



# NeTWorks

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### *Above and Beyond:*

## Making a Difference in Philadelphia's Schools

While much media attention has been paid to the challenges facing public education, NET's **School-Based Social Services** program is having a positive impact and offering concrete solutions at more than two dozen Philadelphia public schools.

"After we link up students to behavioral health services, i.e. outpatient, wraparound services, etc., they still have to succeed in the school setting. We have to have an impact on the whole environment, because if we don't they'll likely fall back into the same behaviors," said Chris Waiters, SBSS Program Director.

Waiters oversees eight Resource Specialists. "Of the 11 providers in the city, we have the most seasoned staff; some have been with our program since its inception in 1997-98. They are indeed very resourceful; they know how to navigate the systems," said Waiters, who launched his professional career at NET six years ago.

"This program has one of the most dedicated and skilled group of staff that we have in any program at NET," said Regan Kelly, Division Director, PA Children, Youth & Family Services. "They consistently go above and beyond."



Students are initially identified through a comprehensive student assessment process. "In Tier

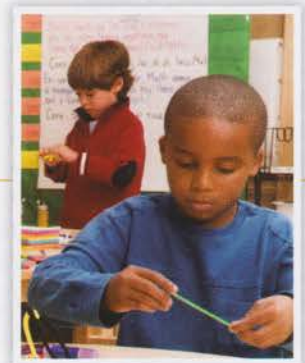
One, school personnel identify pockets of students and then use the regulations that the school has established to address behaviors. In Tier Two, the Resource Specialist becomes involved. Individualized interventions are put in place, and students are referred to us for school-based social work and case management," Waiters explained.

Resource Specialists carry a minimum caseload of 35; they provide short-term case management, brief intervention and crisis stabilization support, and brief clinically informed counseling supports in the high schools. They also link students and families to behavioral health, mental health and social service agencies; help students and families get medical assistance; and foster a team approach.

"We play a big part in helping schools manage the internal climate by creating school-wide resources and programs beyond our contract obligations," Waiters said. "Our goal is to have an impact on the overall school population."

At **Dr. Ethel Allen Promise Academy**, Resource Specialist Zenida Driver set up a mentoring program that's a partnership between Big Brothers Big Sisters and the U.S. District Attorneys' Office.

At **Reynolds Elementary School**, NET developed a rites of passage mentoring program. It incorporates Universal Design, a multipronged approach that gives every student an equal opportunity to learn. Students develop their writing skills and then go through a rigorous midterm process, during which they take an exam and write and give a speech.



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