



# NEWS

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### Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services Office of Drug and Alcohol and Mental Health Receive Federal Grant to Prevent School Violence

**Norristown, PA (Nov. 30, 2018)** – School violence is a serious, preventable public health issue. Exposure to school violence can lead to a wide array of negative health behaviors and outcomes, including alcohol and drug use, anxiety, depression, and suicide. The Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) believes in a comprehensive and public health driven approach to school violence and was awarded the BJA STOP School Violence Prevention and Mental Health Training Program.

This three year grant for approximately \$500,000 has four main strategies. Through this funding stream, HHS will 1) utilize a sustainable approach by training teachers to provide national model violence prevention programs to students K-12, 2) train teachers in management techniques aimed to teach prosocial behaviors and prevent aggressive behaviors in students, 3) train school personnel to recognize the different levels of crisis and strengthen the school team’s role in understanding and responding to students experiencing a crisis before engaging outside supports, and 4) utilize the County network of resources to promote the anonymous reporting system, *Say Something*.

In the near future, HHS will be seeking school partners to join their three year journey in an effort to reduce school violence and continue to foster a positive and supportive learning environment where all children feel safe at school. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), “universal school-based violence prevention programs provide students and school staff with information about violence, change how youth think and feel about violence, and enhance interpersonal and emotional skills such as communication and problem-solving, empathy, and conflict management.” All of Montgomery County’s twenty two school districts will be invited to take advantage of training for their teaching staff to deliver national model programs.

“The Office of Drug and Alcohol has been seeking a sustainable approach to programming offered through our school districts and the BJA grant is just that,” says Kay McGowan, Administrator for the Office of Drug and

Alcohol. “Our approach combines mental wellness, drug and alcohol prevention, and school violence prevention and we are pleased to be able to offer these additional resources to our school districts.”

“One of our strategies offered through the grant is a trauma-informed crisis management and intervention training program that encourages the role of the family in crisis prevention and offers teams the tools they need to enhance the care and support given to youth and families,” notes Pam Howard, Administrator for the Office of Mental Health/Developmental Disabilities/Early Intervention.

School District Superintendents should expect to receive information from HHS in the near future. All questions should be directed to Katie Kucz, [kkucz@montcopa.org](mailto:kkucz@montcopa.org).

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