

# Community Institute for Psychotherapy

1330 Lincoln Ave #201, San Rafael, CA 94901-2141

Phone (415) 459-5999 Fax (415) 459-5602 [www.cipmarin.org](http://www.cipmarin.org)

## 2021-2022 News & Notes



### **June 2021 News and Notes** **CIP Schools Report 2020-2021** **By Robin Joy Berenson, PhD, LMFT**

CIP's School-based Services were provided to students at Miller Creek and Davidson middle schools. Their purpose is to address at-risk youth's mental health needs through a continuum of care offering prevention, early intervention, and treatment so that students can overcome presenting problems, stay in school, and enjoy healthy social development. Emphasis is given to the development of personal strengths and inner resources, including resilience, and healthy coping and decision-making skills, so that youth can avoid substance abuse, and other negative behaviors.

The Schools Project for Disadvantaged Students is CIP's oldest and largest offsite program, founded in 1991. Intern-therapists meet weekly in one-on-one or group counseling sessions with students experiencing urgent emotional distress at imminent risk of school failure. The youth, who span many cultures, are able to discuss an array of issues they may face, including adjustment, emotional distress, and social, academic, and family-related pressures.

Wisdom Warriors Groups, begun in 2011, serve middle-school students experiencing problems with making friends, avoiding risk, managing stress and anger, understanding boundaries, and similar problems. For six one-hour sessions, 6 to 7 students meet weekly for discussion and skill building in resiliency, emotional regulation, interpersonal relationships, and so on. These groups are very successful and highly popular with the students, who appreciate the safe place provided to discuss "the hard issues," and the opportunity to give and receive positive peer feedback.

In 2020-2021 all school-based services were delivered via tele-health. It required additional effort by all to overcome the scheduling, technical, and other difficulties this entailed. Nevertheless, the programs were successfully administered throughout the school year.

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In the Schools Project, we provided the safe place for children's expression of deep emotions, including sadness, anger, confusion, and disappointment, as well as great loneliness and hopelessness. We enabled them to feel heard through the listening and supportive attention of a caring adult. We stressed the importance of exercise, time outdoors, and limiting screen time, for themselves as well as their parents.

In some ways the focus this year was more internal than social or friend focused. Kids learned a lot about themselves. Many children made great use of the therapy, while others missed sessions, "forgetting what day it was," or being otherwise occupied.

Among presenting problems for students or household members, we heard about eating disorders, cutting, addictions, online bullying, and domestic violence. We addressed these through therapy and, often, referrals for caregivers to community resources. Some of these behaviors were just beginning and others already entrenched.

We held 10 Wisdom Warriors groups, five at each school. As always, the groups received high marks from participating students:

"It was so good to have this group with you guys, I felt like I could talk to you and really tell my feelings, and just have a positive time. I learned that others in the group feel a lot of the same things I do."

"Something I've learned is that I don't have to believe all of my thoughts and feelings. My feelings can be all over the place sometimes, but I can still control my actions. I can choose to do nothing and let myself calm down."

"I feel more powerful to think about myself and my decisions. It takes practice but it makes sense to me. I wish I had learned these things before."