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...Because every child deserves a childhood

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ASTOR SERVICES FOR CHILDREN & FAMILIES EXPANDS

INNOVATIVE TELEPSYCHIATRY PROGRAM

Remote-access psychiatry services for children offered in the Bronx and Hudson Valley

Hudson Valley and the Bronx, New York, April 2, 2019 – [Astor Services for Children & Families](http://www.astorservices.org), a non-profit organization that provides children's mental health services, child welfare services and early childhood development programs in New York City's Bronx borough and in the mid-Hudson Valley, has announced the Hudson Valley expansion of its Bronx-based telepsychiatry program. The evidence-based approach uses video conferencing and other telecommunications to provide professional psychiatric care remotely to children with mental and/or behavioral health challenges that are unable to visit an office.

As one of the early pioneers of telepsychiatry for children, Astor established its state-qualified program in 2017 in the Bronx, thanks to a two-year, \$150,000 grant from the van Ameringen Foundation. Each telepsychiatry session is held according to security, privacy and quality of service standards established by the New York State Office of Mental Health and the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and conducted by a licensed child psychiatrist, along with on-site, satellite staff to assist the child client with the technical aspects of a session.



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In addition to providing professional consultation services, treating psychiatrists can use the program's zoom-in, tilt and pan video technology for a sharpened ability to read the participating child's expressions, making the session more nuanced, like an in-office visit.

Astor's telepsychiatry program currently serves 30 children of elementary, middle and high school ages in the Bronx at 11 locations in the borough, including clinical Astor sites at public schools and independent locations. Recently, three locations in the Hudson Valley were added as state-approved hubs for Astor's telepsychiatry services, including a qualified psychiatrist's home office in Newburgh and independent Astor clinics throughout the Bronx and Hudson Valley.

Child participants are screened for clinical criteria, including a designated level of stability, and assessed for suitability by their parents, school counselors, and Astor clinicians. Each child undergoes at least one face-to-face session with his or her psychiatrist before engaging in the remote sessions, with continued participation in the telepsychiatry program determined on a case-by-case basis.

"Overall, the kids' participation in their psychiatric sessions has become more consistent through Astor's telepsychiatry program," said Todd Karlin, Psy.D, AED of Clinical Services at Astor Services for Children & Families. "It's more convenient for them and their parents, and the more consistently kids attend their sessions, the better the chances are for positive outcomes."

Astor's expansion of services and heightened community-school-provider partnership through telepsychiatry not only widens care for the children served by the organization, but also aligns with New York City's Community Schools Initiative that supports the expansion of mental health services in underserved communities through integrated health care, education and community efforts.



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"Astor serves more than 10,000 children, including 3,000 in some of the Bronx's most underserved communities," said James McGuirk, Ph.D., Astor's executive director and CEO. "Most of the children have little access to transportation, making it difficult for them to attend psychiatric appointments. Compounding the problem is a shortage and high cost of child psychiatrists, severely limiting options for our children's care, especially in the Bronx. Now, through Astor's telepsychiatry program, children with emotional and behavioral challenges can get the help they need remotely, giving each one ongoing access to needed treatment, increasing their chances for successful outcomes."

"Telepsychiatry answers the pressing need to find better ways to engage psychiatrists for our children, especially in the Bronx," said Dr. Karlin. "By providing a way for children that cannot travel for psychiatric services to receive them remotely in a convenient setting, telepsychiatry will give more of Astor's children and their families the help they need on a regular basis. That's a big win for the children, their families and our local communities."

About Astor

Since 1953, Astor Services for Children & Families has been providing behavioral and educational services in a caring environment where children and their families find strength, healing, hope and trust. The organization, which has been accredited with The Joint Commission's Gold Seal of Approval, now serves more than 10,000 children and families annually in more than 70 locations. Astor's range of services in the Hudson Valley (Dutchess, Orange and Ulster counties) and the Bronx include: Residential Programs; Early Childhood Programs; and Community-Based Behavioral Health and Prevention Services. Visit the organization online at www.astorservices.org

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Editor's note: A courtesy photo of Astor Child Guidance Center, 750 Tilden Street, in the Bronx, is attached.