



SAFE HORIZON RESPONDS TO WORLD TRADE CENTER TRAGEDY

Since the World Trade Center attack on September 11, 2001, Safe Horizon's Mediation Programs in New York and Kings counties have been actively involved in responding to the needs of individuals affected by the tragedy. Immediately after the attack, the agency mobilized its staff to lend assistance at the Family Assistance Centers, first at the Lexington Armory and then at Pier 94 in lower Manhattan. Additionally, hundreds of Safe Horizon staff have been available to provide victims with both financial and emotional support. To meet the needs of clients, Safe Horizon opened five additional centers throughout the five boroughs.

Numerous departments of Safe Horizon have responded to this disaster. They have provided immediate financial assistance and crisis counseling to victims and relatives of the World Trade Center tragedy. Safe Horizon has operated a 24-hour September 11th hotline that provides current and comprehensive information about services in the tri-state area including financial assistance, counseling, mental health services, employment and legal services, and anti-bias programs. The hotline has served more than 6,500 callers. In addition, Safe Horizon offers Crisis Support Groups for schools, businesses, and organizations whose employees might be experiencing trauma-related symptoms as a result of the attack.

The staff of the Safe Horizon Mediation Program has been an integral part of the agency's disaster relief efforts. Staff members and volunteer mediators have worked nights and weekends with victims and families at the Family Centers and at the hotline offering their listening and empowerment skills as they assist victims.

As a consequence of the disaster, the Manhattan Mediation Center was closed for two weeks. Manhattan Mediation staff quickly rescheduled all cases while operating from other sites. In the first days after the disaster the mediation program staff organized a telephone support outreach to all volunteer mediators, arbitrators and program contacts. For those who were more directly impacted by the tragedy, staff contacted them on a regular basis to ensure that they had appropriate means to deal with the effects of the tragedy.

The Office of ADR Programs would like to extend a well-deserved appreciation to the staff and mediators of the Manhattan and Brooklyn Mediation Centers, in addition to the hundreds of other Safe Horizon staff who have given so freely of their time and expertise to help the victims and family members of this tragic ordeal. A longer article on Safe Horizon's activities is available on the ADR Office website. Look for *Program News*, February 2002.

Washington Heights PEACE Workshop

By Antony G. Hacking & Krister Lowe

Mediators from the Washington-Heights Inwood Coalition (WHIC), a mediation and community-building organization in northern Manhattan, implemented an 8-week conflict resolution pilot project from April to June 2001 in Intermediate School 90. The success of the peace workshop has resulted in a request by the district to expand to 8 more middle schools.

The program involved 240 7th-grade students in 8 classes. Pairs of trainers worked with teachers to deliver the training one-hour a week to each of the classes. The underlying rationale of the program was to facilitate change in both the individual students and the larger culture of the school and beyond. A second guiding principle of the program was to link theory to practice. The curriculum of the program incorporated four components: (1) conflict management awareness; (2) skills training; (3) team PEACE-building projects; and (4) a PEACE festival.

Students inquired into the nature and dynamics of conflict while practicing a five-step (PEACE) conflict resolution process. Role-plays and case studies elicited from the participants were used to provide practical opportunities for skill application. Students worked in teams of from four to ten members on a peace project of their choice. Among the projects were fundraising for homeless children with AIDS in Washington Heights and for the United Nations AIDS fund, poems, speeches and murals promoting peace at IS 90, and skits and dances promoting the curriculum's concepts about peace and conflict. The program ended with a 2-hour PEACE festival—the first in the school's history. Each class presented one of its teams' peace projects, and all received medals and graduation certificates. Speeches were made by community officials including a New York State Supreme Court judge, the district's superintendent and the school's principal. The project was conceived and directed by Mary Gratereaux, Mediation Director of the WHIC.

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