

NEWS



NEWS

MAYOR'S OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS

Monday, January 29, 2007

Mayor Street Launches Citywide Initiative to Improve Children's Social and Emotional Health

PHILADELPHIA COMPACT

**A CITYWIDE COMMITMENT
TO THE HEALTHY SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL
DEVELOPMENT OF ALL PHILADELPHIA'S CHILDREN**

Philadelphia, PA– During a press conference held today at the National Constitution Center, Mayor John F. Street accepted the final report of the Mayor's Blue Ribbon Commission on Children's Behavioral Health (BRC) and unveiled Philadelphia Compact, a \$6 Million publicly and privately funded citywide initiative designed to improve children's social and emotional health – the first such initiative in the Nation.

“As part of our commitment to help children grow into productive adults, we have an obligation to support and promote their social and emotional well-being,” Mayor Street said. “Today we embark on a strategically researched proactive approach to preventing mental health and substance abuse problems, while better serving the children and families already receiving our treatment and services.”

The Philadelphia Compact expands upon the broad base of stakeholders of the BRC and serves as the vehicle for implementing the BRC recommendations. The recommendations are presented as articles of the Philadelphia Compact, which stakeholders and city officials signed during the ceremony.

“By signing this compact today, we agree and commit to advancing the goals and recommendations of the Blue Ribbon Commission,” said Arthur C. Evans, Jr., Ph.D., director of the city's Department of Behavioral Health/Mental Retardation Services and Acting Commissioner of the City's Department of Human Services. “It's a truly historic day when there's broad stakeholder agreement and significant resources dedicated to a new approach for the benefit of children and families.”

The Philadelphia Compact will develop programs and activities to implement the recommendations such as:

- Parents, teachers, coaches, police officers, playground monitors and others who interact with children would get training in child development and how to intervene with children who may be aggressive or withdrawn.
- Children exposed to significant abuse or neglect, violence in the home or in the community and children who have a parent with behavioral health problems or is incarcerated would get behavioral health screenings and supportive interventions to promote social and emotional health.
- Children and families in need of behavioral health services would access treatment in their neighborhood, schools, recreational centers, day care centers or health centers.

The ceremony brought together nearly 200 parents, children, educators, children's advocates, mental health providers, researchers and representatives from City agencies to support The Philadelphia Compact.

“Right now, our regulations and funding streams are based on treating children and youth when they have serious difficulties – after a child is failing, threatening to hurt himself or hurt others – it’s a deficit model,” Dr. Evans said. “We know there are certain factors in a child’s life which make him or her more vulnerable to mental health and substance abuse problems and national studies show that when we help children and families develop healthy social and emotional skills we can avoid many behavioral health problems. This is an effort to do just that.”

Mayor John F. Street created the Mayor’s Blue Ribbon Commission on Children’s Behavioral Health (BRC) in February 2006 to develop a framework and set of recommendations for improving the Philadelphia community’s ability to promote social and emotional wellness for all children.

BRC Co-chairs City Councilwoman Blondell Reynolds Brown and Family Court Judge Kevin Dougherty convened 48 committed and knowledgeable individuals [see attachment], guided by the input and advice of hundreds of Philadelphians participating through three working committees and many public meetings held throughout the community to develop a common agenda and framework for this effort. The BRC’s final report identifies six goals and 22 recommendations for achieving those goals, listed below.

“It’s as simple as listening to a child, showing a child good study habits, or teaching a child how to make friends, express feelings, and cope with stress,” said Councilwoman Brown. “Sometimes it’s one person who sets a child on the right path, but more often it’s children, families and communities working together to make a difference.”

Judge Dougherty noted the excitement on the part of stakeholders involved in the development of the BRC Report and the Philadelphia Compact. He added that the Philadelphia Compact will work to garner the public will for supporting and investing in innovative programs to promote healthy social and emotional development for all children.

“This has been a transparent process where we have tapped into the wisdom of our community to come up with a very innovative approach,” Judge Dougherty said. “Working together with the same transparency going forward, we will accomplish great things for our children and families and communities.”

The following Goals and Recommendations were first published in the January 2007 Final Report of the Mayor’s Blue Ribbon Commission on Children’s Behavioral Health. They remain the focus of the Philadelphia Compact: A Citywide Commitment to the Healthy Social and Emotional Development of all Philadelphia’s Children.

Goal 1: Children’s Social and Emotional Well-Being Is the Responsibility of the Entire Community

1. Advance a framework of resiliency based on the strengths of children and their families throughout the community
2. Support parents and caregivers in their emotional attachment and bonding to children and youth
3. Create community strategies to build public awareness and knowledge of factors that promote social and emotional health and safety
4. Develop strategies to strengthen communities and address environmental factors affecting social and emotional health and safety
5. Ensure that all agencies and organizations commit to promoting the behavioral health of the children they serve

Goal 2: Every Child and Family Served by the Behavioral Health System, or Other Service Systems, Is Valued and Treated With Dignity and Respect

6. Create opportunities in child-serving systems for children and families to have a voice in decision-making regarding planning, service delivery and treatment
7. Deliver services and supports in a way that respects and is responsive to children’s racial, ethnic and cultural backgrounds, sexual orientations and gender identities
8. Create mechanisms for a youth and family peer component to be integrated into all behavioral health care services for children and youth and place peer support in communities with children and families

Goal 3: Prevention, Early Identification, and Early Intervention Activities Help Children and Their Families to Prevent Behavioral Health Problems, or Reduce Their Impact Once They Arise

9. Improve and expand broad-based prevention and health promotion activities to keep all children on the right track
10. Identify and intervene early with children who are vulnerable to behavioral health problems
11. Identify, promptly refer, and secure services for children and youth experiencing behavioral health problems including those in early care and education, school settings, and the child welfare and juvenile justice systems

Goal 4: Children and Families Are Able to Obtain Quality Services When and Where They Need Them

12. Provide children and families with information about all available services
13. Develop better access points to services and support for children and their families
14. Ensure availability of a full array of quality, culturally-competent and community-based services for children and their families
15. Make every effort to move children from distant and residential settings to community-based and home-based settings

Goal 5: Supports and Services for Children and Families Are Effective and Provided by Skilled and Knowledgeable Providers and Staff

16. Create and employ accountability and quality assurance measures to ensure effective services
17. Expand the number of skilled professionals and paraprofessionals serving children and families at all levels of care by developing strategies for recruiting, retaining and rewarding a culturally-competent workforce
18. Upgrade the skills of those working with children by expanding and improving training and education for behavioral health and other staff
19. Boost the effectiveness of services by incorporating culturally-sensitive, developmentally-appropriate and trauma-informed practices

Goal 6: True Collaboration Is Achieved at the Service Level and the System Level

20. Improve coordination and integration across individual, service provider and system levels
21. Develop specific reforms to improve collaboration in schools and between schools and the behavioral health system
22. Increase the integration of behavioral health and physical health services

To learn more about the Philadelphia Compact and how to get involved visit www.philadelphiacompact.org.

###