

Praeventus

Program for the Development of Human Potential (PDHP)

Executive Director's Message

Volume 1, Issue 2
June 2019

Dear PDHP Community,

Per NYS OASAS, risk factors that inhibit healthy youth development are organized into four categories: Community, Family, School, Individual and Peer. In our role as prevention educators, we are charged with reducing risk factors and to increase protective factors for the children, families, schools and communities where we serve. Our work is accomplished through the use of evidence-based programs, assessments, short-term counseling, referrals and parental/community engagement.

During this school year, students completed pre and post assessments to record changes in perception and/or thoughts prior to and after the delivery of one or more of the

EBP's we've implemented.

Although, evidence of our work may not render immediate results, let us remember that our goals are to prevent alcohol and other drug use in individuals, families, communities and more importantly to stop problem behaviors from occurring.

Thank you for an eventful 10-months.

Your partner in prevention.

Norwood Keaton,
M.A.Ed., SAS, CASAC 2, CARC,
CRPA, SAP

Pre-Testing

PDHP school counselors incorporate evidence-based curricula weekly at their schools. With every guidance lesson, students become educated and mindful of their social abilities, self-esteem, positive relationships, peer pressure refusal strategies, and the negative effects of smoking and alcohol use. As of January 2019, students had the opportunity to participate in an online pre-test for the curriculum Too Good For Drugs.

The pre-test consisted of ten questions in which students used a Likert scale to respond

anonymously. Each questionnaire was adjusted to the student's grade level. Students were instructed to log onto the questionnaire website in which the counselor provided each student with their own code. This process was a quick and easy way for students to become familiar with the material before the counselor began the course. This 10-minute questionnaire, additionally allowed the counselor to become cognizant of what students have been exposed to prior to starting the program. Students did not receive a grade for the pre-test nor did it

affect their average grade. The sole reason for the pre-test is to have an understanding of the student's prior knowledge. Once the pre-test was completed and submitted, students were able to begin the Too Good For Drugs course with their counselor.

Antonina Scalici, M.S. Ed
School Counseling

New York State OASAS

Risk Factors That Inhibit Healthy Youth Development

RISK FACTORS	Problem Behaviors				
	Substance Abuse	Delinquency	Teen Pregnancy	School Drop-Out	Violence
Community					
*1. Availability of Alcohol and Other Drugs	✓				✓
*2. Insufficient Laws and Policies to Reduce Substance Use	✓	✓			✓
*3. Social Norms Favorable Toward Substance Use	✓	✓			✓
4. Community Disorganization	✓	✓			✓
5. Extreme Economic Deprivation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Family					
*6. Family History of the Problem Behavior	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
*7. Family Management Problems	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
*8. Family Conflict	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
9. Parental Attitudes Favorable Towards Drugs	✓	✓			✓
*10. Parental Attitudes Favorable Towards Other Problem Behavior	✓	✓			✓
School					
11. Academic Failure	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
12. Low Commitment to School	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Individual and Peer					
13. Early Initiation of Drug Use	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
14. Early Initiation (K-5) of Problem Behavior	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
15. Perceived Risk of Drug Use	✓				
16. Favorable Attitudes Toward Drug Use	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
*17. Friends Who Use Drugs / Engage in Other Problem Behavior	✓	✓		✓	
18. Peer Rewards for Drug Use	✓				
19. Depressive Symptoms	✓				

✓ Indicates that at least two longitudinal studies have found the risk factor to predict the problem behavior.
* Indicates some preliminary evidence of correlation to problem gambling.

Based on research by the Univ. of Washington, Social Development Research Group (SDRG).

BRD-2011

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An Overview of the Current Trends in Street Drugs

On February 6th, PDHP counselors facilitated a prevention workshop for juniors and seniors who attend Nazareth Regional High School regarding current trends in street drugs. In recent years, we have seen a resurgence of hallucinogens and synthetic drugs (i.e. Spice, K2, marijuana) being used by young people. In addition, vaping by teenagers has reached an epidemic level within the United States. The purpose of our presentation was to educate the community and the students about the dangerous effects of these drugs and the impact they have on our brains and our bodies. This opportunity allowed our expert staff to address this epidemic and supply

youth with helpful tips and information in an effort to prevent teenage drug use.

Christina Sama-Bommarito, MA, NCSP

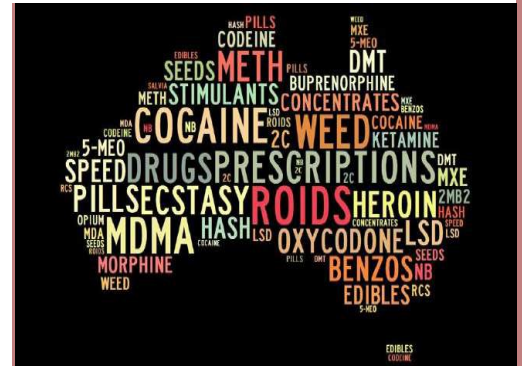


Photo Credit:
Mary K O'Sullivan

Family Therapy

Each borough field office houses a family therapy unit where we provide services on a sliding scale to families with children enrolled in one of our Catholic schools. Also, we work public school students who are parish members

Referrals are received from principals, PDHP counselors and occasionally a parish priest will accompany a family to our office. Typical reasons for a referral are: substance use, familial separation, divorce, single Parent stressors, custodial

grandparents, children who assume adult responsibilities, absence of social skills and parental support.

Therapists are available after school and early evening September through July. Anyone seeking assistance can contact either the Brooklyn or Queens Field Office at 718-871-7777 and 718-849-2200 respectively.

Ellen Danziger, LCSW

"Family therapy or family counseling is designed to address specific issues that affect the psychological health of the family, such as major life transitions or mental health conditions."

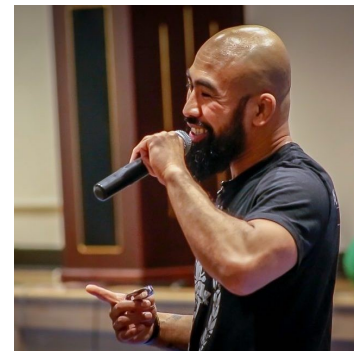
Champ Up! Program in Queens Catholic Schools

This spring, several Queens Catholic Schools had the privilege of having Chris Romulo present a well delivered, inspirational speech to their middle school students. Chris, a former Muay Thai champion found resilience after Hurricane Sandy washed away the life he once knew.

Chris' message "Champ Up!" teaches students and adults to live more resilient lives. This program taught students to uncover the champions within themselves, so that regardless of what obstacles come

their way, they can face them. Chris was engaging, motivating, and inspired all those in attendance. Many students walked out feeling excited to make a positive change for the future. One of Chris' many motivational lines, included "Fall seven times, stand up eight", a strong message of getting back up every time life knocks you down. We hope to have the Champ Up! Program reach more schools in the future.

Jackie Sekunda, M.S Ed School Counseling



Family Fun Night

I attended my first family fun night at St. Francis of Assisi, Brooklyn, coordinated by Cary Anne Fitzgerald, Parent/Community Outreach Coordinator for PDHP. What a treat! It was a delight to see the children, parents, principal and PDHP staff all have fun together. It was a night that sparked communication and teamwork.

It was a humbling experience to see parents participate in all of the activities, especially the dads when they played with a hula hoop. Watching the children try to decide which parent to cheer on if and when they were separated was inspiring to say the least but in the end the children always cheered on both parents. I found it very interesting to hear a dad and his daughter reason out why they made certain choices when we played the

game, "I rather."

My second attendance of a family fun night was held at St. Gregory's the Great Catholic Academy in Brooklyn, where I work as an elementary school counselor two days a week.

The true meaning and spirit of teamwork came into play that night between PDHP staff. It was time to rally when we thought that we were going to have only one family attending the event. A couple of us were low of spirit but one team member got us going and we ended up with a spectacular night.

It was inspiring and encouraging being a part of a team where we adapted to the crowd at hand and that Cary Anne allowed us to give suggestions and be our creative selves. I am unsure as to who had more fun -

the parents or the children but it is a fact that they all had fun! Parents and children hopped, twirled, skipped and walked across the floor. They laughed together while trying to aid each other with the hula hops and created a lasting rain storm.

Parents and children from both schools were very vocal in expressing their enjoyment of spending time together in an environment where they were allowed to do so without interruptions and no judgment but particularly without electronics

To this day parents and children ask me in the hallways of St. Gregory the Great as to when will there be another family fun night.

Pauline Melchoir-Morris, MSW

Social Media

In this age of social media obsession, it's only fitting that PDHP "gets with the times" and jumps on the bandwagon. Joining the ranks of social media has given us the opportunity to not only bring awareness of our services to the community, but also to connect with its members on a higher level.

The social media industry is getting bigger and bigger by the day, and shows no signs of ending anytime soon. As of January 2019, statistics show that there are over 3 billion active social media users in the world, on average, people have over 5 social media accounts each, and the average daily time spent on social media is over 100 minutes a day per person.

About 6 years ago, PDHP created a website to keep the community up to date on recent hap-

penings. Our website contains information for parents, teachers, students and community members on topics such as Drug, Alcohol and Gambling news, information and abuse prevention, Counseling and therapy and other local resources, employment opportunities and contact information.

PDHP has since increased our presence on the internet universe by creating both Facebook and Instagram accounts. These accounts welcome members of the public to like / friend / follow us, in order to keep everyone updated on recent articles and information on Drug and Gambling trends and resources, and also of PDHP happenings and events in the schools and parishes of the Diocese of Brooklyn, in Brooklyn and Queens, NY. You can find PDHP pages and accounts using the following platforms -

Website - <http://pdhpbklyndiocese.org> Facebook - (PDHP) - <https://www.facebook.com/programforthe development of human potential/> (PDHP Parents) - <https://www.facebook.com/PDHPParents/Instagram> - PDHPNY

Social Media usage has proven to be a powerful tool in PDHP's "Belt" of methods to bring awareness to the community in the areas of Alcohol, Tobacco, Other Drugs and Gambling Prevention Awareness. If you have not already done so, we invite you to "Log On" and visit the online world of PDHP. See you there!

Lisa Bisciello
M.S. Ed School Counseling

Crisis Response Team

Throughout the school year, situations often arise, that can be difficult to handle. Most often situations are just that, a situation. However there are times that an event is considered to be a crisis and assistance is needed. It is important to recognize the difference between a situation and a crisis in order to figure out what are the next steps that need to be taken. We can define a crisis as a death of a student, teacher, and/ or an individual who is close to the school community. It is a time when more help is needed to address this type of loss in order to start the process of

healing. As a member of PDHP, I am part of a wonderful group of professionals who have been trained in how to assist in this process.

When a crisis has arisen, the first step is for the principal to reach out to PDHP and speak with the Borough Director. The Borough Director will then discuss what type of crisis the situation is and what type of response is necessary. A plan will be created and implemented through the program in order to address the affected individuals. Knowing that there are people knowledgeable in the areas

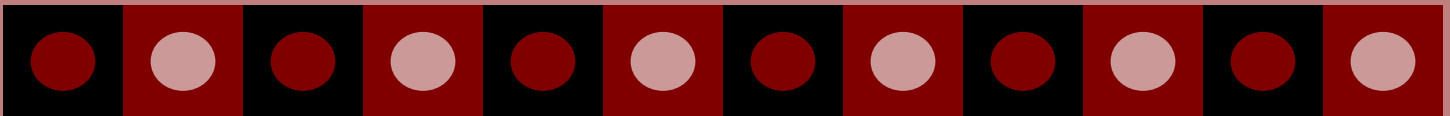
of loss, can create a feeling of support and comfort in an unfortunate situation.

Nicole Moskowitz, M.S. Ed School Counseling

Parental Engagement: Guiding Good Choices

For five weeks, a group of parents from Saint Francis De Sales Catholic Academy met regularly for PDHP's Parenting Curriculum, Guiding Good Choices. This is a small, (15 parents maximum), but committed group of parents from grades 4 – 8. Over the weeks, they got to know about each other and their children. They often reviewed their parenting practices and learned about different strategies or methods and gained insight on a great deal of topics pertaining to this age group. In this group, the first two sessions explore with the science behind prevention and discuss a parent's role. From here, there is a great realization that risk in the form of first experience with substance use can occur within the next two years and through a child's friends. The parents work on strategies to assist them in keeping their children healthy and bonded to the family. Refusal Skills are one of these strategies which can be applied in so many scenarios from "friend drama" to peer pressure. They then look at communication skills among family members and practical skills that they can teach their children in the home setting which will be needed as they reach adulthood. Parenting is hard work but being able to find support and community in its practice seems to offer a chance of reflection, empowerment and respite.

Cary Anne Fitzgerald, Parent & Community Outreach Coordinator



ASAP STATEWIDE PREVENTION CONFERENCE

On April 7-9, 2019 Mr. Keaton, PDHP Executive Director and I attended the first New York State Prevention Conference in over ten years. There is an old saying that "one ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." Finally the New York Association of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Providers (ASAP) became aware that prevention is a critical component in addressing substance abuse in New York State

The NYS prevention providers made a strong case that more state funding is needed to address vaping, alcohol and other abuse drug use to the NYS residents, especially to the most vulnerable and our young children.

Some of the Conference highlights were the following:

- NYS is preparing a Drug Prevention Blueprint for implementation during the in the 2020-2021 school year. This will provide a comprehensive approach on how to present "best practices" in prevention to the school population.
- NYS will disseminate a Youth Development Survey. This survey will assess current drug use of school age children. Also, this information will assist in the preparation of the Drug Prevention Blueprint.

One of the conference presenters, Carlton Hall, stated that according to the CDC more than 72,000 Americans died from drug overdoses in 2017. Mr. Hall also presented historical perspectives of drug use in the U.S.:

- In 1999, over-prescribed medication for pain management
- In 2010, Heroin became the drug of choice because pain medication became less available and too expensive.
- In 2019, Synthetic drugs are more prevalent.

As you can see from the above, "one drug leads to another". This was stated 26 years ago by John F. Kennedy. As you can see we have not learned from our drug-abuse history.

I feel hopeful that the NYS initiatives will assist drug prevention providers by having the tools to address this drug epidemic.

Salvatore Violo, LCSW
Queens Borough Director

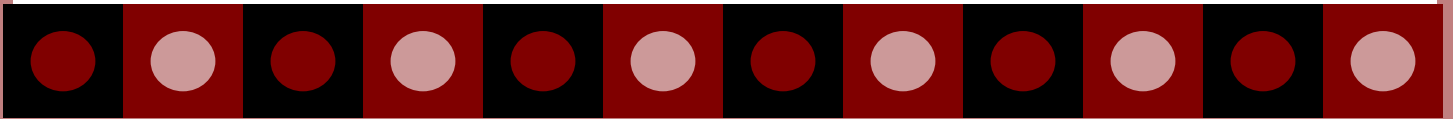
"Understanding and identifying risk and protective factors helps providers and communities understand what they can do to prevent problem behavior and promote healthy development among children, adolescents and young adults."
NYS OASAS Prevention Framework

Net Smartz

Exciting things continue to happen online and internet safety is one of them. From the beginning of the 2018 academic school year, various schools within Brooklyn and Queens participated in an internet safety workshop called Net Smartz. The Net Smartz workshop's mission is to engage students with an interactive and educational program that provides age-appropriate resources to help teach those young digital citizens how to keep safe both on- and offline. The workshop was given to middle school and high school aged students. Students were very engaged during the presentation, especially during the videos that emphasized how not to keep their most personal information private.

It was quite insightful and assuring to hear how knowledgeable students were on the topic of child predators and inappropriate online material. Also, students continued to show improved awareness by learning about other severe consequences of inappropriate internet activities. Students showed great candor about their online use, as well as the matter and the means of keeping themselves safe online. The workshop allowed students the opportunity to hear from one another how much importance is placed on having a positive and safe online experience. By the end of each presentation, students met the goals of recognizing potential internet risks and the continued understanding of how to prevent themselves from being exploited online through cyber-bullying, and how to report such victimizations to a trusted adult or the appropriate cyber safety authorities.

Reginald Bien-Aime, J.D.



Catholic Charities Brooklyn/Queens and PDHP

At the May PDHP Staff Meeting, we were joined by several members of Catholic Charities Brooklyn & Queens in accordance with Bishop Di Marzio's wish that the two agencies establish a relationship. The aim of this meeting was to offer a dialogue with both, the goal was to inform PDHP about the vast and holistic services provided through Catholic Charities and to seek trends and challenges PDHP counselors have been experiencing. The conversation brought PDHP up to speed with all the items that can be made available to our students and their families. Among these services, but not limited to, were ACS Prevention Services, ESL support, Afterschool programs, Mindfulness groups, Substance Abuse Treatment, Family Stabilization, and Senior Care. Cross-connections were made between Catholic Charities programs such as having children visit the senior centers for different pro-social & stewardship events. Most services were available in both boroughs. Best line of contact for referrals and advisement of concerns were shared. Mr. Keaton reminded staff that our children deserve access to these services as much as their peers in other school systems with more widespread access and asked that we advocate for them accordingly.

Cary Anne Fitzgerald

Professional Development: Mental Health Resources in New York State

At our January meeting we were addressed by Mrs. Ruzelia Watkins. Mrs. Watkins is a service provider for Vibrant Emotional Health. She discussed a plethora of mental health assistance options available in NYC. Most notable was NYC Well which is a 24/7 hotline that provides free and confidential assistance for mental health and substance concerns.

Also discussed was a program available through NYS Medicaid. Children and Family Treatment Support Services provides therapy and rehab services for children and youth under 21 who are covered by Medicaid and have mental health and/or substance needs. They anticipate adding family peer support services in July 2019.

All of these services provide valuable referral sources for our agency.

Theresa Francois, M.A. Ed

EBP Post- Tests: Proving that Prevention Works!

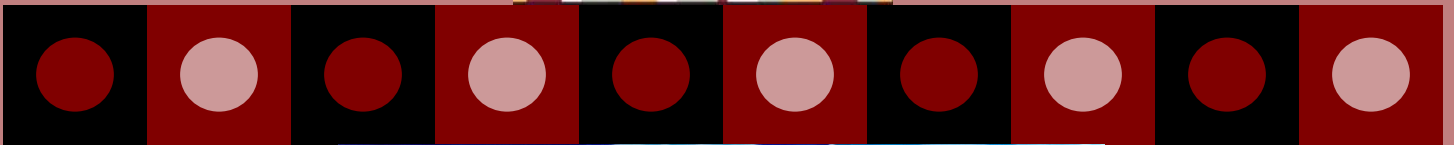
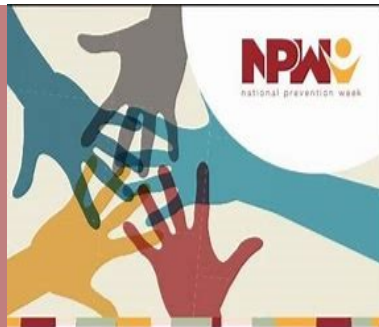
PDHP Counselors, Regional Coordinators and Prevention Educators provide a number of Evidence-Based Programs, or EBPs, to K-12 students throughout the Catholic elementary and high schools of Brooklyn and Queens. These programs are designed to educate students on life and social skills, in order to increase knowledge, help the student understand consequences and decrease misconceptions, and help them to improve attitudes toward a healthy lifestyle. These programs focus on topics such as drug and bullying education and prevention, goal setting, decision making, social and communication skills, and assertiveness.

While qualitatively, we know that these programs are reaching and positively affecting our students, how do we prove prevention works, quantitatively? How do we prove scientifically, numerically, that we are affecting something that hasn't happened yet - something that may or may not happen in the future?

One solution is pre and post tests. Students complete the same questionnaire before the start of the program, and again after the conclusion of the program. Students can be administered these questionnaires either on paper or online, through a computer or tablet. The benefit of using the computer is that scoring can be completed faster, and many different types of statistics can be generated (i.e. - by gender, age, etc.).

The goal is clearly for students to score a higher grade on the post test, since they were not yet taught the information when students completed the pre test. If students were present and attentive during the program, they should record a notice change upon completion of the post test, proving that the EBP had an impact on those students, and ultimately supporting the premise that - prevention works.

Allison Warfield, M.S. Ed School Counseling



**Photo Credit:
Nicolette Pirozzi**



GOOD SHEPHERD CATHOLIC ACADEMY

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Good Shepherd
Roman Catholic Church
1950 Batchelder Street
Brooklyn, NY 11229
(718) 958-2820

Resurrection
Roman Catholic Church
2331 Garfield Avenue
Coney Island, NY 11229
(718) 743-7234

May 21, 2019

The Program for the Development of Human Potential has been an invaluable asset to our academy community. Nina, our counselor, has done an amazing job working with classes on life skills and has helped individual students through difficult times in their lives. The care that she gives our students has touched their hearts and allowed them to persevere through challenges. The support we receive from everyone at PDHP, whether through counseling services in and out of school, or through parent workshops, has helped us fulfill our mission of educating the whole child and to help them reach their fullest potential. PDHP has provided our students and their families with resources and support to navigate successfully through the challenges that are so prevalent in our society. I look forward to continuing to work with PDHP and hope that every school/academy has the opportunity to do so.

Sincerely in Christ,

Mr. John O'Brien
Principal

Staff Retreat

Wednesday, June 12, 2019

Our day began with a docent-led tour of “That 80’s Show” Art Exhibition: The exhibition features prominent artists such as Keith Haring, Kenny Scharf, Jean-Michel Basquiat and Eric Fischl. Their unique pop- style art is expressed as an agency for change, increasing awareness and dialogue about prominent social issues such as the crack/ cocaine epidemic, Reagan’s war on drugs and “Just Say No”, the HIV/ AIDS crisis, LGBTQ stigmatization and systemic racism. This exhibition aims to explore how art is a vehicle for self-expression, political activism, and provide a framework for social and cultural issues.

Next, we received a guided walk of sculptures on the grounds of Nassau County Museum of Art featuring work by Marko Remec, “A Mirror to Nature”. Studies have shown that viewing art/ sculptures and being in green spaces actually changes our brains in a way that affects emotional health. It increases cognitive ability, reduces anxiety and increases overall feelings of happiness and well-being.

We concluded the day learning Qigong in the formal garden with Mike Mc Comiskey. Qigong originated in China and dates back 5000 years. It exercises balance and harnesses “qi” or “life energy” It is described as meditation in motion, taking you through a set of slow, gentle movements while you focus on your breath. It provides many physical and psychological benefits such as relieving stress, lowering blood pressure, stimulates the central nervous system, improves muscle tone and aids in digestion.

****All three of these activities work as protective factors in the prevention of substance use and other high risk behaviors. Through experiential learning, PDHP staff will utilize these techniques to teach and model with students in order to enhance their prevention practice.**

Kristen Malone, LCSW-R

