

**THEory into ACTION**  
**A Bulletin of New Developments in Community Psychology Practice**

**DEPAUL FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SERVICES – “Strengthening and empowering families and communities through innovative, evidenced-based, community-oriented services and the training of culturally-competent, socially responsible professionals.”**

**DePaul Family and Community Services Clinic Responds to the Needs of Chicago-area Youth**

*by Orson Morrison, Psy.D. and Olya Glantsman, Ph.D.*

The staggering exposure of Chicago’s youth to trauma and violence is well documented. From 2008 to 2012, more than 530 youth were killed in Chicago; nearly 80% of the homicides occurred within 22 African-American or Latino community areas, located in the South, Southwest, and West segments of the city. In 2010, 1,109 school-aged youth were shot, and 216 of those were killed. Nearly half of Chicago’s homicide victims are young people aged 10–25. In the Chicago Youth Development Study, 80% of inner-city teen boys reported exposure to violence. In the “Illinois Infant Mental Health Survey: Findings and Recommendations” (Gilkerson and Cutler), nearly 50% of inner-city adolescents demonstrated signs and symptoms of depression. These results are in line with the findings of the National Center for Post-traumatic Stress Disorder showing that more than 40% of children exposed to violence show symptoms of post-traumatic stress.

DePaul Family and Community Services (DePaul FCS) continues to engage with community partners such as Community Youth Development Institute (CYDI) to design interventions that address the urgent trauma-related needs our youth, families, and communities face each day. Approximately 95% of registered clients reported either having been the victim of a violent physical assault or directly witnessing a violent physical assault during their childhood/adolescence, under-scoring the significant impact of trauma in the development and overall functioning of these youth. Employing many principle of Community Psychology, DePaul FCS strives to impact the entire school system by providing professional consultation with teaching staff and administration on the impact of trauma on students’ development and learning and providing individual students and their families trauma-informed behavioral-health services. This effort, to go out into the schools and communities, is something that is very unique about DePaul in comparison to other training sites and truly embodies Community Psychology’s principles of ecological perspective and participatory approach.

Service History

DePaul FCS has been in existence since 1974 when the National Institute of Mental Health, State of Illinois Department of Mental Health, and DePaul University joined in an agreement to fund a new community mental health center to serve children and families with mental health issues living in the near north area of Chicago, Illinois. Beginning in 1998, a grant from the Department of Human Services (DHS) under the Urban System of Care program allowed DePaul FCS to

expand programming including opening two satellite offices located in close proximity to Cabrini-Green and Lathrop Homes (Chicago public housing developments). Since that time, DePaul FCS has continued to embrace the model of providing flexible, community-based interventions to some of the most in-need communities in the Chicago area.

#### Program Services

- Individual and Family Counseling
- Group-Based Interventions
- Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT)
- Psychological Testing/School Observations
- Psychiatry, Medication Evaluation and Medication Monitoring
- Professional Development/Continuing Education
- Brochure: <http://csh.depaul.edu/centers-and-institutes/dfcs/services/Documents/FCS%20Brochure%2012-12.pdf>

#### Awards and Honors

In 2005, DePaul FCS's community based work was recognized by the American Psychological Association (APA) when DePaul FCS received the national Harry V. McNeill Memorial Award for Innovative Community Mental Health.

DePaul FCS also functions as a training center for the clinical psychology graduate program at DePaul University, and all students are trained for at least one year of their clinical practica through DePaul FCS. In 2006, the APA named the DePaul University Clinical Psychology doctoral program as an Outstanding Training Program in the area of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology. As part of this award, DePaul FCS was particularly singled out as providing students with strong training in delivering effective services to underserved populations (e.g., low-income, urban youth) and with training in the area of diversity. In 2007, APA selected DePaul's Clinical Psychology program as one of three Richard M. Suinn Minority Achievement Award winners. This award honored DePaul for its percentage of ethnic minority students and faculty, and its active efforts to promote diversity in clinical psychology.

When interviewed about the clinic, the center's director, Orson Morrison, said: "DePaul FCS embodies the Vincentian values of social justice and empowerment. We are deeply committed to partnering with the community and other child and family systems to address issues and needs that have been identified by them. We value working in natural settings in the community which improves access to services, provides a contextual understanding of our clients, and facilitates the transfer and application of knowledge gained over the course of our work with clients."

When asked about their experiences at the FCS, many graduate students commented on the valuable experiences they have had at the clinic and the center's unique embodiment of Community Psychology principles. For example, Abby Brown, an advanced Clinical-Community graduate student at DePaul stated: "The clinical training experience I have received at FCS has been grounded in everything I value as a budding clinical-community psychologist: empowerment, culturally-appropriate interventions, and social justice." Another advanced Clinical-Community graduate student, Meredyth Evans, had this to say about the center: "My time as an extern at DePaul Family and Community Services was a highly valuable experience.

It taught me that therapy work can be much more than meeting with a child and her family in an office every week. It taught me that it can and should also involve understanding the broader communities in which the children and their families live in, including their neighborhoods, and their schools. For instance, I had the opportunity to see some of my clients in their schools every week, which allowed me the chance to regularly meet and consult with their teachers, school counselors and others who impact their lives on a daily basis. Overall, my time at [DePaul's FCS] trained me to think beyond the individual when providing effective treatment and support to our clients, by fostering the continued development of my cultural awareness and competency and through reflection and understanding of the broader systems that our clients live in.”

**For more information on DePaul Family and Community Services contact:**

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