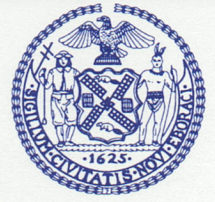




News...

FROM COUNCIL MEMBER

G. OLIVER KOPPELL



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For Immediate Release

KOPPELL FIGHTING TO RESTORE FUNDING FOR CHILDREN UNDER FIVE MENTAL HEALTH INITIATIVE

Council Member Oliver Koppell, Chair, Committee on Mental Health, Mental Retardation, Alcoholism, Drug Abuse and Disability Services, has called for a full restoration of the “Children Under Five Mental Health Initiative” in the city budget. Because the Mayor has refused to include the \$1.2 million requested for this initiative in his FY 2012 Executive Budget, Koppell is fighting to have the funding restored by the Council.

At a press conference on the steps of City Hall on Thursday, May 26, 2011, where he was joined by parents, children, providers and advocates, he said, *“To the extent that children displaying the need for mental health services in the early years of life receive these services, the more likely it is that treatment at a greater cost can be prevented in the future.”*

Since 2005, the “Children Under Five Mental Health Initiative” has been the only source of funding (with few exceptions) for mental health services for young children. Over 3,000 children and their families have benefited from these services. Many of these children have been neglected physically and/or sexually abused, have experienced various forms of trauma such as the loss of a parent or sibling to violence, have endured multiple moves in foster care or are being raised by parents with severe mental illness.

(Koppell cont.)

“A high and growing number of pre-school expulsions because of aggressive sexual or other disruptive behavior, stemming from abuse and trauma, is a clear indication of the need for intervention and remediation by mental health professionals,” Koppell said.

Experts in the field of neuroscience have shown that because of the brain’s plasticity in a child’s early years, treatment at a young age is likely to be successful and forestall problems in later years. ***“Cutting the Children Under Five Mental Health initiative, would not only jeopardize the current health and well-being of the youngest New Yorkers, but also the future of these small children,”*** said Joan Siegel, Senior Policy Associate for Health & Mental Health, at Citizens’ Committee for Children of New York.

Dr. Susan Chinitz, a Riverdale resident, and Director of the Early Childhood Center and Associate Professor of Clinical Pediatrics at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine, said, ***“The only source of funding for accessible mental health services for infants and young children comes from the “Children Under Five Mental Health Initiative.” It is critical that this funding be restored.”***

“Injuries and ailments in early childhood, such as broken bones and bloody noses, usually receive attention because they are visible. However, there are wounds that often go untreated because they are invisible, but are as important to cure as physical injuries. I am committed to the restoration of funds to help heal these hidden wounds in our youngest, most vulnerable children,” Koppell concluded.