

Memorial Hospital / **Press Release**
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Memorial Hospital Foundation Receives Behavioral Health Grant for 2005 Hurricane Survivor Initiatives

GULFPORT, Miss.—The Memorial Hospital Foundation received a \$596,000 grant for Memorial Behavioral Health (MBH) and the University of Southern Mississippi (USM) Marriage and Family Therapy Program to administer mental health services in 16 area schools.

These programs are the result of efforts begun by Memorial following Hurricane Katrina and were launched at the beginning of the 2008-2009 school year in the Gulfport, Long Beach, Pass Christian, Bay-Waveland and Hancock County school districts. Memorial sought to expand its school-based health clinics into mental health for school-aged children.

The American Red Cross Hurricane Recovery Program as part of the program's behavioral health initiative provided the grant, with Johns Hopkins and USM as key partners in this important project, for survivors of the 2005 hurricane season.

This grant has funded five mental health clinicians based at MBH, and an additional five graduate students in the USM Marriage and Family Therapy Program. These teams will deliver mental health services to school-aged children suffering from the impacts of Hurricane Katrina and other related mental health problems. The goal of the project is to conduct approximately 3,000 mental health sessions for more than 1,100 children during the grant period.

During the first three months of the program, clinicians have delivered mental health services to more than 415 school-aged children and conducted over 600 mental health sessions.

“There remains a great need for mental health services in our schools,” said Michael Zieman, Administrator of Memorial Behavioral Health. “Although Katrina made landfall in 2005, the impact is still felt by the children in our school systems all along the coast. Near misses by Hurricane Gustav and Ike contributed to increased anxiety and our children are not immune to it,” said Zieman.

According to terms of the grant, the USM Marriage and Family Therapy graduate students must remain in a Katrina-impact area for up to four years after graduation after their work with the initiative.

"Memorial is pleased to have led the efforts to expand mental health services to the younger residents of our service area and are proud to join with John Hopkins and USM in bringing these needed resources into our community," said Gary Marchand, Memorial Hospital President /CEO.

Dr. Jeff Hinton, co-director of the project and professor in the Marriage and Family Therapy Program at USM, is excited about the grant: "This program has been a wonderful learning experience for our graduate students. More importantly, they will be available to help fill the great need for mental health professionals along the Gulf Coast after they graduate."

Professors from Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health have been asked to evaluate the success of the program. The grant's evaluation team includes Dr. Larry Wissow, child psychiatry; Dr. Judy Bass, mental health services research; and Ms. Kelly Bower, community nursing.

For additional information, please contact Memorial Hospital Foundation at (228) 865-3419.

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