**Office of Sponsored Programs Spotlight**

**Mental Health on Campus**

This project funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration for $145,000 over three years fills a critical gap in mental health services currently being provided on our campuses. The program under the leadership of Kate Mahoney, Executive Director of the Naomi Ruth Cohen Mental Health Institute. The Institute, part of the clinical counseling department at TCSPPs Chicago’s campus, is dedicated to eradicating the stigma associated with mental illness making it ideally suited to provide this service. Beginning with TCSPPs Chicago campus the project will implement Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) training, with the goal of expanding these services to local colleges and universities in our local Chicago community. Project staff will train relevant school personnel to recognize the signs and symptoms of mental illness in students enrolled in higher education and how to appropriately refer these students to treatment.

The project will focus on Chicago area college and university students recognizing college and university students have unique stressors and risk factors related to the demands of school: balancing academic, social, and employment responsibilities while being independent and away from family, friends, and other supports — often for the first time. More than 75% of mental illnesses develop before age 24, making college campuses ideal locations for early identification. This important Mental Health First Aid training will help reduce the stigma surrounding mental illness in young adults and improve mental health literacy on participating college campuses. This project will provide training for ten project staff members from the institute to become certified as MHFA instructors in the Higher Education curriculum. These instructors will then deliver training at city and community colleges, four-year universities, and graduate schools throughout the Chicago area.

The first training was held on the Chicago Campus on December 18, 2018, with a stellar turnout of faculty and staff. Participants were engaged and successfully completed the training. The team is scheduled to conduct an onsite 5-day instructor training led by the National Council on Behavioral Health focused on certifying more instructors to teach the Mental Health First Aid course April 29 - May 3, 2019. This program fits within our defining elements of promoting cultural awareness and competence, and we remain committed to expanding the base of knowledge in psychology and related behavioral and health sciences.