



Traumatic Loss Coalitions for Youth

A Message from Donna...

Welcome to the new school year. I hope that you were able to enjoy a restful and relaxing summer.

I am very pleased to present our new and improved TLC Newsletter. Our aim is to give you timely information on our many activities throughout the state as well as articles pertinent to school age youth. I would like to thank Dotty Rodrick for her hard work in creating the new look of the newsletter and for her creativity and perseverance in improving the format.

The year is starting off with a very exciting state-wide conference on September 28th and 29th. We are pleased to have Dr. Eliana Gil, a leader in the field of treating traumatized children, as the presenter. This is the first of an annual conference focusing on children and trauma to be presented each fall. This conference is in addition to our annual Suicide Prevention Conference held in the spring. To accommodate interested participants throughout the state, we will again hold both conferences in two locations.

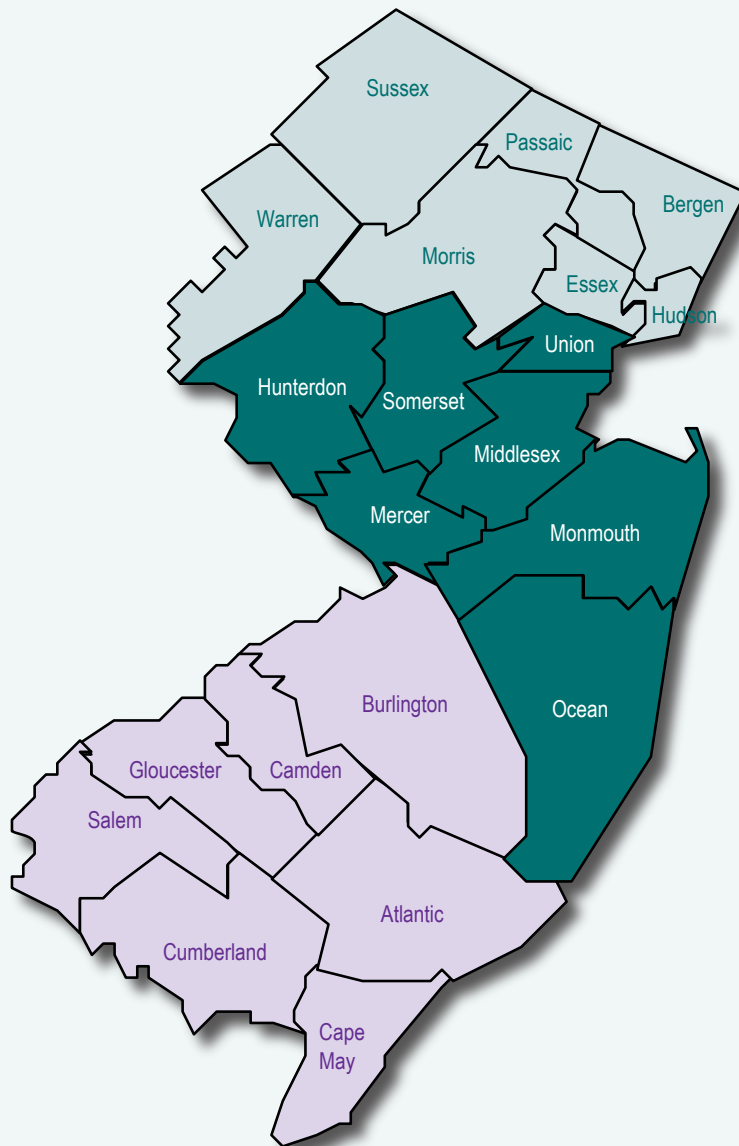
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Newsletter

Fall 2006



Across the State



Northern Region Counties

Central Region Counties

Southern Region Counties

Introducing *TLC* Central

151 Centennial Avenue, Piscataway, NJ 08854 • (732) 235-2810



Donna Amundson, LCSW

Donna Amundson is the program manager for the statewide Traumatic Loss Coalitions for Youth Program. She began her work with the TLC as the Training Coordinator in 2001 and was appointed Program Manager in 2004. Donna has an undergraduate degree in Psychology and a Masters in Social Work (MSW) degree from New York University. She has been a licensed clinical social worker for 24 years working for UMDNJ-University Behavioral HealthCare for 21 of those years as a clinician, and prior to her work with the TLC as a clinician supervisor. She has Basic and Advanced certification in PTSM and CBI from the Center for Trauma Psychology, Boston, Massachusetts; EMDR and Clinical Hypnosis. Donna has presented at several national conferences in the areas of suicide prevention, suicide assessment and working with the seriously mentally ill.

Nancy Baird, MA

Nancy Baird was a media specialist at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey – University Behavioral HealthCare for 16 years. During that time, she filmed the earliest suicide survivor groups in New Jersey and subsequently shared, both professionally and personally, in the efforts towards suicide prevention. In 2000, she joined the Traumatic Loss Coalitions for Youth program (TLC), assisting in the creation of the first county coalitions and their conferences. As part of the TLC's administrative team, Nancy oversees the program's fiscal responsibilities and provides technical and promotional assistance in statewide initiatives to schools, counties, and community organizations.



Dotty Rodrick

After retiring from 24 years of service to the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey, Dotty returned part time to join the Traumatic Loss Coalitions for Youth program. She is the liaison to the 21 County Coordinators for data management; coordinates conferences and workshops and is editor of the TLC Newsletter.

The Traumatic Loss Coalitions for Youth (TLC), a joint initiative of the Behavioral Research and Training Institute at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey-University Behavioral HealthCare and the New Jersey Department of Children and Families, Division of Child Behavioral Health Services, was organized in September 2000. The TLC is dedicated to providing suicide prevention programs as well as a collaborative and coordinated mental health response to global or community crises affecting school age youth. To accomplish our mission, TLC supports countywide coalitions bringing together educators, mental health providers, law enforcement, members of community agencies, faith-based organizations and others working with youth. With a core team of dedicated professionals, TLC is led by Donna Amundson, LCSW, Program Manager, and supported by Resource Coordinators: Nancy Baird, MA, and Dotty Rodrick. Coalitions have been established in New Jersey's 21 counties with a TLC Coordinator leading the initiative.

Suicide Prevention Training for Teachers Assembly Bill 3931

Since Bill 3931 was introduced by former Governor Codey mandating suicide prevention training for teachers, many school districts have called TLC Central to schedule the training. The TLC is one of several providers who are authorized to do this training, and Donna Amundson and a roster of TLC coordinators are already conducting these trainings throughout the state.

Assembly Bill 3931 also calls for a revision of the core curriculum content standards in Comprehensive Health and Physical Education to provide for instruction in suicide prevention for elementary, middle and high school pupils.

Safety and efficacy are two important aspects of youth suicide prevention programs. We urge school administrators to consult the Suicide Prevention Resource Center (SPRC) Registry of Evidenced Based Suicide Prevention Programs and choose a program that meets particular standards of evidence. You can access this registry under Evidenced Based Practices: <http://www.sprc.org>.

Contact TLC Central (732) 235-2810 for additional information.

Hot off the Press

The TLC is very pleased to announce that a grant proposal submitted by a team from Middlesex County spearheaded by Dr. Patrick Piegari, County Superintendent, and Amy Jacob, Middlesex County TLC Coordinator, was awarded. This is an 18 month Emergency Response and Crisis Management Grant provided by the U.S. Department of Education (DOE). It will enable all schools in Middlesex County to update their school crisis plans in order to incorporate the latest research on emergency response and crisis management. The four areas to be focused on are preparedness, mitigation, response and recovery. The Middlesex County TLC was instrumental in identifying the need for this initiative. This project will include a director, an executive task force and the creation of preparedness teams in every school district. It will also include conferences and trainings to address the four phases of crisis management. Middlesex County Vocational School will administer the grant.

The design of this project was a collaborative effort of Lori Dillon; County Mental Health Administrator, Dr. Piegari; and representatives from multiple county agencies working in the area of crisis planning and response. ***Congratulations!***

Coordinator's Column

Patty Weeks and Barry Keefe (*Atlantic County*) oversaw training on the SOS Program; psychological first aid and gang awareness.

Stephanie Mulfinger (*Bergen County*) provided critical incident responses in eight traumatic events in Bergen County.

Elda Goss (*Burlington County*) sponsored NIMS and ICS training for the county's School Response Team.

Barbara Steltz (*Camden County*) brought the following topics to their TLC: Assessing Students at Risk of Violence; Basic Disaster Training, Red Cross; Art and Children: Assessment and Intervention; Sensory Intervention Techniques in Trauma Response and Responding to Youth Suicide, Camden County 2006.

Silvana Gomez (*Hudson County*) brought in speakers on DYFS reform and Cultural Adjustments and Trauma at a Hudson County coalition meeting.

Elaine Howe (*Hunterdon County*) provided presentations on Hate Crimes; Stress and Youth at Risk; Screening Children with Mental Illness and Art and Music Therapy for the Hunterdon County TLC.

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Coordinator's Column

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Elliot Katz (*Monmouth County*) focused their coalition activities on continuation of a three year endeavor to implement suicide prevention training programs and curricula in all Monmouth County high schools.

Nicci Spinazzola (*Somerset County*) introduced the Post Traumatic Stress Management (PTSM) model to the TLC coalition and successfully used the model in various interventions for Somerset County schools.

Michele Iannucci (*Morris County*) provided responses to several youth deaths in Morris County and also spoke at parent meetings arranged by school administrators.

Thank You!

The TLC would like to thank Doug Forrester, president of BENECARD Association, for his generous contribution through the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, NJ Chapter. A percentage of the proceeds from the 9th Annual Golf Outing held at the TPC at Jasna Polana on September 18 benefiting the NJ Chapter of AFSP will be allocated for the production of a Teacher Training DVD and web based suicide awareness program presently being developed by TLC Central.

Prevention Awareness

The Choking Game

A game (that is not really a game at all but a potentially lethal activity) that kids are engaging in is called by several names: "The Choking Game," "Passout," "Blackout," "Space Monkey," "Space Cowboy," "Knockout," "Gasp," "Rising Sun," "Airplaning". The age most commonly involved in this behavior is 9-14, and it is being practiced by both boys and girls. This activity should not be confused with autoerotic asphyxia which is usually engaged in by older adolescents and adults in which there is sexual stimulation as well as the action of stopping blood flow to the brain.

This behavior involves a child or adolescent putting pressure on the neck or chest of a peer until that child passes out. Engaging in this activity achieves a brief high or euphoric state by stopping the flow of oxygen containing blood to the brain. The pressure on the arteries is then released and blood flow to the brain resumes causing a "rush" as consciousness returns. There are variations of this activity such as using hyperventilation and then chest compression until there is a brief loss of consciousness. Youth who engage in this activity with peers, often have the false sense of security that it is safe because they believe that the person is

being monitored and the ones performing the action are in control of the situation. Other youth will perform this activity alone using ligatures like ropes, belts, shoe strings, ties, etc. Any form of this activity is dangerous in that there is a cumulative death of large numbers of brain cells and the variation in blood pressure can cause strokes, seizures, and retinal damage. In addition, placement of the hands in strategic spots on the neck can stimulate a small mass of nerve cells that can stop the heart. Engaging in the activity alone carries other dangers in that once consciousness is lost, the person cannot release the compression and the weight of the unconscious body will tighten the ligature and cause death in 2-4 minutes. Serious head injury can occur as well when the youth passes out.

These activities are not new and most youngsters learn them from older peers. It is important for parents and others who work closely with youth to talk about the dangers of these activities in much the same way that they talk to them about the dangers of using drugs and alcohol. As with other informational programs about risky behaviors, it is important to discuss the dangers of this game without the use of sensational graphics or "how to" information that may be titillating to vulnerable youth. Some of the warning signs to look for are: inexplicable marks or bruises on the neck, loss of

concentration, flushed face, changes in personality such as overly aggressive or agitated, a thud in the bedroom or against the wall indicating falling in the case of solo practice, redness of the conjunctivae, unexplained cuts, bruises or head bumps, locked bedroom doors, frequent and severe headaches, belts, leashes, ropes, ligatures and shoelaces tied in strange knots and found in unusual locations and/or disorientation after spending time alone.

Please watch for future informational workshops on this topic that will be offered by the TLC in your region.

Out of the Darkness Community Walks

The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) is sponsoring its 2006 Community Walks in over 70 communities across the U.S. Join the TLC and thousands of others who will walk to raise money for research and educational programs to increase national awareness about depression and suicide and to assist survivors of suicide loss.

You can walk in honor of a loved one, in teams as families, as schools, or as organizations. This walk is a wonderful way for youth to memorialize a peer who has died by suicide. Please visit the AFSP website, www.afsp.org, or call 1-888-333-AFSP (2377), ext. 23. The two sites in NJ are Buccleuch Park, New Brunswick on Sunday, 10/1/06, 9:00 am and Cooper River Park, Cherry Hill on Saturday, 11/4/06, 8:00 am.

Resources

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP)
www.afsp.org

American Association of Suicidology (AAS)
www.suicidology.org

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN)
www.nctsn.org

Suicide Prevention Action Network USA (SPANUSA)
www.spanusa.org

NJ Disaster Mental Health Services (NJDMHS)
www.disastermental-healthnj.com

Suicide Prevention Resource Center (SPRC)
www.sprc.org

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
1-800-TALK (8255)

Book Corner

To assist teachers and students grades 6-8, the National Institute of Health (NIH) developed curriculum supplements.

The Brain: Our Sense of Self; The Science of Mental Illness and Understanding Alcohol: Investigations into Biology and Behavior.
<http://science.education.nih.gov>

The Dougy National Center for Grieving Children provides pamphlets and books on grieving children, e.g., *35 Ways to Help a Grieving Child; Helping the Grieving Student: A Guide for Teachers and After a Suicide: A Workbook for Grieving Kids.*
<http://www.dougy.org>

Dr. Eliana Gil has written extensively on child abuse and related topics including the books: *The Healing Power of Play: Working with Abused Children; Out Growing the Pain: A Book for and About Adults Abused as Children; and her most recent: Helping Abused and Traumatized Children: Integrating Directive and Nondirective Approaches. Treating and Preventing Adolescent Mental Health Disorders-What we know and what we don't know,* is edited by Dwight L. Evans, Edna B. Foa, Raquel E. Gur, Herbert Hendin, Charles P. O'Brien, Martin E.P. Seligman and Timothy Walsh.

Coalitions Meetings in Your County

Ocean County's TLC and the Emergency Response Committee (ERC) meets the 3rd Wednesday of each month, 9:30-11:30 am at the Ocean County Department of Human Services.

Gloucester County's next TLC meeting will be on Wednesday, October 11, at 1:30 pm at the Gloucester County Library, Mullica Hill Branch. Being featured is Jack Farwig, Director of Psychiatric Emergency Screening Services, presenting on what schools and agencies need to know about making referrals to the Screening Center.

The Camden County TLC will meet October 19 and speakers from the C&A Anxiety Disorders Clinic at Temple University will present on Anxiety in the Classroom: Looking into the Overlooked.

The Hunterdon County TLC meeting on September 27, 2006 will feature *Managing Sudden Traumatic Loss in the Schools*.

The Bergen County TLC meeting on November 15, 2006 will feature Nancy Graham of the Renfrew Center for Treatment of Eating Disorders.

Cape May County will feature Gang Violence training on October 6.

Atlantic County's first TLC meeting of the school year is October 3.

Save the Date

- | | |
|-------------------------|---|
| 9/28/06
8:00-3:00pm | <i>The Art of Working with Traumatized Children</i>
Eliana Gil, PhD, Richard Stockton College of New Jersey, Pomona, (732) 235-9282 |
| 9/29/06
8:00-3:00pm | <i>The Art of Working with Traumatized Children</i>
Eliana Gil, PhD, Somerset Marriott, Somerset, (732) 235-9282 |
| 10/17/06
6:30-9:30pm | <i>Understanding and Dealing with Self-Injury</i> ,
Barent Walsh, PhD, St. John Neumann Diocesan Center, Piscataway, (732) 562-1990, x1624 |
| 10/27/06 | <i>Teen Dating Relationships: The good, the bad and the ugly</i> ,
Hunterdon County TLC and Child Abuse and Missing Children's Commission, (908) 788-1372 |
| 5/3/07 and
5/10/07 | <i>5th Annual Youth Suicide Prevention Conference</i> ,
TLC, One conference – two locations, Somerset Marriott and Richard Stockton College of New Jersey (732) 235-2810 |

A Message from Donna...

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We will be busy this year fulfilling our dual mission of suicide prevention and trauma response. The TLC has been providing training for schools who have requested our assistance in meeting the mandates of Bill 3931, which is a featured article in the newsletter. We are presently developing a teacher training program that can be implemented in the schools by existing staff. We are very fortunate to have national experts in the field of youth suicide working with us in the program's development. Watch for more information about this exciting initiative.

Our school response teams have been working throughout the spring and summer and have

provided timely and sensitive intervention in several schools throughout the state following a traumatic incident. I would like to personally thank those members of the Traumatic Loss Lead Response Teams for their dedication and expertise in helping children and families recover from sudden traumatic loss. If you are interested in becoming a member of our Lead Response Teams, please contact your TLC Coordinator.

We are looking forward to another collaborative year. It is our privilege to be working with so many dedicated professionals in the schools, mental health treatment centers, juvenile justice facilities and law enforcement personnel in addition to countless others who work closely with the youth of New Jersey everyday.

In the Spotlight...

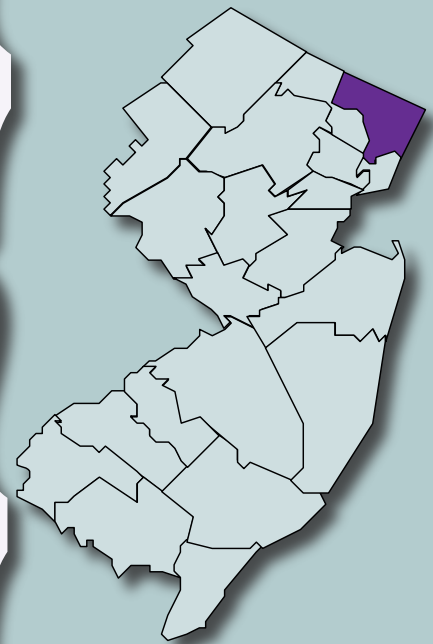
Bergen County



The Bergen County Traumatic Loss Coalition was launched in March of 2002, with the appointment of Stephanie Mulfinger, LCSW, as the TLC Coordinator. Stephanie had the daunting task of bringing together school, police, mental health, clergy, and other representatives from these numerous municipalities and school districts.



Bergen County is the most populous county of the state of New Jersey adjacent to both New York City and New York State. Seventy of New Jersey's 324 state municipalities are located in Bergen County, along with seventy-nine school districts.



Some of the educational topics that the Bergen County TLC focused on during the 2005-2006 academic year included: A Panel of Bergen County Crisis Response Resources, an overview of services available at the Center for Alcohol and Drug Resources, and a presentation on "Psychopharmacological and Behavioral Treatment of Children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder". In addition to providing education and networking opportunities, the Bergen County TLC works closely with Care Plus NJ, Inc.'s Trauma Response Services, thereby providing a direct link to crisis response and support services in the aftermath of a trauma.

In 2005, through partnership with the Todd Ouida Foundation, Children's Anxiety and Depression – The 3 "R's": Recognition, Research, & Resources attracted over 300 attendees. Bergen TLC's 4th annual conference, "Reducing the Risks: Best Practices for Youth at Risk of Violence or Suicide", held on March 17, 2006, was also covered by local news, well attended and well received.

Moving forward, planning continues on providing a "Post-Traumatic Stress Management" (PTSM) training in northern NJ, and then through TLC Central building a Trauma Response Network in Bergen County that will offer specialized training, supervision, skills drilling and ongoing advanced training in PTSM. In the area of suicide prevention, the TLC will also continue to be a resource for information on implementing Assembly Bill 3931.

To contact Stephanie or the other TLC Coordinators, please see listing on last page of this Newsletter.



Traumatic Loss Coalitions for Youth

Central Office: 732-235-2810

Who to Contact in Your County

Northern Region Counties

Bergen County

Stephanie Mulfinger, LCSW
201-797-2660, x103
stephaniem@careplusnj.org
Care Plus NJ, Inc.

Essex County

Arlene O'Connell LPC (Acting)
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aoclpc@aol.com
UMDNJ - UBHC

Hudson County

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Jersey City Medical Center

Morris County

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Atlantic Behavioral Health

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Warren County

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Warren Family Guidance Center

Central Region Counties

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Mercer County

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County of Mercer

Middlesex County

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UMDNJ - UBHC

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Kimball Medical Center

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Cumberland County

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