

# Newark Central School District Wins \$ 625,000 Mental Health Grant



**N**ewark Central School District recently learned it is part of three-district consortium that has been awarded the federal Mental Health Awareness Training Grant (MHAT) sponsored by SAMHSA (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration) that will provide \$125,000 a year for the next 5 years to the NCSD.

Laurie Palmisano, Director of Community School and Grant Services, said the grant has two main goals:

- To increase the capacity of participating school districts to recognize and appropriately respond to students experiencing mental health problems.
- To increase the capacity of participating school districts to partner with community agencies to refer and support students experiencing mental health problems.

Palmisano said the project will focus on developing and implementing a “systemic, community schools-based infrastructure that will deliver trauma informed training to prevent serious mental health issues among our students and respond appropriately to those who are experiencing a mental health crisis or the onset of a mental health disorder.”

“During this project, we will train 16 Regional Turnkey Trainers in Therapeutic Crisis Intervention (TCIS) and 16 Regional Turnkey Trainers in Youth Mental Health First Aid (yMHFA) from Newark, Lyons and Clyde-Savannah school districts.

She said Therapeutic Crisis Intervention (TCIS) is a crisis prevention and intervention program created by Cornell University and designed to teach participants how to help at-risk children learn constructive ways to handle crisis.

“The goal is to create not only a safe environment, but also one that promotes growth and development so students can learn to manage a variety of feelings and emotions including frustration, failure, anger, rejection, hurt, and depression,” Palmisano said.

She said Youth Mental Health First Aid (yMHFA) is designed to teach how to help an adolescent (age 12-18) who is experiencing a mental health or addictions challenge or is in crisis.

“The course introduces common mental health challenges for youth, reviews typical adolescent development and teaches a 5-step action plan for how to help young people in both crisis and non-crisis situations,” she said noting topics will include anxiety, depression, substance use, disorders in which psychosis may occur, disruptive behavior disorders (including AD/HD), and eating disorders.

By the end of the fifth year, the goal is to have 800 staff members (teachers, aides, administrators, bus drivers, cafeteria workers, law enforcement, community partner staff from the three school districts) trained in yMHFA and 296 staff will be trained in TCIS.

