

School Based Counseling Services

Description

East Orange School-Based Counseling: For more than 30 years, MHA has applied for and received a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) from the City of East Orange to deliver supportive mental health counseling services to high school and middle school students across various East Orange schools.

Montclair Child Development Center Mental Health Counseling: MHA offers clinical mental health consultation services to the Montclair Child Development Center (MCDC) across its four locations—Montclair, Glen Ridge, Orange, and Belleville—for their Head Start and Early Head Start programs. This fee-for-service agreement has enabled MHA to provide MCDC with a licensed counselor who conducts classroom observations, assessments, and offers in-class supportive interventions. Additionally, services and support are available to staff and parents, including psychoeducational presentations that introduce positive behavioral support strategies for both groups.

NJ Performing Arts Center / MHA Collaboration: Supported by a grant from the Healthcare Foundation, NJ Performing Arts Center (NJPAC) and MHA formed a collaborative partnership. This alliance allows MHA to offer mental health resources to NJPAC students, parents, and teaching artists as NJPAC carries out its creative programming. In-class support is provided to students when addressing sensitive topics, and ongoing parent support groups are co-led by MHA clinicians.

Personnel

East Orange School-Based Counseling: This program utilizes the services of one part-time Licensed Clinical Social Worker, who works with one or two graduate social work or counseling interns.

Montclair Child Development Center Mental Health Counseling: One part-time Mental Health Clinician, working 20 hours per week, provides evaluations, assessments, and counseling to MCDC preschool students and their families.

NJ Performing Arts Center / MHA Collaboration: One part-time Licensed Clinical Social Worker.

Program Highlights

East Orange School-Based Counseling: During FY2025, MHA provided mental health counseling services to students in the following East Orange schools: Cicely Tyson Middle and High Schools, Fresh Start Middle and High Schools, and STEM Middle and High Schools. The Licensed Clinical Social Worker, along with a graduate-level social work intern, served 60 middle and high school students. Below are some examples of how students utilized their time with MHA mental health clinicians:

- Future planning for after high school graduation

- Gaining resources to assist with homelessness or domestic violence
- Processing trauma and learning healthy coping mechanisms
- Exploring absenteeism
- Addressing issues with classroom behaviors

Montclair Child Development Center Mental Health Counseling: In FY2025, the counselor dedicated 633.5 hours to providing classroom support to children and teachers, as well as parent support at each location. Resources such as PerformCare were provided to children and their families to help bridge service gaps. Children received individual sessions incorporating techniques such as mindfulness, play therapy, emotional regulation, and self-expression to help them better understand and manage their behaviors. The MHA counselor also conducted outreach and educational series for parents and families, successfully engaging them in the services offered at MCDC. Additionally, the counselor provided training and guidance to teachers on how to effectively support the children in the program.

NJ Performing Arts Center / MHA Collaboration: In FY2025, the MHA Licensed Clinical Social Worker provided a total of 367 hours of professional and personal development sessions, support groups, and direct services. The professional and personal development sessions covered topics such as classroom management techniques for addressing behavioral challenges and strategies for engaging students in activities. Support groups offered NJPAC parents a supportive space to connect and discuss issues affecting their children, including managing stress and anxiety, supporting their children in making friends, and coping with bullying. Direct services included individual youth sessions focused on concerns such as family issues, anxiety, bullying, emotional regulation, inattentiveness, and impulse control. Additionally, the Licensed Clinical Social Worker provided support to students during the Dodge Poetry Program, which celebrates poetry as a catalyst for social change.

FY 2026 Goals

East Orange School-Based Counseling: MHA will maintain its commitment to delivering supportive mental health counseling services to a minimum of 50 students across the following East Orange Schools: STEM, Fresh Start, and Cicely Tyson Middle and High Schools. Through personalized counseling, students will receive emotional support, behavioral interventions, and strategies to enhance their well-being and academic success. For students requiring additional or specialized services beyond what MHA can provide, appropriate referrals will be made to community partners and external mental health resources to ensure comprehensive support. This ongoing effort aims to foster a nurturing environment where students can thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.

Montclair Child Development Center Mental Health Counseling: MHA is dedicated to offering ongoing mental health consultation to the MCDC community. This comprehensive support includes guidance on effective classroom management techniques to promote a positive learning environment, psychoeducational sessions to increase awareness and understanding of mental health topics, and assistance in connecting families and staff with relevant resources and external support services. Additionally, MHA facilitates support groups designed to foster peer connection, provide emotional support, and promote resilience among students, staff, and families. Through these efforts, MHA aims to

create a supportive and empowering community that prioritizes mental health and well-being for all members of MCDC.

NJ Performing Arts Center/MHA Collaboration: MHA is committed to sustaining and strengthening its partnership with NJPAC, recognizing the partnership as a vital resource that has significantly benefited students, teaching artists, and parents alike. MHA will continue to provide a licensed clinician who will offer individualized and group counseling services tailored to meet the diverse needs of the NJPAC community. In addition to direct counseling, the clinician will provide ongoing consultation to staff and teaching artists to support the integration of mental health best practices within programming. MHA will also assist in connecting families and participants with relevant resources and community services to ensure comprehensive support. This continued collaboration aims to foster a nurturing environment that promotes emotional well-being, resilience, and personal growth for all involved in NJPAC's creative and educational initiatives.