



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For more information
Contact: Jenny Brandhorst
jbrandhorst@beacon-therapeutic.org
773-298-6444

Innovative Program Helps At-risk Moms, Kids Avoid Homelessness
Toughest cases helped by collaborative, unique service model

Chicago, November 30, 2011— It may take a village to raise a child, but it takes a targeted combination of cooperative support services to assist young homeless mothers to rise above a multitude of debilitating circumstances. This is what Beacon Therapeutic and its partner Heartland Alliance found when they conducted a three-year study to help at-risk mothers and their children rise from poverty, mental illness and domestic abuse.

Beacon Therapeutic, in collaboration with Heartland Alliance, hosted a forum for interested and involved organizations, funders, and stakeholders on its successful Family Assertive Community Treatment (FACT) program in early November to share highlights and results of recent FACT study findings.

Initiated in 2008, FACT enrolled participants for the program, the majority of whom were never married, unemployed and raising two or more small children. The participants were 18-25 years old at the time of enrollment. A third of them were living in a shelter with their children and nearly all had received mental health services prior to enrollment in FACT, with the most common diagnosis being depression; 45 percent had attempted suicide.

“FACT demonstrated that a coordinated approach using this model could reduce the impact of homelessness on child development,” said Susan Reyna-Guerrero, LCSW, President and CEO of Beacon Therapeutic. “By stabilizing many of the conflicting impacts on these young mothers including joblessness, mental health and substance issues, we were able to have an effect on both the mothers and their children, thus grounding the basic family unit.”

Highlights of the FACT study results included:

- Significant increases in the number of days living in their own homes (e.g., own apartments);
- Significant decreases in the number and extent to which they experienced mental health symptoms including depressive symptoms;
- Significant decreases in the severity and number of PTSD symptoms;
- Significant decreases in level and feelings of overall parental stress (parenting incompetence);

- continued -

One of the key lessons learned from the FACT program was the value and importance of “systems integration.” Many child welfare, educational, mental health and legal systems can play a role in the success or failure of young mothers struggling against homelessness and instability; each has something to offer, but coordination is essential. Through coalition building efforts FACT demonstrated the value of bringing disparate groups together – systems and service organizations—to advocate on behalf of these young women and their children, align services provided, cross train staff and conduct early interventions on behalf of the target population. FACT was the driving force behind the formation of a coalition aimed at involving decision-makers across the various systems that have an impact on this hard-to-reach group of young mothers.

FACT is based on ACT (Assertive Community Treatment), a program proved to be both cost effective as well as clinically successful serving people at risk. Beacon, together with partner Heartland Alliance, links at-risk families to housing, jobs, treatment, education, healthcare and financial support. The FACT program was evaluated by the University of Illinois at Chicago Center for Mental Health Services Research and Policy along with Beacon’s Continuous Quality Improvement department.

FACT received funding from Conrad N. Hilton Foundation and the National Center on Family Homelessness with additional support from local funders including the McCormick Foundation, Polk Bros. Foundation, Prince Charitable Foundation and the Chicago Department of Family Support Services.

Beacon Therapeutic Mission

Empower at-risk children and families by providing accredited educational, mental health, and social services.

About Beacon Therapeutic

Founded in 1968 as a Therapeutic Day School, Beacon is approved by The Joint Commission, Illinois State Board of Education, AdvancEd, and Illinois Department of Human Services. As a multi-site organization, Beacon has three core programs and key initiatives: Therapeutic Day Schools (elementary and high school); Homeless Outreach Services; and Outpatient Mental Health Services. Visit www.beacon-therapeutic.org to learn more about the organization.

#