

# *Putnam/Northern Westchester BOCES*



## **REGIONAL CRISIS TEAM (RCT)** **Overview of Services**

*NYS Suicide Prevention Conference*  
*September 18, 2017*

# Crisis Team Model & Theoretical Framework



- ❧ The crisis team model is an exemplar of an interdisciplinary intervention where health professionals from all disciplines come together.

Source: Roberts, A. R. (2005) *Crisis Intervention Handbook: Assessment, treatment and research*. New York: Oxford University Press.

# History of the RCT



✧ In 1999, the Putnam/Northern Westchester BOCES Regional Crisis Team (RCT) was established by Dr. Jeanne Gold, Coordinator of the Guidance & Child Study Center, after the tragic events at Columbine High School prompted proactive efforts to assist component school districts to prepare for a crisis of this magnitude.

# Purpose of the RCT



- ❧ The purpose of the RCT is to:
  - ❧ Provide **guidance, support and/or assistance** to students, staff and/or administrators following **serious crisis situations** within the PNW BOCES region that may be related to a national disaster, school violence, or the death of a school community member.
  - ❧ Provide **crisis intervention and response training and resources** as well as share **best practices** with members of the team.

# RCT Members



- ❧ The Regional Crisis Team, as it is organized today, consists of volunteers from all 18 component school districts and other community mental health agencies in the region.
- ❧ Participating School Districts: Bedford, Brewster, Briarcliff, Carmel, Chappaqua, Croton-Harmon, Garrison, Haldane, Hendrick Hudson, Katonah-Lewisboro, Lakeland, Mahopac, North Salem, Ossining, Peekskill, Putnam Valley, PNW BOCES, Somers and Yorktown.
- ❧ Participating Agencies: Bereavement Center of Westchester, Child Advocacy Center of Putnam County, ESI Employee Assistance Program, Four Winds Hospital, MHA of Westchester and Newtown Comfort (LCC K9) Dogs.

# RCT Members



- ❧ **Special Consultants:** Dr. Barbara Bernstein (MHA of Westchester), Ruth Commercio (Grief Counselor), Putnam County Department of Social Services and Westchester County Department of Community Mental Health.
- ❧ **Special Affiliates:** PNW BOCES Administrators Regional Crisis Team (ARCT), Long Island School Practitioner Action Network (LISPAN), Western Connecticut Regional Crisis Team and **Regional Suicide Safety in Schools Leadership Team.**
- ❧ **Special Resources:** PNW BOCES RCT Wikispace (<http://regionalcrisisteam.wikispaces.com/>).

# RCT Member Services



- ❧ RCT members are available to provide:
  - ❧ Assistance with **crisis planning**;
  - ❧ **Post-crisis services** (consultation, observation, and/or counseling, etc.) and follow-up (debriefing, evaluation, etc.) services provided to students, staff and/or administrators after the occurrence of a serious school crisis;
  - ❧ **Ongoing support** during the aftermath of a crisis.

# RCT Member

## Roles & Expectations

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- ❧ **Remain current and apply best practices in the areas of crisis prevention, intervention and response.**
- ❧ **Adhere to the RCT's professional code of ethics.**
- ❧ **Participate in monthly meetings.**
- ❧ **Be available to report when the RCT is activated.**
- ❧ **Promote use of the RCT in the region.**
- ❧ **Share information, materials and resources with school districts, agencies and throughout the region.**

# Monthly RCT Meetings



- Monthly meetings consist of:
  - Networking and sharing** among members.
  - Training and/or presentations** on topics related to crisis intervention and response.
  - Learning by **debriefing** recent school crisis situations.

# RCT Activation Process



- ❧ The RCT is activated when a school district representative/designee contacts the RCT facilitator (Lynn Allen or Frank Guglieri) who:
  - ❧ Collects **factual information** about the situation and determines what additional services are needed.
  - ❧ **Contacts RCT members** to report or be on standby as needed.
  - ❧ **Remains in contact** with the school district throughout the duration of the crisis situation.
  - ❧ **Facilitates** onsite debriefings with school districts and with the members of the RCT as needed or requested.

# Onsite RCT Work



- ❧ When RCT members are called in to assist a school district, they:
  - ❧ **Report to the assigned RCT facilitator** for instructions.
  - ❧ Understand that they are **responding only to the stated needs** of the school district.
  - ❧ Are aware of the importance of **supporting the school district** without being intrusive or over reactive.
  - ❧ Are cognizant that the school **district's administrators and staff members know how best to meet the needs** of their school communities.
  - ❧ Assigned RCT facilitator will **check in with RCT members** before they leave the school district where they have been dispatched to provide crisis support.

# RCT Statistics



- ☞ Since 2007 when statistics began being collected, the RCT has served over 18 schools in the region:
  - ☞ 32 responses due to student deaths
  - ☞ 12 responses due to staff member deaths
  - ☞ 10 responses due to other crisis situations
  - ☞ 54 = total responses (activation, standby, consultations, etc.)

# RCT Longevity



- ❧ The RCT has remained in existence since 1999 because of:
  - ❧ **Longstanding, proven leadership** in the areas of crisis prevention, intervention and response.
  - ❧ **Volunteer professionals** from area school districts and agencies who are committed to helping schools in times of need.
  - ❧ The team's **responsive, supportive, trustworthy and professional** approach.

# Benefits of the RCT



- ❧ The RCT benefits the school districts in the PNW BOCES region by:
  - ❧ Providing **additional guidance, support and assistance** to students, staff and/or administrators during serious school crises at any time including evenings, weekends and vacations.
  - ❧ Providing **training and relevant information** regarding crisis prevention, intervention and response.
  - ❧ **Sharing best practices and resources** to help prevent crises and effectively respond when they occur.

# RCT Affiliates



## ❧ Administrators Regional Crisis Team (ARCT)

- ❧ Serve as an arm of the PNW BOCES' Regional Crisis Team (RCT) to share best practices in the areas of crisis prevention, intervention and response as well as expand available support to school districts in the region during crisis situations.
- ❧ Establish a **network of district and building level administrators who volunteer to support other administrators** before, during and after crisis situations by being available to provide:
  - ❧ Onsite or on call assistance, guidance and support during a crisis situation, opportunities to debrief and process the events of a crisis situation and crisis resources (sample letters, emails, guidance documents, etc).

# RCT Affiliates



## ❧ Newtown Comfort (LCC K9) Dogs

### ❧ Requesting the LCC K9 Comfort Dogs:

- ❧ The **district point person will initiate the request** for one or more dogs. If the Regional Crisis Team (RCT) is activated, the team leader will make the request.

### ❧ Types of Crises:

- ❧ LCC K9 comfort dogs are **highly trained** and are prepared to respond to a variety of crisis situations, including but not limited to disasters and deaths of students or staff.
- ❧ LCC K9 comfort dogs can be helpful after any crisis that has a significant emotional impact on students and staff.

# RCT Affiliates



## ❧ Regional Suicide Safety in Schools Leadership Team

### ❧ Purpose:

- ❧ To provide a user friendly, coordinated means for schools and communities to access expertise, guidance, support and resources to create an environment of suicide safety.

### ❧ Goals:

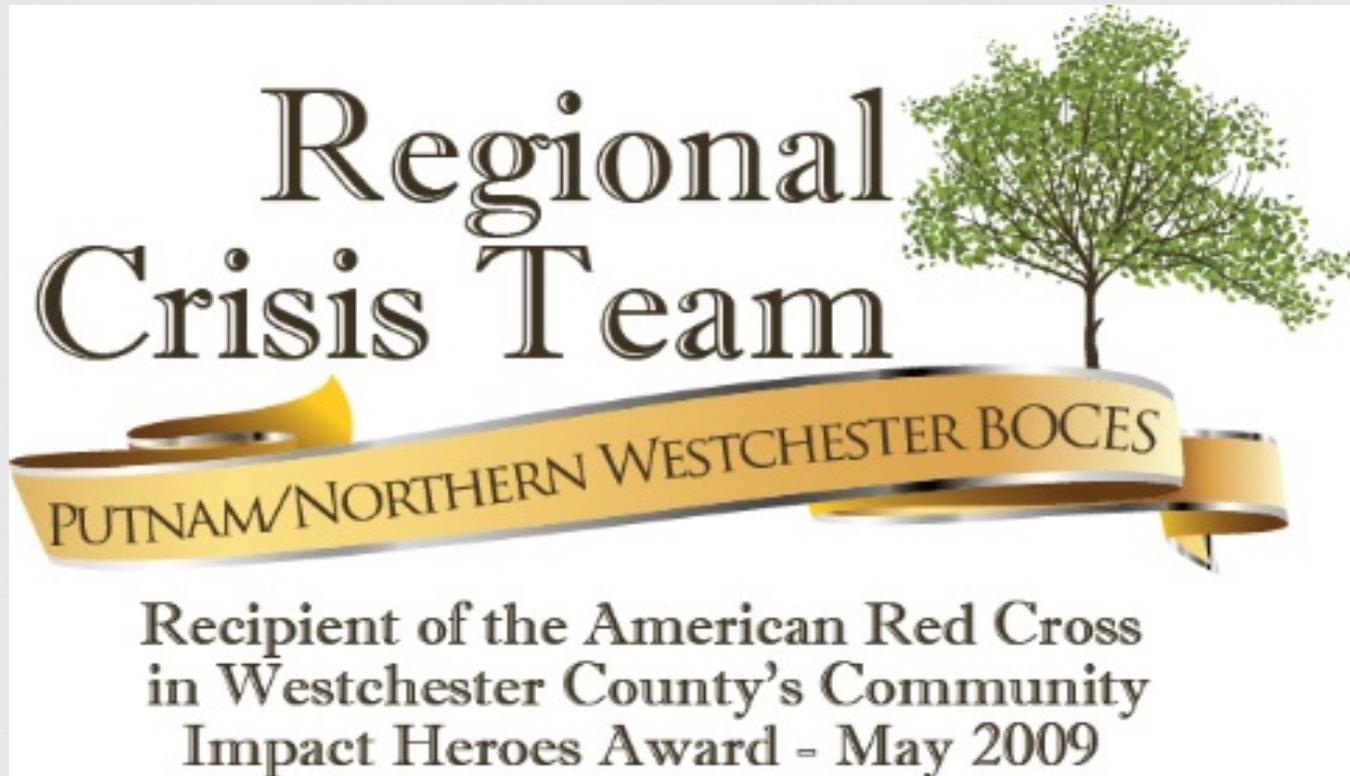
- ❧ Seek opportunities to educate (ex: host or provide trainings, etc.) school communities regarding suicide safety.
- ❧ Serve as a collaborative leadership team that can be activated to provide person-centered suicide prevention, intervention and response support to schools and the community.
- ❧ Create a vetted list of resources, sequenced trainings (suicide safety, science of causes of suicide, mindfulness, mental health first aid, etc.) and best practices in suicide safety.

# RCT Recognition



- ✧ In 2009 & 2015, the RCT was selected to present at the **New York Association of School Psychologists' Annual Conference**.
- ✧ In 2011, the RCT was selected by the University of Western Sydney, Australia (School of Medicine - [Disaster Response & Resilience Research Group](#)) to meet with a **Churchill Fellow** to extend her knowledge of models for assisting children who experience disasters specifically in school settings and with models involving school communities.
- ✧ In 2011, the RCT was **featured in an article** in the New York Association of School Psychologists' Newsletter entitled, *P/NW BOCES Regional Crisis Team: A Collaborative Professional Learning Community Approach to Crisis Response*.
- ✧ In 2016, an *Overview of PNW BOCES Regional Crisis Team* was presented at the New York State Association of School Personnel Administrators' Annual Conference.
- ✧ In 2017, an *Overview of PNW BOCES Regional Crisis Team* was presented at the New York State Suicide Prevention Conference.

*Recipient of the*  
**Red Cross of Westchester County  
Community Impact Heroes Award  
May 2009**



# RCT Replication



- At all times, the RCT is interested in supporting and improving crisis work on all levels and in all regions. As a result, similar teams have been established on Long Island in 2015-2016 and in Western Connecticut during the 2014-2015 school year.

# Contact Information



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