

12/31/2009

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From: Samantha Segars, MFT, Director of Merced Services  
Sierra Vista Child & Family Services

- 1) **THE ISSUE:** Many children with mental health issues struggle in school and have difficulty accessing services for a variety of reason.
- 2) **THE NEED:** School based mental health services that address children's social emotional development and behavioral issues and that include the family and school system. Many of these children are in environments where it is not possible to access services in the school or community. The number of services schools provide have decreased due to the recession and stricter budgets. The families may not qualify for health insurance or not have insurance that would cover specialty mental health services, or the family has too many stressors that create barriers to receiving needed services, e.g., lack of transportation, poverty, etc.
- 3) **THE PROPOSED SOLUTION:** Sierra Vista has worked with the Merced community through Merced County Office of Education and Merced County Mental Health. These services include Mental Health Consultation and Intervention in the home, school and community. Access to these services are gained by meeting certain criteria, for example qualifying for Special Education, being eligible for full scope Medi-Cal, or being 0-5 years of age. For those children who could benefit from mental health services but do not meet these criterion, problems are most often identified due to difficulty in school. This program would provide the following services for these children:

#### **School-based Mental Health Consultation**

- \* A professional would be hired as a Mental Health Consultant. This person would have experience and training in behavior intervention and general mental health intervention skills. This person would be trained in cultural competency with a focus on Strength-based, solution focused mental health intervention.
- \* Children would be referred by school sites if a child is engaging in behaviors or has social emotional struggles that are non-responsive to existing intervention strategies.
- \* A Mental Health Consultant would assess the child issues in the school and home environment with permission by the legal guardian. The service would be intensive, short-term intervention focusing on offering recommendations to the involved parties regarding intervention and would provide short-term training to the child, their families and school personnel to intervene more effectively.
- \* The Mental Health Consultant would follow up with the school and family to ensure generalization of the skills acquired and long-lasting effects.
- \* Case management would be offered to support access to services in the community if necessary.

- 4) **THE PROJECTED RESULTS:** Children will be more successful in school and have skills to cope with social emotional and behavioral difficulties. Care givers would have the skills to intervene with these children and support continued success.