



PRESS RELEASE

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NYU Child Study Center Receives \$300,000 Grant from Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to Bring School-Connected Mental Health Services to Children in Need, with Emphasis on Afro-Caribbean Immigrant Families

March 1, 2007 – New York City – The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) today announced that the New York University Child Study Center has been selected to participate in a new national program to reduce emotional and behavioral health problems among local children in need, particularly those from low-income immigrant and refugee families. The new program, *Caring Across Communities: Addressing Mental Health Needs of Diverse Children and Youth*, will award NYU up to \$300,000 to provide mental health services to 1,500 first-grade students at five public schools in Brooklyn over the next three years.

In Brooklyn, the new *Caring Across Communities* project will focus on providing services for the large and growing Afro-Caribbean immigrant community of families from Jamaica, Trinidad, Tobago, Haiti, Grenada, and St. Lucia. The project is one of 15 selected by RWJF for the program from a nationwide pool of applicants.

The new project will use a culturally informed approach to providing evidence-based mental health services, ranging from universal prevention and screening to individualized treatment.

The NYU Child Study Center will partner with five community organizations, including High Times Christian Fellowship, Full Effect Gospel Ministries, Family Life Development Center, Crown Heights Service Center, Inc, and St. Mary's Community Services, Inc., to offer the project in five public elementary schools – PS 66, 114, 135, 167, and MS 394 in Region 6 of Brooklyn. Approximately 40 school staff from these schools will receive training in child mental health, evidence-based mental health treatment for children, cultural competence, and ethnic socialization in school settings.

“We know that immigrant families have specific beliefs and customs that are associated with positive mental health,” said Esther Calzada, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry at the NYU Child Study Center and the principal investigator of the project. “We want to build on those strengths while at the same time addressing the challenges that immigrant families face in raising children in the U.S.”

Recognition of the substantial mental health burdens borne by children is growing. An estimated 21 percent of U.S. children show symptoms of a psychiatric disorder during

the course of a year. Poverty increases the likelihood of certain mental health problems.

"This project is part of a new movement to help children get the mental health services they need," said *Caring Across Communities* National Program Office Director Julia Graham Lear, Ph.D. "The aim here is to make a positive difference in these children's lives."

Although emphasis will be placed on addressing the mental health needs of immigrant and refugee children, services provided through this and other *Caring Across Communities* projects will be available to all children at a given school.

Children from immigrant and refugee families often face economic, social, and personal hardships – poverty, separation from family members, and challenges of cultural adaptation – that may affect their mental health and overall well-being, but they are less likely than other children to get the services they need.

"These are special populations of children with mental health needs that are both unique and substantial," said Wendy Yallowitz, program officer at RWJF. "*Caring Across Communities* will help these children make a healthy transition to life in the United States."

More than 30 million immigrants and refugees live in the U.S. In 2002, children of immigrants totaled 13.5 million – representing more than 26 percent of low-income children under age 18 in this country.

For more information about the project, contact Kari Root at (212) 263-2479 or kari.root@med.nyu.edu.

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation focuses on the pressing health and health care issues facing our country. As the nation's largest philanthropy devoted exclusively to improving the health and health care of all Americans, the Foundation works with diverse groups of organizations and individuals to identify solutions and achieve comprehensive, meaningful and timely change. For more than 30 years, the Foundation has brought experience, commitment and a rigorous, balanced approach to the problems that affect the health and health care of those it serves. When it comes to helping Americans lead healthier lives and get the care they need, the Foundation expects to make a difference in your lifetime.

The NYU Child Study Center is dedicated to the understanding, prevention and treatment of child and adolescent mental health problems. The Center offers expert psychiatric services for children and families with emphasis on early diagnosis and intervention. The Center's mission is to bridge the gap between science and practice, integrating the finest research with patient care and state-of-the-art training utilizing the resources of the New York University School of Medicine. The NYU Child Study Center offers a variety of mental health services for children, adolescents, young adults and their families. Child and Family Associates is the clinical arm of the NYU Child Study Center and the point of entry for all clinical programs. The goal of the Child Study

Center is to bring together the most research-supported evaluations and treatments with an individualized and family centered approach. The Child Study Center was founded in 1997 and established as the Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry with the NYU School of Medicine in 2006. For more information, please visit www.aboutourkids.org.

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