeks.

The importance of the funding for these services is depicted by these 2 examples of successes:

- AK is a 17 year old female (past history of witnessing domestic violence) who was suffering from anxiety and major depression which hampered her general functioning and more specifically in school. Her grades were dropping very significantly and at times she had difficulty going to school. She has been involved in treatment including weekly sessions with the abovementioned clinician and appointments with our nurse practitioner who has been prescribing antidepressant medication. AK's symptoms have decreased greatly and she has been doing very well in school again.
- GT is a 11 year old male who experienced some abuse and was displaying serious behavioral and academic problems in school. He (and his parents) were seen by the abovementioned clinician to educate the parents regarding alternative parenting methods (abuse was accepted in their culture), address with GT self-esteem and behavioral issues. GT was also referred to our psychiatric nurse practitioner and was diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and prescribed appropriate medication which was needed to supplement therapy. There has been much improvement in his school performance and as well as with the family relationships.

Without the funding from CHI, these clients would have had to wait longer, and similar to other clients on our waiting list, decided not to follow through with services. We at Family and Community Services of Somerset County are so appreciative of the tremendous efforts of the caring and dedicated volunteers of the Children's Hope Initiative and the funding that they provide to benefit this vulnerable population.

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in good hands

