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**CAMP GREENTREE - A SUMMER HAVEN FOR HOMELESS YOUTH IN MONTGOMERY COUNTY**

*Community Mental Health Provider Fills Gap for Youth with Complex Behavioral Needs*

ROCKVILLE, MD – July 1, 2024 – A five-week summer camp designed to support youth with complex behavioral needs experiencing homelessness will open July 1 in Montgomery County, Md.

Camp Greentree is a partnership between JSSA and Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS), who acts as the key referral partner. JSSA will provide staffing and programming to operate the camp, which is being funded through grants from: MCPS; the McKinney-Vento National Center for Homeless Education; and the Maryland Consortium on Coordinated Community Supports (the Consortium) and Maryland Community Health Resources Commission (CHRC).

This unique approach to emotional and behavioral support increases access to mental health care for youth experiencing homelessness by providing them with therapeutic treatment while they attend a traditional summer camp.

“Our camp will allow children to learn about their strengths and needs and engage in therapeutic activities without feeling stigmatized or like they are participating in treatment,” said Joe Wilson, JSSA’s Senior Director of Mental Health Services. “This program is sorely needed.”

Camp Greentree helps children experiencing limited success in school and making friends develop the core skills they need to build positive and productive relationships with peers and adults in their lives. During its first year, the camp will run from July 1 to August 2 and serve 69 children ages 5 through 12 who MCPS has referred.

“The Consortium is thrilled to partner with JSSA to support the mental health and wellbeing of students experiencing homelessness,” said Consortium Chair David Rudolph. “We look forward to working with JSSA as they implement Camp Greentree and other important programs.”



The grant to JSSA was one of 129 grants awarded statewide by the Consortium/CHRC to support student behavioral health programs and services. Funding was made available by the Maryland General Assembly under the Blueprint for Maryland's Future (Ch. 36 of 2021). The Consortium/CHRC grant to JSSA will support a comprehensive array of services for students and families in Montgomery County, including Camp Greentree. MCPS has identified 1,500 students experiencing homelessness in the district. This is based on the criteria outlined by the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.

Camp Greentree has also created seasonal jobs, as additional staff were hired to support the camp program alongside JSSA's clinicians. A low camper-to-staff ratio is crucial for providing campers with the support they need to meet their individualized needs.

JSSA, a community health and social wellness agency, actively works with MCPS to support students who may otherwise have limited access to mental health services. Mental health clinicians are currently embedded in 39 MCPS schools, and that number is expected to expand to 75 in the coming school year thanks to a recent grant from CHRC. JSSA's MindCraft Program provides comprehensive mental health support to students and their families, and the addition of Camp Greentree this summer builds on an already significant presence in the county school community.

#### **About JSSA:**

JSSA is the trusted health and social wellness agency serving the National Capital Region. We help neighbors and their families through their most vulnerable moments with warmth and acceptance. We focus on four core areas: supporting people's mental health, helping people with disabilities find meaningful jobs, caring for older adults so they can safely age at home, and offering dignity and comfort to hospice patients. More information about JSSA and our mental health services is available at [www.jssa.org](http://www.jssa.org).

#### **About the Maryland Community Health Resources Commission**

The grant was awarded by the Maryland Community Health Resources Commission (CHRC), established by the Maryland General Assembly in 2005 to expand access to health services in underserved communities. Since its inception, the CHRC has awarded 846 grants totaling \$282.5 million in funding, supporting programs in every jurisdiction of the State. These programs have collectively served more than 628,078 Marylanders. More information about the CHRC can be found at <https://health.maryland.gov/mchrc/Pages/home.aspx>

#### **About the Maryland Consortium on Coordinated Community Supports**

The Maryland Consortium on Coordinated Community Supports (Consortium) was established by the Maryland General Assembly as part of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future to create a statewide framework to increase access to coordinated, non-stigmatized, comprehensive



behavioral health services statewide. The CHRC is the fiscal agent and provides staff support for the Consortium. More information about the Consortium can be found at <https://health.maryland.gov/mchrc/Pages/Maryland-Consortium-on-Consolidated-Community-Supports.aspx>

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