



WJCS Testimony to the New York State Early Childhood Advisory Council  
April 25, 2017

Good Afternoon. My name is Patrice Cuddy and I am the director of Child Parent Programs at Westchester Jewish Community Services.

Thank you to the Early Childhood Advisory Council for this opportunity to speak today about improving the quality and access to New York's early childhood care and education programs and for the work you do to improve the lives of New York's children.

As an early childhood educator for more than 20 years, I have studied the research that clearly demonstrates the components of a high quality early childhood care and education program; and I have witnessed the positive impact of these programs on our most vulnerable - and often most promising children— those from families with multiple barriers to educational and economic success – including poverty and other forms of disadvantage, including, but not limited to immigration, language barriers and systemic racism.

We know what quality looks like. That is why I am here today to advocate for the Parent Child Home Program to be a strong part of the legislative agenda of the ECAC. The Parent Child Home Program is nationally recognized, evidence-based, intensive, two-year home-visiting program that is a worthy investment of taxpayer dollars. Families enroll in the program when their child is approximately two years old and receive twice weekly, 30 minute visits from a highly trained home visitor for 23 weeks a year for a total of 92 home

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visits over a two-year period. The home visitor employs a non-directive approach, utilizing high quality games and books that are left in the home, to model behavior for parents and enhance child development. Decades of longitudinal studies and positive outcomes clearly demonstrates that the Parent Child Home Program is of the highest quality and it works – it works in preparing young children for success in school and in life. The issue is Access. Lack of access of low-income families and children to high quality early childhood programs. Access to high quality early care and education programs that break the school preparation gap and academic achievement gap between children from low-income families and their more economically advantaged peers. Access to the financial resources that provide economically advantaged families with greater access to high quality programs for their pre-school children. The national studies are too numerous to mention but they clearly show the efficacy of the Parent Child Home Program:

- **School Readiness:** PCHP graduates enter Kindergarten prepared to learn and achieve over the long-term at considerably higher rates than control group participants.
- **Health Child Development:** PCHP graduates show increased independence, social cooperation, cognitive abilities, emotional stability, task orientation and pre-literacy.
- **Strengthens Families** – the PCHP promotes positive parenting skills, increases healthy interactions and communication between parents and children, and parents increased consistency and responsiveness and affection to their children.



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- **Empowered Parents** – the PCHP provided parents with opportunities to develop skills and knowledge to be confident in their abilities to be their child’s first and most important teacher. PCHP families show greater involvement with their child’s school and education.
  
- **Return on Investment** – the PCHP yields short and long-term economic benefits and saving.
  - **Studies show** reduced need for costly special education services resulting from home visiting programs demonstrate reductions in the number of children entering school with developmental delay and show significant increase in a participant’s lifetime earnings potential.

WJCS has administered the Parent Child Home Program in Westchester for 45 years and we are proud to be the only replication of the national program in Westchester. The WJCS Parent Child Home Program is the anchor to our agency’s early childhood programs – we have expanded the reach and impact through other innovations based on the PCHP model including the WJCS Child Care Home Program, the Parent-Child Center, Early Childhood Matters and Summer Fun at Hartley Park.

Over the past four years, Westchester families and children have been the beneficiaries of New York State funding that has allowed the WJCS Parent Child Home Program to solidify and expand services. The Public-Private Partnership grant through OCFS, expiring next year, has leveraged private funding and has helped WJCS provide access to the highest quality early care and education services in Mt. Vernon. Please make every effort to advocate for the continuation of OCFS Public-Private Partnership funding in Mt. Vernon and



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other Westchester and NY State communities and for additional NY State funding for home visiting services that break the school preparation gap and cycle of poverty and disadvantage.

In closing, I am grateful for the opportunity to advocate for home visiting services for all NY State children who deserve access to the highest quality early care and education. I am also grateful for the chance to give voice

to children and families in local communities in Westchester, who are often forgotten among the known wealth and advantage of this county. Please make all these children and families part of your legislative agenda.

For further information, please contact Patrice Cuddy, Director of WJCS Parent-Child Programs at 914-949-7699 – ext. 424 or [pcuddy@wjcs.com](mailto:pcuddy@wjcs.com) or Jan Fisher, Director of Public Affairs at 914-848-8163 or [jfisher@wjcs.com](mailto:jfisher@wjcs.com).

*Founded in 1943, WJCS is one of the largest non-sectarian, non-for-profit human services agencies in Westchester. We support 20,000 Westchester residents annually to meet challenges and achieve personal success. Services include mental health treatment, a network of child and youth development initiatives, programs for people with disabilities and autism and homecare, services for older adults.*

# WJCS Fast Facts

**A SNAPSHOT:** Founded in 1943, WJCS is one of the largest human services agencies in Westchester County. WJCS strengthens the fabric of Westchester by providing quality care and services to those in need, regardless of race, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, or economic status. We help 20,000 people annually to meet life's challenges, supporting them to reach their personal goals.

## Mental Health

**WJCS is the largest provider of licensed outpatient mental health services in Westchester County.** We offer research-proven services to people struggling with depression, anxiety, other mental health issues, and individuals coping with the impact of trauma.

- Family mental health clinics, school-based clinics and mobile services
- Specialized treatment including Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT) to help people manage challenging and life-threatening emotional behavioral issues
- Care management for individuals with chronic health and mental health problems
- Social/emotional wellness screening for children
- Recovery supports for individuals with serious mental illness including peer-led wellness groups, social and recreational activities, and supportive friendships
- Specialized mental health services for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and autism
- Mental health services for older adults



## Trauma

**Through the WJCS Treatment Center for Trauma and Abuse, WJCS is at the forefront of addressing psychological trauma** caused by sexual abuse, domestic and community violence, and other life circumstances.

- Research-proven treatment for children, teens and adults
- Established treatments for children who have been sexually abused, and adults with childhood sexual abuse histories
- Violence prevention programming
- Professional and community education and training
- Evidence-based groups for parents and children affected by family violence
- Assessment and individual and group treatment for children with problematic sexual behavior

## Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities and Autism

**WJCS programs support individuals throughout the life cycle to reach their potential,** enhance their strengths, and live independently within supportive communities.

- Community residences and supportive living options
- Service coordination
- WJCS Autism Center
- Therapeutic social skills and recreational skill-building groups for children, teens, young adults and adults
- Parent/grandparent support groups, trainings, and workshops
- Testing, assessment and evaluation for children and adults
- Licensed respite, home health, and companion services
- Tracking devices for children on the autism spectrum who may wander or get lost
- Traumatic brain injury services

# WJCS Fast Facts



## Children, Youth and Families

WJCS initiatives for children from pre-school through adolescence are guided by **agency expertise in youth development, education, literacy and learning, parenting, mental health, and trauma.**

- Early childhood literacy, learning and emotional support programs
- Parenting education and support
- After-school programming
- Violence prevention and intervention and juvenile justice
- Teen pregnancy support and pregnancy prevention
- Leadership development
- Academic and career support
- Westchester's only LGBTQ youth center offering individual, group and family counseling, recreational opportunities, community education and advocacy.

## Older Adults and Home Care

WJCS provides a range of integrated programs that support older adults to age safely and well in their homes and communities whenever possible.

- Licensed home health, companion and respite services for older adults and people with special needs
- Geriatric care management including in-home assessments and care planning
- Kosher nutrition and socialization programs
- Support to caregivers
- Information and referral

## Jewish Community

The WJCS Center for Jewish Programs is committed to **meeting the needs of a dynamic Jewish community** in Westchester through privately funded initiatives in 40 local synagogues, Jewish community centers, day schools, geriatric centers and with individuals in the community.

- Educational, counseling, spiritual and mental health programs
- Cultural, social and community service initiatives
- Services for people with special needs
- Holocaust survivors and Third-generation groups

## Research and Training

WJCS is committed to implementing programs and services using **research-proven practices to ensure that Westchester residents receive the most effective care delivered by skilled professionals.**

- Staff and community training through the WJCS Educational Institute
- Data collection, research, program evaluation and analysis
- Accredited psychology and social work internship programs
- Research and program evaluation services to other agencies

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