

## Advantages of School-based Mental Health Programs

**Access:** Children are being quickly identified, evaluated and treated at the elementary school level in the comfort and familiarity of their school surroundings or in their own home.

**Familiarity:** Children and parents know the school facilities, faculty and staff. This familiarity helps dispel the stigma that frequently stops families from seeking help for mental health problems.

**Partnerships:** The School-based model benefits all children, families, teachers and administrators as it provides a constructive, safe and effective avenue to assist children facing mental health challenges while limiting disruption to the school community.

## Testimonials

**Parent:** *"Our therapist is a hero! She has helped us more than she will ever know. I don't know what we would have done without her. Our son would not be the wonderful person he is today without the help from the therapist. We cannot say enough good things about her."*

**Principal:** *"Each year we see more and more students with emotional challenges. Having services in the school setting addresses barriers to learning for students and provides a variety of resources provided by a licensed mental health professional for teaching and support staff to utilize."*

**Pediatrician:** *"I am in full support of this program and feel that it is of great value to the children of the Quad Cities. It is not only a value to the individual's affected with behavioral and emotional concerns, but also to the learning of the children in the classrooms."*  
– Robert Anderson, M.D.

**Vera French Psychiatrist:** *"The staff involved in the School-based Program are well trained and have a personal investment in improving the mental health and academic achievement of children. A value of their work has been tangible by significantly decreasing the number of hospitalizations and the crisis interventions over the years."*  
– Ghada Hamdan-Allen, M.D.

## Our Challenge is Financing

Our approach is to work with all the stakeholders in order to best meet the needs of the child. This means we interact with parents, administrators, teachers, counselors, and other organizations like the Department of Human Services. Research shows our approach works, however, in this type of environment less than 50 percent of the services we provide are reimbursed via insurance, Medicaid, Hawk-I, etc.

Vera French, the Vera French Foundation and private donors have been underwriting the unfunded cost of the program since its inception in 2001. While we are currently in 18 out of the 36 grade schools in Scott County we are struggling to continue to finance the existing program, much less expand it into all 36 schools.

While we work with other organizations focused on the needs of children to try to develop more permanent and long-term financing, we continue to seek donations from private donors. **Your help is needed and very much appreciated. Thank you.**

**For information on how you can help, call the Vera French Foundation at 563-888-6257.**

## Contact Information

For information on our School-based mental health programs contact:

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VERA FRENCH

Quality, Accessible, and Comprehensive Mental Health Care

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Vera French Community Mental Health Center is a not-for-profit, 501(c)(3) organization and is accredited by the State of Iowa Division of Mental Health/Developmental Disabilities Services. The Center is supported in part by private donations, the fundraising efforts of the Vera French Foundation, Scott County and a variety of insurance carriers including Medicaid and Medicare. To protect their privacy, no actual clients are pictured.

*"Life's darkest corners are often in the mind"*  
– Vera French Bates, M.D.

## Caring for Kids



This is how it works...



VERA FRENCH

Quality, Accessible, and Comprehensive Mental Health Care

## School-Based Mental Health Services: Meeting the Needs of Children

*One morning a Vera French School-based therapist arrived at work to find a five-year-old girl (with a serious mental health disorder) huddled under her coat in the corner of her kindergarten room. She was unresponsive to her teacher and classmates but her therapist was able to coax her to come to the play therapy room. With the help of her therapist, she was able to verbalize her distress, receive support and within forty minutes return to her classroom – ready to learn.*



In 2001, Vera French Community Mental Health Center, in partnership with the Vera French Foundation, established School-based Mental Health Services for Kids. This multi-elementary school program, developed to provide mental health care for young people by placing Master's-level therapists in local elementary schools. For more than eight years, School-based mental health programs have been making an important difference in the mental health of more than 2,000 children by providing an array of mental health services at school.



### Children's Mental Health Care Needs: Real, Common, and Treatable

*The evidence is growing:* Mental health problems affect one in every five young people at any given time. An estimated two-thirds of all young people with mental health problems are not getting the help they need. It is estimated that the number of children who have mental disorders range from 7.7 million to 12.8 million.

More needs to be done to get mental health services to children in need and prevent problems for kids at risk. The goal of all concerned is to overcome barriers to access and connect children and their families with needed services. Evidence shows that one of the best ways to accomplish that goal is through School-based programs.

The Vera French School-based Mental Health Program provides access to comprehensive mental health care for children in Scott County elementary schools. Children served face challenges including: depression, anxiety, trauma, grief, abuse, ADD - ADHD, serious emotional disturbances and suicide.

### Services Offered by Master's-level Therapists Include:

- Mental Health Evaluation
- Individual Therapy
- Group Therapy
- Family Therapy
- Parent Skill Development
- Psychiatric Consultation
- Teacher Support and Consultation
- Advocacy for Students and Families
- Crisis Intervention
- Collaboration with School Community (teachers, guidance counselors, principals)
- Connecting Students and Families to Community Resources
- Parent/Child Interaction Therapy

## Who We Help and Why it Matters...

**Elementary aged children** – benefit when they overcome challenges that keep them from achieving success in school and in their homes.

**Families** – benefit by their improved ability to proactively respond to their child's behavior.

**Teachers** – benefit by having more time for teaching when children with severe emotional/behavioral problems are successful.

**Other Children** – benefit because there is less classroom disruption.

**Community** – benefits by early intervention that helps children cope and adapt, reducing the likelihood of substance abuse, truancy and dropout.

*Children's Mental Health Matters Because:*

*Our Children are our Greatest Resource*

### Successful Outcomes

- A significant decline in disciplinary referrals and police/court contacts
- Increased classroom attentiveness and decreased distractive behaviors
- Significantly less rebellious behavior, less victimization, increased positive peer associations
- Improved grades and fewer special education referrals

