

Highlights of The GUIDE Program in Prince George's County

By Sarah Smee, April 2004

The GUIDE Program, Inc. is a multi-faceted non-profit organization headquartered in Hyattsville. GUIDE began serving families in Prince George's County more than 36 years ago, and has since expanded to include programs in Baltimore and Montgomery Counties as well as Baltimore City. GUIDE offers mental health, substance abuse, juvenile justice, and social services programs. Though each of these programs is unique, all of GUIDE's efforts are based on three common themes: enriching lives, empowering families, and enhancing communities. In Prince George's County, GUIDE operates two residential human service programs, the Independence Program in New Carrollton, and a Therapeutic Group Home in Fort Washington. The agency also provides Family Intervention Specialists (FIS) to the Intensive Aftercare Program of the Department of Juvenile Services.

The Independence Program is a 50-bed psychiatric residential rehabilitation program for adults with serious and pervasive mental illness. Clients live together in apartments and group homes, and are provided with personal support, supervision, medication management, counseling, and casework services. In this residential setting, staff provide training and support for daily living, self-care, medication management, employment or job readiness skills, and transportation, as well as recreational and social activities. These skills allow clients to manage their conditions, and several former residents are now living successfully on their own.



Karyn Black (L), Assistant Program Director and Stefanie Rupertus (R), Program Director for GUIDE's Independence Program



Micahel Jones (L) Clinical Director, Amanda Franchuk (center) Clinical Coordinator, and Nicole West (R) Clinical Coordinator for GUIDE's Therapeutic Group Homes

GUIDE's Therapeutic Group Home is a residence for severely emotionally disturbed youth aged 13 to 18 who are temporarily unable to live with their families. Staff provide round-the-clock supervision and support for the young men in the program. The home provides a therapeutic milieu as well as formal mental health treatment services. While residing with GUIDE, the youths do chores, attend school, participate in community service projects, and take part in recreational and cultural activities. Additionally, GUIDE provides family counseling whenever possible to help families prepare for reunification.

The focus of the Department of Juvenile Services Intensive Aftercare unit is to provide monitoring, support, and services to youth who are returning to the County after placement in detention and other out-of-home residential settings. GUIDE provides three licensed social workers to the Department as FIS personnel who focus on providing youth and families mental health services. GUIDE's FIS workers provide individual, group, and family therapy; mental health screening, assessment, and treatment planning; as well as consultation and some casework services.



Amina Aleem (left) and Christa Calkins (Right) GUIDE FIS Workers

The last year has seen many cutbacks in funding for mental health and social services in Maryland, but GUIDE continues to strive for excellence in all its programs. Says Executive Director Scott K. Birdsong, “In challenging times, it is even more critical to step back from the day-to-day grind and reflect on the importance of our work, its remarkable positive impact on the lives of individuals, contributions made to communities, and the many ways we learn from our clients and consumers.”



**Camilla Smith, GUIDE FIS Worker
And
Scott K. Birdsong, GUIDE's Executive Director**