

**New Morning Youth and Family Services
Collaborative with Motherlode Union School District
Women's Fund El Dorado
2012 Final report**

In these difficult economic times many families in the Mother Lode Union School District (MLUSD) are caught in a healthcare chasm, where the working poor, often single parent mothers, don't qualify for Medi-Cal or Healthy Families insurance programs and don't have enough income to purchase insurance. El Dorado Women's Fund grant allowed New Morning Youth & Family Services (NMYFS) and MLUSD to provide the students in the District with school based mental health services.

Children can take on the stressful effects of being raised in a low income family with a single working parent. They often earn low grades, have extensive discipline reports, are frequently absent, have a history of traumatic loss and/or abuse, lack adult supervision and many know the devastating consequences of substance abuse among family members. These students and their families quite frequently have no resources to enroll themselves and/or their children in the mental health services they may need. Many who do not have health care will benefit from school-based counseling services.

This grant allowed the district's counseling program to expand its school-based services, increase capacity, while reaching at-risk, non-insured students and their families. Our program goal was to assist families in becoming more stable while working with students to improve behavioral and academic functioning. These services were child centered, included families, and were culturally competent.

Parents increased their skills in communicating effectively, learned to establish and reinforce boundaries, and better understand their child's developmental and emotional needs. Overwhelmed by economic and social difficulties of their own, parents were assisted with case management services to establish links with other service providers who can best meet the needs of their family. Teachers learned to identify early warning signs for at-risk youth. And, lastly, students received the help they need to improve academic performance, decrease problem behaviors while improving peer and teacher relationships.

During this past year, two New Morning therapists provided the following:

At **Herbert Green Middle School**, serving children in 5-8th grades, 14 students seen in three different psych-educational groups which met for 8 sessions. The groups had various focus areas including: feelings identification, expression and processing; grief and loss; impulse management; and assertiveness building. In addition, 12 students provided individual and/or family counseling on a crisis and/or regular basis during the school year. The issues addressed in these sessions included but not limited to: depression, self-harm; suicidal ideation; grief; anxiety; coping with parental divorce; incarceration, alcohol/drug addiction and/or mental health issues; history of child abuse and/or domestic violence; isolation and/or peer rejection; bullying; disruption in attachment; relationship conflicts. In response to the suicide of an 8th grader, this counseling grant also helped support crisis counseling for many students.

Approximately 95% of the students and their families receiving services are interested in continuing counseling next school year.

At **Indian Creek Elementary School**, serving children in grades K-4th, the therapist saw approximately 20 children during the school year. She provided individual, family and group counseling for these children.

The main issues these children struggled with included school behavior problems that lead to classroom disruptions, detentions, suspensions and ultimately created barriers to learning. At least 25% of her caseload was comprised of children adjusting to living with extended family members because their parents were unable to care them safely and the remainder were primarily living in a single parent household. Family stressors created anxiety in these children making learning very difficult.

Success Story

The therapist at Indian Creek worked with 3 siblings, ranging in age from 5-11 years old, living with their great aunt due to their father being in prison and their mother in inpatient treatment for alcohol and/or drug rehabilitation. The therapist provided individual and family therapy to these children to help them adjust to their living situation. The children were all having various responses to a history of neglect and dramatic changes in their lives with the youngest throwing multiple aggressive tantrums each day, the middle child with many worries and anxieties around having enough money for food, bills, where to sleep and the oldest with depressive symptoms and failing grades. At the end of the school year all blossomed in their new household, were performing well academically and reported reduced fears, worries and tantrums. The great aunt reported that they are all learning to act like kids again.