

NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER 2010

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

10/15/10 - School Site Coordinator Meeting

10/28/10 - Core Management Team Meeting

10/29/10 - Emergency Operations Center Meeting

EL RANCHO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT SAFE SCHOOLS/HEALTHY STUDENTS GRANT INITIATIVE

DISTRICT MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAMS GET A BOOST

Thanks to the recently awarded Safe Schools/Healthy Students Grant Initiative, school-based mental health programs will be expanded for the students of the El Rancho Unified School District. This is great news for our children, parents, teachers and administrators because area mental health professionals will be providing on-site services to our District schools and these expanded services include Pre-K through High School in collaboration with ALMA Family Services and Penny Lane Centers.



School-based mental health programs are essential tools for keeping our students emotionally healthy and physically safe. Without these safeguards, many at-risk kids can miss opportunities for learning and personal growth.

- School-based programs provide a more private environment in treating emotional and behavioral issues.
- School-based programs mean less time away from the classroom.
- School-based programs provide early intervention in order to minimize long-term problems, often helping relieve symptoms of stress and other emotional disorders.

The bottom line for school-based mental health treatment means students can develop their potential for productivity within the classroom and control negative behavior patterns to enhance their ability to have positive relationships and achieve personal well-being.

What services are offered through an expanded mental health program?

- Identifying behavioral and emotional health needs
- Assessment, interviews and evaluations
- Intervention therapy
- Consultation with parents and teachers
- Support services and community resources
- Parent and teacher training

The SS/HS Grant provides that services will be provided free of charge to those uninsured or underinsured, and assistance for private pay families to access appropriate services. All programs take place during school hours or may include adjusted hours to family schedules.



Having on-site mental health treatment is just one more critical facet of our schools' moving toward creating the best possible environment for all students. The goal of ERUSD is to insure that all students be intellectually stimulated, emotionally nurtured, and socially integrated within their community.



SPOTLIGHT ON...

Maria Huerta

Maria Huerta, under the recently awarded Safe Schools/Healthy Students grant, will serve as the Mental Health Services Liaison within the El Rancho Unified School District. Ms. Huerta has spent over 12 years working in special education, counseling children and providing parenting programs for families. Her career has been based on ensuring students receive appropriate special education services as well as improving mental health practices in District schools. Under the grant, she will continue her fine work of ensuring that students have appropriate services relating to mental health.

In addition to obtaining a B.A. in Psychology and a Masters Degree in Counseling from California State University, Los Angeles, Ms. Huerta is a Licensed Educational Psychologist. All of her training has focused on working with special needs children and their families. No wonder that Ms. Huerta comes into her new position so highly qualified.

Working closely with the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health and providers both private and public, it will fall to Ms. Huerta to ensure that services are well suited and timely. She has been charged with creating a marketing campaign designed to eliminate negative attitudes and stereotypes relating to mental health. At the same time, Ms. Huerta will be establishing a referrals program expected to expand school-community relationships by developing and identifying mental health and counseling needs to staff, students, parents, and the community at large.

Maria Huerta's personal life is filled with outdoor activities, especially running. She enjoys coaching her daughter's Girls Under 12 soccer team, and taking photographs of her son's football, and baseball team activities. Reading is a particular pleasure for Maria who has a great sense of humor. Certainly a requisite for the often-stressful work in special education.

El Rancho Unified School District is indeed fortunate to have someone as capable as Maria Huerta taking on additional tasks required by the Grant Initiative. She will serve on the Core Management Team and Element Working Group to bring her best efforts to bear on the emotional well-being of our students and families.



WE-TIP LINE (ANONYMOUS REPORTING) 800-78-CRIME (27463)