

Liberty, NY - Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) today announced that Sullivan County Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) has been awarded a \$399,882 grant from the U.S. Department of Education to support counseling programs in targeted elementary schools. The funds will be used to establish or expand counseling programs through hiring qualified school counselors, social workers, psychologists, and psychiatrists.

"I am pleased that these funds will place more counseling services in Sullivan County elementary schools," Hinchey said. "School counseling programs are essential to providing children with the tools they need to develop friendships, problem solve and learn how to work together during their most formative years of development. By providing these young students with mental health services, schools are helping to remove obstacles to learning and encouraging academic achievement."

Counseling services will use a developmental, prevention approach, and will be designed and employed with the participation of parents of the involved students. Sullivan County BOCES will use the funds to help close the gap between their students and mental health professional ratios recommended by the law. The services will also try to reduce the number of disciplinary referrals in schools involved in the program.

"Students need these kind of counseling services at the earliest age possible. The grant will allow us to provide the kind of counseling that will assist students in the present and prevent problems in the future," said Dr. Martin Handler, District Superintendent of Sullivan County Board of Cooperative Education Services.

The grant comes from the Department of Education's Elementary and Secondary School Counseling Program.