

Park Hill School District

-**Family Connections**-

 March 2014

Parents and Guardians: Happy March! As school social workers we are sharing the following information as part of our work to help students and families find community agencies. If you have any questions or would like additional support in finding a resource, please contact your student’s school social worker (names are listed below).

**Information about the *new* “Autism Spectrum Disorder”**

If you have a child with autism you have likely heard of the DSM-IV.  It is published by the American Psychiatric Association and it’s used by clinicians to provide a formal diagnosis of autism and related disorders. The manual outlines the specific criteria that must be met to receive a diagnosis. The main purpose is to provide standard guidelines for clinicians to use for the diagnosis of different psychological disorders and conditions.

The DSM-IV identified a set of Pervasive Developmental Disorders that are considered “autism spectrum disorders”. These include Autistic Disorder, Asperger’s Disorder, and Pervasive Developmental Disorder Not Otherwise Specified. The DSM-IV has been under revision for several years and a new edition, the DSM-5 was released in May 2013.  Significant changes to the criteria and categories of ASDs are occurred in the new edition. As a parent it is important that you be well informed.

One of the most significant changes is that the separate diagnostic labels of Autistic Disorder, Asperger’s Disorder, and PDD-NOS have been replaced by one umbrella term “Autism Spectrum Disorder.” Further distinctions were made according to severity levels.  The severity levels are based on the amount of support needed, due to challenges with social communication and restricted interests and repetitive behaviors. For example, a person might be diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder, Level 1, Level 2, or Level 3.  The DSM-5 revision website says the reasons for using the umbrella term of “Autism Spectrum Disorder” are 1) the old way isn’t precise enough—different clinicians diagnose the same person with different disorders, and some change their diagnosis of the same symptoms differently from year to year, and 2) autism is defined by a common set of behaviors and it should be characterized by a single name according to severity.

The removal of the formal diagnoses of Asperger’s Disorder and PDD-NOS is a major change. People who currently hold these diagnoses will likely receive a different diagnosis when re-evaluated.  This has the potential to be confusing for parents of children with these diagnoses as well as children and adults who identify strongly with their diagnosis.

Revisions to the specific criteria needed for a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder have also been made. The new criteria are more thorough and strict compared to the old criteria.  These changes are based on research, analysis, and expert opinion. The revisions have been made with the hope that the diagnosis of autism spectrum disorders will be more specific, reliable, and valid.  Despite these positive hopes, legitimate concerns have been raised regarding how these changes might impact people on the spectrum.  One of the biggest concerns is that some who are higher functioning will no longer meet the more strict diagnostic criteria and will therefore have difficulties accessing relevant services.  If you have questions about these new changes it is important to talk to your child’s doctor.

**WE ARE HERE TO HELP! HERE ARE THE PARK HILL SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKERS:**

Karen DiSanto, Renner and EL, 816.359.5830 Cheryl GunnSeidler, Southeast and Union Chapel, 816.359.6140

Carolyn Bidwell, Tiffany Ridge and Chinn, 816.359.6229 Colleen Pleiss, Hawthorn and Graden, 816.359.6560

Katherine Kraai, Congress and Lakeview, 816.359.6811 Marla Anderson, Prairie Point and Line Creek, 816.359.6379

Karen Calonge, Park Hill High, 816.359.5616 Jill Hazell, Plaza and Park Hill South, 816.359.6709

Allison Dawson, Gerner Family Early Education Ctr., 816.359.6310 Rachel Duron, Russell Jones Education Ctr, 816.359.6089



**Attendance: Make Every Day Count!!**

As you know the MO Department of Education’s expectation for school districts is that 90% of the students are in attendance 90% of the time. This change requires schools to look at the attendance of every individual student instead of letting some student’s perfect attendance cover up students who are missing a lot of school.

**What can I do to help?**

* Recognize that as a parent you are responsible for making sure your child develops the habit of regular attendance.
* Attendance matters for doing well in school and life starting in kindergarten and even in pre-kindergarten.
* Stress and model that good attendance will help your child(ren) do well in high school, college, and at work.
* Recognize that it doesn’t matter if an absence is excused or unexcused. They all represent lost time in the classroom and a lost opportunity to learn.
* It’s important to know the school-wide chronic absence rates, since too many absences can slow down instruction for all students.
* If you are facing tough challenges related to access to health care, unstable housing, poor transportation or lack of food, you can and should seek out support from the school and community.
* **Above all, set an example for your child. Show him or her that attendance matters to you and that you won’t allow an absence unless someone is truly sick.**

**Platte County Family Support and**

**Children’s Division**

816.858.3740

Feel free to contact them directly for any help or questions regarding: Family Health care/MO HealthNet, food stamps, temporary assistance, child care assistance and more.

**Kansas City Resources for Utility Assistance:**

Salvation Army of Platte County 816-452-5663

Good Samaritan Center 816-630-2718

Metropolitan Lutheran Ministries 816-454-5295

Northland Assistance Center 816-421-2243

United Services 816-858-5153

St. Therese 816-741-2800

**Tri-County Mental Health Services**

816.468.0400

CRISIS LINE: 888.279.8188

They provide medication services, counseling and in-home case management. You may qualify for their sliding fee scale.

**Platte County Health Department**

816.587.5998

Please contact them for any health concerns. The Health Department has appointments for individuals who are either uninsured or have MO HealthNet that reside in Platte County. They are also able to provide immunizations to individuals who qualify.