



For Immediate Release

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Oakland Family Services expands mental health treatment for children *Grant helps children exposed to trauma and toxic stress*

Pontiac, Mich. (Feb. 1, 2017) – Oakland Family Services will be able to help more children deal with the trauma of being removed from their home and placed into foster care, as well as other types of traumatic events, with a \$100,000, two-year grant from the Flinn Foundation.

The grant will provide \$50,000 each of the two years for training in the agency’s Behavioral Health program. Five clinicians will be trained in a research-based program called Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, also learning how to train other staff members. Through this type of therapy, children and parents will learn new skills to help process thoughts and feelings related to traumatic life incidents; manage and resolve distressing thoughts, feelings and behaviors; and enhance safety, growth, parenting skills, and family communication.

Oakland Family Services anticipates at least an additional 150-200 children will receive these specialized services, impacting as many as 1,000 children over five years. Currently, the agency only has one clinician trained in this type of therapy in the Behavioral Health program.

“Having more clinicians who can provide this research-based program to the clients we serve will result in families being healthier and reaching a higher potential than they would have without this intervention,” said Erika Alexander, director of Behavioral Health Operations. “When children have had traumatic events, we want to help them work through those thoughts and feelings associated with that trauma to decrease the symptoms they are experiencing.”

Some of the symptoms children could be showing include anxiety, depression, nightmares, insomnia, fear of separation, or self-harm behaviors.

Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy addresses trauma and toxic stress experienced by children. According to the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, toxic stress occurs when a child experiences strong, frequent, and/or prolonged adversity—such as physical or emotional abuse, chronic neglect, caregiver substance abuse or mental illness, exposure to violence, and family economic hardship—without adequate adult support. Research shows the more adverse experiences in childhood, the greater the likelihood of developmental delays and later health problems.

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“Oakland Family Services serves so many in the community who are dealing with the effects of trauma and toxic stress in their lives,” said President and CEO Jaimie Clayton. “We are so thankful to the Flinn Foundation for helping us provide our clients with the treatment they need.”

The Ethel and James Flinn Foundation is a Detroit based private foundation established in 1976 by Ethel “Peggy” Flinn and her brother, James “Jim” Flinn, Jr. Peggy passed away in 1994. Jim Flinn Jr., who was diagnosed with schizophrenia in his early 20s, led a remarkable life until his passing away in 2007 at the age of 91. The Foundation is committed to improve the scope, quality and delivery of mental health services in Michigan. Since inception, over \$30 million in grants have been awarded. The Foundation’s geographic focus is primarily Southeast Michigan, defined as the counties of Wayne, Oakland, Macomb and Washtenaw.

Oakland Family Services is a private, nonprofit 501 (c) (3) serving the community since 1921 and dedicated to providing individuals and families the opportunity to build brighter futures. The agency’s prevention, education and treatment services touch the lives of more than 40,000 individuals throughout southeastern Michigan. The agency has offices in Pontiac, Berkley, Rochester Hills and Walled Lake. For more information, go to www.oaklandfamilyservices.org.

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