LSUHSC PSYCHIATRY DEVELOPS NEW PROGRAM TO ADDRESS MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS OF KATRINA DISPLACED AND FUTURE DISASTERS

New Orleans, LA – A grant in the amount of $749,695 from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation is funding a program developed by the Department of Psychiatry at LSU Health Sciences Center New Orleans to enhance mental health services and capacity in Katrina-affected areas and to better meet mental health needs following future disasters. Led by co-principal investigators Howard Osofsky, MD, PhD, Professor and Chairman of Psychiatry at LSU Health Sciences Center New Orleans and Joy Osofsky, PhD, Professor of Pediatrics and Psychiatry, Head of Pediatric Mental Health, and Director of LSUHSC’s Violence Intervention Program, the New Orleans Metropolitan Area Family Resiliency Project at LSU Health Sciences Center New Orleans will:

- Enhance, provide and evaluate critically needed evidence-based behavioral and mental health services for children and their families in school settings and for first responders and families in New Orleans, St. Bernard, and Plaquemines parishes
- Conduct training for mental health professionals and others on evidence-based intervention protocols through the implementation of Learning Collaboratives in the Gulf Region in collaboration with the National Child Traumatic Stress Network
- Develop Youth Leadership summer and year-round programs to support youth resilience, build self-efficacy, and decrease risky behaviors
- Develop prevention and intervention strategies that can be used as a knowledge base for future disasters and to inform policy decisions
- Develop a collaborative base with other public health and service agencies in the heavily impacted areas to re-establish needed infrastructure, increase collaborative efforts, and enhance service accessibility for children and families
- Conduct awareness-building training for child-serving professionals and first responder counselors to increase their knowledge, capacity, and ability to make appropriate referrals

“Children and families who have returned to the New Orleans metropolitan area, while pleased to be back, continue to react to the ongoing stress, hardship, demoralization, economic losses, persistent problems with living arrangements, and uncertainties about the future,” noted Dr. Joy Osofsky, Professor of Pediatrics and Psychiatry. “First responders, such as police, firefighters and other emergency workers deal with the slow recovery, community difficulties, problems with infrastructure, and increasing numbers of personal and family stresses.”

“The outcomes we can expect for participants in this program include reductions in individual and family symptoms, and school-related behavior problems.” said Dr. Howard Osofsky, Professor and Chairman of Psychiatry at LSU Health Sciences Center New Orleans. “We expect to see an improvement in school performance, family strengths, and both individual and community resiliency.”

About LSU Health Sciences Center New Orleans

LSU Health Sciences Center New Orleans educates the majority of Louisiana’s health care professionals in its Schools of Medicine, Dentistry, Nursing, Allied Health Professions, Graduate Studies, and Public Health. In the vanguard of biomedical research in a number of areas in a worldwide arena, the annual economic impact of LSUHSC pre-Katrina was more than $1 billion. LSUHSC faculty, residents, and students take care of Louisianians, including the medically indigent and under-served, in hospitals and clinics throughout the state. LSUHSC faculty continued to care for their patients during and following the 2005 flooding which decimated LSUHSC New Orleans campuses, and to provide immediate and continuing outreach services. LSUHSC resumed its educational and research enterprises on temporary campuses in Baton Rouge less than four weeks after Katrina. LSUHSC leadership continues to work with federal, state, and local agencies to rebuild Louisiana’s health infrastructure. For more information, visit www.lsuhsc.edu
About the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation focuses on the pressing health and health care issues facing our country. As the nation’s largest philanthropy devoted exclusively to improving the health and health care of all Americans, we work with a diverse group of organizations and individuals to identify solutions and achieve comprehensive, meaningful and timely change. For 35 years we’ve brought experience, commitment and a rigorous, balanced approach to the problems that affect the health and health care of those we serve. When it comes to helping Americans lead healthier lives and get the care they need, we expect to make a difference in your lifetime. For more information visit www.rwjf.org.

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