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**School-Based Mental Health Clinics continued**

The goal of the clinics is to provide high-quality, affordable and accessible outpatient mental health services in school settings. Said Fraser, "If we can promote timely and appropriate evaluation and treatment, we can reduce the effects of mental illness, including anti-social behavior, family breakdown, classroom outbursts, severe dysfunction of children and adolescents and, especially, the need for inpatient mental health care." Additional benefits of an in-house program include direct communication and coordination with school staff that can result in improved behavior and educational outcomes for students, and the opportunity to provide mental health in-service education for school staff.

The clinics will be staffed by Family & Children's employees. Initially, services will be offered 20 hours a week, Tuesday through Thursday, with hours increasing along with referrals. The full-time therapist at each location – with LMSW, LCSW, LMHC, LMFT and LCAT licensure – offers assessments and therapy. Students can be referred to the program by school guidance counselors, school social workers or parents.

A similar partnership with the Binghamton City School District is in process – stay tuned for more information.



**Let us help you or a member of your family.**

We provide expertise in the following areas, and most services are covered and paid for by insurance, Medicare or Medicaid. The Family & Children's Society offers:

- Elder Counseling
- Family Homes for the Elderly
- Family Mental Health Clinic
- Home Care – Home Care Aide Service, Health Homes, Vocational Incentives
- Nursing Home Transition & Diversion Waiver Program

- OASIS After-School Program
- School-Based Programs
- Sexual Abuse Treatment

**Staff Recognized for Years of Service**

Thank you and congratulations to Family & Children's Society staff members celebrating milestone years of service! These individuals were honored at a September 12 event at the Holiday Inn Arena in Binghamton. The celebration included a full breakfast with eggs, sausage, bagels and more. Said Executive Assistant Diane Kubik, "We've hosted this event each September for many years, but this is the first time we're doing so outside the office – we've outgrown the training room space we used to utilize for the breakfast."



CFO Don Waddell presented Accounting Supervisor Ann O'Neil with her 25-year award.

CEO Lisa Hoeschele offered a welcome and introductions, and program directors introduced their honorees. Each person received a Family & Children's Society logo pin indicating his or her years of service, as well as a check from the Sunshine Club. Congratulations to:

**25 years**  
**Beth Andreessen**, Home Health Aide  
**Kay Keltos**, Home Health Aide  
**Ann O'Neil**, Accounting Supervisor



Home Health Aide Beth Andreessen (left) received her award from Assistant to the Home Care Director Penny Donato.

**20 years**  
**Penny Donato**, Assistant to the Home Care Director  
**Diane Kubik**, Executive Assistant

**15 years**  
**Mark Cantales**, Sexual Abuse Treatment Program Clinical Social Worker  
**Vickie Kelly**, Home Health Aide

**10 years**  
**Karen Calisher**, Health Homes Program Manager

**5 years**  
**Wendy Dunham, RN**, Home Health  
**Don Waddell**, CFO



Home Health Aide Kay Keltos was also recognized for 25 years of service.

**School-Based Mental Health Clinics Open in Two Districts**

This fall, Family & Children's Society is pleased to debut school-based mental health clinics in the Windsor and Johnson City School districts. Individual, group and family counseling will be available to students at all grade levels in both districts. Staff and office space are located in Windsor's high school and in Johnson City's K-8 building. Family & Children's applied for a license from the New York State Office of Mental Health to operate a satellite mental health clinic in these school settings.

Said Mental Health Clinic Director Cara Fraser, "Staff in these districts approached us about establishing services on-site. Especially in a rural district like Windsor, transportation can be a barrier to accessing mental health services on a consistent basis. Representatives of the Broome County Promise Zone – a collaboration among Binghamton University, Broome-Tioga BOCES and the Broome County Department of Mental Health, geared to supporting the county's public schools – were helpful in facilitating initial discussions between the Windsor district and Family & Children's."

Despite being a more urban district, many Johnson City families also struggle with transportation concerns due to the campus' location on top of Carpathian Hill. Upon learning about Family & Children's plan to expand mental health services within school districts, Johnson City administrative leaders requested a meeting to discuss details and be included.

turn to us!

## Spotlight on Family and Children's Society's Compliance Program

THE PURPOSE OF AN ACTIVE COMPLIANCE PROGRAM IS TO PREVENT, DETECT AND REPORT FRAUDULENT ACTIVITY AS IT PERTAINS TO BILLING SERVICES TO FEDERALLY-FUNDED PROGRAMS.

Over the past year, Family & Children's Society has worked to enhance and improve its internal compliance program. As an entity covered by the federal Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), concerns related to client privacy are also managed by the compliance program. Read on to learn how the program works to protect clients, staff and the organization.

### At a Glance:

- Staff: Judy Olson, RN (Home Care Division), and Karen Vredenburgh (Mental Health Clinic) with Paula Currie, RN, CHC, Compliance Officer for Family & Children's Society's partner organization Family Counseling Services of Cortland County, Inc., serving as compliance consultant.
- Contact options: Toll-free compliance hotline at 1-844-299-1089, anonymous drop-boxes (common hallway in the Johnson City office, mailroom at the Binghamton office and kitchen at the Owego office), or by email at [jolson@familycs.org](mailto:jolson@familycs.org), [kvredenburgh@familycs.org](mailto:kvredenburgh@familycs.org), [pcurrie@fscortland.org](mailto:pcurrie@fscortland.org) or [compliance@familycs.org](mailto:compliance@familycs.org).

As an organization that bills Medicaid/Medicare more than \$500,000 per year, Family & Children's Society is required by the New York State Department of Health to have an active compliance program in place. Quality compliance programs must contain certain elements, such as Board and CEO oversight, a compliance officer/staff, policies and procedures, training, monitoring of in-house procedures and formal methods for reporting of compliance concerns. Many of the program's components were already in place; the main changes were updating required policies and procedures, developing and completing training for new and existing employees, promoting reporting and participating in ongoing monitoring of billing, documentation credentialing and other requirements. Copies of required policies, procedures and other materials required by law have been provided to staff.

The recent partnership with Family Counseling Services of Cortland County, Inc. (FCS Cortland)

enabled Family & Children's to tap the expertise of FCS Cortland's Compliance Officer Paula Currie, RN, CHC, as a consultant to the program. Currie passed a comprehensive exam and was awarded health care compliance officer certification by the Health Care Compliance Association following attendance at the Association's basic compliance academy in November 2015.

According to Olson, the most significant changes have been making the program easier to navigate and comprehend. She said, "Our goal is for staff to understand the importance and purpose of the compliance program: Preventing, detecting and reporting fraudulent activity related to billing, as well as protecting client privacy. Staff should feel safe from retribution if they report a concern. A compliance program is only effective if staff are willing to support it."

Said Vredenburgh, "We want clients and the public to know that Family & Children's has an effective compliance program that sets a standard for expectations of reporting, and that staff, Board members and volunteers understand and promote the importance of compliance."

To report a concern, the following options are available: the toll-free compliance hotline at 1-844-299-1089, using the anonymous drop-boxes (in the common hallway in the Johnson City office, the mailroom at the Binghamton office and the kitchen at the Owego office), or by emailing [jolson@familycs.org](mailto:jolson@familycs.org), [kvredenburgh@familycs.org](mailto:kvredenburgh@familycs.org), [pcurrie@fscortland.org](mailto:pcurrie@fscortland.org) or [compliance@familycs.org](mailto:compliance@familycs.org).

Said Currie, "I'm proud to be of assistance to the compliance staff at Family & Children's. They are committed to ensuring everything they need is in place, and that staff, Board members and clients understand compliance is an important part of the agency's operations. Additionally, staff can be assured that reporting a compliance concern is encouraged and expected, and compliance officers are mandated to protect the identity of anyone reporting. It's part of the job, and it's the law."

## Learn More: Q & A with Compliance Consultant Paula Currie

Currie answers some common questions about compliance and an effective compliance program.

*What are the most common types of compliance concerns reported by staff or clients?*

PC: The most common compliance concerns are usually related to Medicaid or Medicare billing. Family & Children's strives for a high level of accuracy in billing and reporting, and the requirement for compliance oversight focuses staff efforts on ensuring accuracy through routine monitoring and auditing of transactions. An issue can arise from a mistake in data entry for billing, such as using an incorrect code, or supporting documentation that is missing, not current or sufficiently detailed.

*How do you protect the identity of individuals reporting compliance concerns?*

PC: In reviewing reports and conducting follow-up investigations, the identity of the reporter cannot be revealed per our internal policy, required by state and federal law.

*What tools/methods do you use to investigate compliance concerns?*

PC: We use interviews and audits of documents to substantiate reports. Compliance officers are also trained in investigative techniques that keep the process professional.

*How do you address/resolve compliance concerns?*

PC: The issue is resolved as an outcome of the investigation. For example, if we receive a report that we were paid for a service to which we are not entitled for payment, the organization self-discloses that and returns the payment with a detailed explanation.

*What if a reported concern is proven to be unfounded? Does the person who reported it get in trouble?*

PC: Absolutely not. Both the federal and New York State False Claims Acts include provisions that protect the reporter. Retaliation in any form is prohibited by law. Part of the compliance officer's role is to monitor for any possible retaliation and address it immediately. People who retaliate against reporters are subject to disciplinary action.

*What else do compliance officers do when not investigating concerns?*

PC: In small agencies such as ours, compliance officers often serve in other departments in administrative/managerial roles.

*Does/can the person who reports a concern get a follow-up report to understand how the concern is being addressed?*

PC: It depends on the type of issue reported. If the concern involves any kind of action toward an employee, that is a confidential human resources situation, and the reporter would not receive a follow-up. However, when possible, the compliance officer makes every effort to inform the original reporter about the investigation and resolution.

*Is there an average number of concerns reported per year?*

PC: Not really. If the compliance program is effective, then the issues should be minimal. However, no reports can mean that the program is not effective as staff may not understand they are expected to report, or do not believe their identities will be protected. Compliance is an ongoing effort to ensure we operate appropriately at all times.

## Family Homes for the Elderly Dinner Celebrates Care Providers

Family & Children's Society's Family Homes for the Elderly program celebrated its care providers during the annual provider appreciation dinner on August 31. Held at McGirk's Irish Pub in Binghamton, more than 30 people attended. Care providers who reached milestone years of service were recognized, including:

**25 years:** Deborah and Ronald Palaschak and Louise Rose

**20 years:** Scott and Carolan Mersereau and Susan Rink

To honor the care providers, several Family & Children's Society staff members attended as well, including CEO Lisa Hoeschele, Executive Assistant Diane Kubik, CFO Don Waddell, Nurse Case Managers Kathy Ballog, Judy Olson and Diane Rossiter, and Board Members Thomas Hoke and John Spencer. Said Rossiter, "This program allows individuals to stay as independent as possible while living in a structured and caring family setting."

The Family Homes for the Elderly program has operated in Broome County for 26 years and offers family-style living in 22 private homes as an alternative to nursing home placement. Care providers also accept younger clients who are mentally or physically disabled. For more information about the program, contact Rossiter at (607) 296-7108 or [drossiter@familycs.org](mailto:drossiter@familycs.org).



Family Homes for the Elderly Supervisor Diane Rossiter (right) presented Sharon Peart with a 25-year recognition, which Peart accepted on behalf of her mother, Louise Rose, who was unable to attend.