

NYU CHILD STUDY CENTER

CHANGING THE FACE OF CHILD MENTAL HEALTH

FEBRUARY 2007

This monthly newsletter provides parenting and mental health information, as well as upcoming events and programs by the NYU Child Study Center.

ASK THE EXPERT: SUMMER CAMP FOR SPECIAL NEEDS KIDS

Karen Fleiss, Psy.D., Assistant Professor of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Clinical Director of the NYU Child Study Center Long Island Campus, and Co-Director of the Summer Program for Kids

Q: What are some things parents should consider when choosing a camp for their special needs child?

A: If you have a child with special needs it is very important to consider the suitability of the camp to the needs of your child. After all, summer camp should be a fun and memorable experience for children. For example, although many camps advertise that they accept children with ADHD or Asperger Syndrome, they do not necessarily have the staff to camper ratio that is needed for these children to have a successful experience. An effective ratio for a special needs population is at least 1: 2.

It is important to find out how knowledgeable the camp is about the particular problem or difficulty your child has, how much information is imparted to the staff, and what the staff training is like. Ask how specific situations are handled. For example, if your child tends to stay on the periphery of a group situation, how will the staff encourage your child to become involved and participate in group activities? Some children with special needs are not athletic and shy away from sport activities. Try to select a camp program that offers most of the activities that your child enjoys. If your child does best with structure, you might want to consider a program that has a pre-set schedule, rather than daily options for your child. This latter format could be overwhelming for your child because it requires a level of flexibility and independence that your child may not yet be able to navigate.

Q: How do I know which summer camp is right for my child?

A: Obtain as much information about the program as you can, including the population it serves, the staff to child ratio, and how long it has been in operation. In addition to doing the basic research, visit the camp while it is in session and meet with the director personally to speak about your child and his/her issues in order to feel comfortable with your choice. Although children are unique and have varying needs, speaking to the parent of a

child who attended the camp can be extremely helpful in determining if the program is a good fit for your child.

Q: What is the importance of the counselor to camper ratio?

A: Counselors can play a key role in helping your child have a positive and enjoyable summer experience. A high counselor to camper ratio can be beneficial in a number of ways—the children will have more of the attention they need, peer issues that arise can potentially be addressed more easily and quickly, and having more counselors creates a better opportunity for your child to establish a connection with one, which can be a wonderful influence.

Q: Are there additional considerations I should keep in mind?

A: If your child takes medication it is important to ask how the camp administers medication. If you anticipate changes in medication while your child is attending the program, feedback from the program staff could be helpful to the doctor to determine the effectiveness of the medication and if any side effects are observed. Asking the director if and how feedback regarding the medication could be obtained would prove quite useful.

Q: Does the Child Study Center offer a camp program for children with special needs?

A: The NYU Summer Program for Kids is the first summer program in the New York metropolitan area designed to make summer a fun, productive, and successful experience for children with ADHD. It is an eight-week, all-day therapeutic clinical program based on research effectiveness. Daily activities include team sports, skills drills, an art center, and academic and computer work. The program has an outstanding staff-to-child ratio, with one staff member for every 1.5 children. Counselors are senior-level undergraduate students as well as graduate students, who receive specialized training in behavior modification, social skills training, and classroom management. Areas of focus include building self-esteem, developing social skills, improving academic performance and classroom behavior, and practicing athletic skills. Parents are also taught specialized parenting skills to enhance parent-child relations. For more information, call Dr. Karen Fleiss at (516) 355-7601.



In addition to our clinical services for children and adolescents, the NYU Child Study Center offers a variety of programs and services for parents, educators, and mental health professionals:

- **Separation and Divorce Support Group**
The NYU Child Study Center's Family Divorce Support Service is offering a Separation and Divorce Support Group for parents, which will begin February 27th and will meet on Tuesdays from 12:00-1:30 pm. The cost for the series of six sessions is \$300. For more information, please call Rebecca Dell'Aglio at (212) 263-8720.
- **Help for Shy or Socially Anxious Teens**
The NYU Child Study Center is offering a state-of-the-art treatment program for teenagers who experience social anxiety. For more information, contact Dr. Ali DeGeorge at (212) 263-2755.

Current Treatment Studies:

- **BMS Abilify Study**
Does your child have repetitive movements such as eye blinking, neck rolling, or shoulder shrugging? Does your child make repetitive sounds such as throat clearing, coughing, or sniffing? If so, your child may be eligible for a new treatment study. The NYU Child Study Center is currently evaluating children and adolescents ages 7-18 with tic disorders or Tourette's Disorder to determine if they qualify to participate in the study and receive specialized, professional care at no cost. For more information, contact Natalie Wieland at (212) 263-8992.
- **Parent Training Study**
The NYU Child Study Center is currently recruiting parents of children ages 3-8 to participate in a 10-week research study that is examining the effectiveness of parenting classes. The parenting group will meet once a week for two hours. For more information, contact Dr. Camilo Ortiz at (516) 299-3754.
- **Anxiety and Decision-Making Study**
Does your child worry too much? Free anxiety evaluations are available for kids ages 8-17 as part of a study of children and adolescents who worry. Compensation is provided. For more information, contact Kristin Gotimer at (212) 263-0661.

Events Calendar

NYU CSC Grand Rounds

*Administrative Grand Rounds and Clinical Presentation –
"Sorry Ma, I Forgot What You Just Taught Me!"
Memory and Its Impact on Adjustment and Achievement*

When: Friday, February 2

Where: Auditorium Alumni A, NYU Medical Center
550 First Avenue
Time: 11:00 – 12:15 pm
Cost: Free

Sunny and Abe Rosenberg Lecture Series

"Stop Teasing Me": Anti-Bullying Programs that Work

When: Wednesday, February 7

Where: The Brearley School
610 East 83rd St. (Between East End Ave. & the East River)
Time: 4:15 pm – 6:30 pm
Cost: Free
Register at www.AboutOurKids.org/rsvp or e-mail
nyuschoolpartnership@med.nyu.edu.

NYU CSC Grand Rounds

Toxins in Early Childhood: Lead, Tobacco, and Maternal Depression

When: Friday, February 9

Where: Auditorium Alumni A, NYU Medical Center
550 First Avenue
Time: 11:00 – 12:15 pm
Cost: Free

Sunny and Abe Rosenberg Lecture Series

Understanding Psychiatric Medications for Children and Adolescents

When: Wednesday, March 14

Where: The Dalton School
108 East 89th Street (Between Park & Lexington Avenues)
Time: 4:15 pm – 6:30 pm
Cost: Free
Register at www.AboutOurKids.org/rsvp or e-mail
nyuschoolpartnership@med.nyu.edu.