



# Center for Multicultural Human Services

VPP Investment Partner Series



## ■ Center for Multicultural Human Services

*A familiar voice in an unfamiliar land.*

Imagine the frustration of parents who do not speak English, trying to get help for a child who is having difficulties in her new American school. Or the isolation of a child dealing with the emotional and physical scars of torture they endured before escaping his war-torn country. Imagine their relief when they find help and reassurance from a counselor or social worker who speaks their language.

Urdu, Vietnamese, Dari, Japanese, Kurdish, Italian, German.... The Center for Multicultural Human Services

(CMHS) is a familiar voice in an unfamiliar land because it is able to provide a range of mental health, social, and educational services to immigrants and refugees in more than 30 languages. The diversity and dedication of the staff is testament to this organization's passion for providing comprehensive, culturally sensitive services to ethnically rich populations, and to sharing its experiences with other service providers. Says CMHS Executive Director Dennis Hunt, "We can be cultural interpreters for clients as well as for colleagues who want to learn a new language or service."



## ■ Profile

Center for Multicultural Human Services (CMHS) provides mental health, educational, legal, and social services in over 30 languages to residents of the Washington metropolitan region. CMHS also offers training and consultation nationally and internationally.

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### Facts

**Founded: 1992**

**Executive Director: Dr. Dennis Hunt**

**Chair, Board of Directors: N. Thomas Connally, MD**

**2005:**

**Staff: 35 full-time staff, 65 part-time staff**

**Budget: \$4.5 million**

**Children Served: 1,559**

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### Mission and History

The mission of the Center for Multicultural Human Services (CMHS) is to help people from ethnically diverse backgrounds succeed by providing comprehensive, culturally sensitive mental health services and by conducting research and training to make such services more widely available.

CMHS was founded in 1992 by Dr. Dennis Hunt to respond to the social and mental health needs of the growing immigrant and refugee population in the National Capital Region. This organization grew out of Hunt's work in the 1980s finding foster placement for unaccompanied Vietnamese minors through Catholic Charities in Richmond, VA. Over the years, CMHS has evolved into a multi-dimensional service provider responding to the needs of the

growing immigrant and refugee community in the region. The organization, whose professional staff and volunteers speak more than 30 languages, also trains local, national, and international human service professionals to provide culturally appropriate services to people in need.

### Services

CMHS is a nonprofit organization staffed by multi-ethnic, multilingual social workers, psychologists, psychiatrists, counselors, education specialists, art therapists and graduate interns from local universities.

CMHS offers a broad range of mental health, social, educational, health and language services geared to the unique values and characteristics of individuals and families from diverse cultures. They help people understand and navigate American culture and organizations so they can become self-sufficient. The CMHS approach is holistic, community, and family-centered, with a special focus on children and at-risk youth.

The majority of CMHS's work is concentrated in preventive services, including programs for at-risk youth, parenting skills, anger management classes, and psychiatric services for children and adults. CMHS has developed extensive experience and expertise in treating people of all ages who are dealing with traumatic stress resulting from surviving war in their homelands. In addition, CMHS helps people navigate a new environment through literacy, English, and life and job skills training, as well as transportation, interpreting, and emergency shelter services.

For over 10 years, CMHS has offered clinical training programs for emerging professionals in psychology, social work, and counseling. Their training programs are model programs for building the cultural competence of the U.S. mental health workforce in order to increase access to quality mental health care for critically underserved, culturally and linguistically diverse population.

### Notable Awards and Honors

- Winner, Silver Telly Award, for the Children of War video based on CMHS' Children of War play, 2005.
- Outstanding Volunteer Program of the Year, Volunteer Fairfax, 1999
- Outstanding Nonprofit of the Year, Leadership Fairfax, 1999

## ■ Performance Summary and Fact Sheet

### Summary

CMHS is a stronger organization than it was in 2001, better serving its children and families. Its effectiveness and sustainability have increased as well.

### Key Information

- *Date, years, and stage of VPP Investment:* December 2001; 4 years (later-stage; partially funded)
- *Capital committed and disbursed by VPP:* \$2,984,830 committed; \$2,461,000 disbursed
- *Estimated children to be served in 2010:* 8,559
- *Revenue increase & % budget growth:* \$2.6 to \$4.5 million – 73% in four years
- *Leveraged funding:* \$1.6 million
- *Expansion to new places and coverage:* Three new school-based programs and new coverage in DC

### Aspiration and Goals

The VPP investment partnership will help CMHS achieve its vision to be recognized locally, nationally, and internationally as a leader in helping at-risk children and families from low-income and diverse cultural backgrounds overcome the obstacles that prevent them from achieving healthy functioning. CMHS hopes to expand its services to benefit significantly more children and families; refine its model for services to at-risk children from multicultural backgrounds to achieve greater effectiveness and impact; and provide consultation and training services to help to adapt and replicate its model regionally, nationally, and internationally. More specifically, the CMHS vision for 2007 includes:

- Increasing the number of children receiving extended developmental services from a current 785 children annually in Northern Virginia to 2,500 children annually throughout the National Capital Region, including establishing new branch offices in Montgomery County, MD; Washington, DC; and Herndon VA. Without VPP's support, the expected growth would likely be approximately 1,300 children and only one branch office.



- Deepening the level of services received by children to ensure that larger numbers transition from “at-risk” levels to “thriving” instead of movement only to “vulnerable” or “stable” status. This will involve developing outcome measures for all services provided and the ability to produce research data documenting intervention/treatment effectiveness.
- Providing consultation and training to professionals in the US and abroad on the CMHS model of services for at-risk children from multicultural backgrounds, including development of well-defined, replicable therapeutic interventions to help children traumatized by displacement, war, or abuse achieve their full potential. This would serve not only as a revenue-generating activity, but also as a way to fill the gap regionally for children unable to receive direct services from CMHS.

### Investment Rationale

The Washington metro area has become one of the top destinations for immigrants to the US, and the diversity of these immigrants is the greatest in the nation. The majority of this flow has been to the suburbs, with more than two-thirds of the population growth (750,000 people) in the last 20 years in Northern Virginia alone attributed to immigrants and their offspring. Culturally appropriate services to low-income children and families with a variety of ethnic backgrounds and cultures are in high demand. CMHS fills a critical gap by providing services to a large number of low-income, cultural minority populations and by specializing in mental health and developmental work with these children and families. CMHS has the leadership and staff to take the organization to the next level. The executive director, Dennis Hunt, built the organization from six employees with a \$200,000 budget to its current size. His leadership and vision have drawn an outstanding group of professionals, highly regarded in the community. The members

of the first-class multicultural staff at CMHS speak 30 languages and over half have advanced graduate degrees, many in clinical and child psychology. Administrators from the schools in which CMHS provides services describe CMHS staff’s unique ability to deal with the difficult issues faced by children who experience the trauma of displacement, war, or gang violence. In the words of one, having CMHS to help students work through these issues helps teachers to focus on instruction and children on learning. CMHS is recognized in the community as uniquely positioned to help at-risk multicultural children overcome obstacles that prevent them from developing their full potential. It is a trusted agent within the community it serves. In a recent series of testimonials, representatives from a range of agencies dealing with immigrants or mental health issues all consistently praised the outstanding services provided by CMHS for children from low-income, multicultural backgrounds.

### Key Accomplishments

Increased staff and structural capacity resulted in an almost 300% increase in the number of children served over four years, growing from 582 to 1,559; new coverage in the District of Columbia through a partnership with Covenant House; and the training of 9,411 individuals to provide more effective services to culturally diverse children and families, a substantial increase over the goal. Other noteworthy accomplishments that contributed to improved capacity and increased effectiveness include:

- **Planning and Focus:** In 2002 completed a strategic plan outlining the expansion of services throughout the Washington region based on emerging community needs and the readiness and capacity of local jurisdictions and other funding entities to support new services. The plan



also focused on building the internal capacity to deliver effective, high quality, culturally appropriate services.

- **Human Capital—Board and Management:** Strengthened Board, adding six new members and consultant-facilitated training. Created strong middle management by adding six highly skilled Program Managers. Fully integrated a COO with extensive clinical and administrative experience in human services. Contracted with major accounting firm to oversee finance department through an on-site CPA.
- **Information Management:** A state-of-the-art information management system was installed to track client billing, demographics, services, and outcome measures. All insurance billing is done electronically. New state-of-the-art donor database showed number of gifts tripled since 2001.
- **Program Effectiveness:** Ph.D.-level research staff develop, refine, and track outcome measures for all clients. Evidence-based treatment models are being implemented in school and agency services for children.
- **Model Codification:** With support from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, CMHS is codifying its effective multicultural mental health service model to help other nonprofit sites locally, regionally, and nationally respond more effectively to the human service needs of refugees and immigrants.



## ■ Leaders

### Dr. Dennis J. Hunt

**Licensed Clinical Psychologist and Executive Director**



Dennis J. Hunt, PhD is a licensed clinical psychologist and the founder and executive director of the Center for Multicultural Human Services (CMHS) in Falls Church, Virginia. CMHS, founded in 1992, is a nonprofit organization providing a wide range of mental

health, educational, and social services for immigrants and refugee families in over 30 languages. CMHS also offers training and consultation on cross-cultural mental health issues and operates a United Nations and federally funded program for the treatment of torture survivors and a federally funded program for the treatment of child and adolescent survivors of war, displacement, and refugee trauma.

Prior to starting CMHS, Hunt directed a large foster care program for refugee children for ten years. He consults with news media, school systems, and human service programs throughout the US and in Canada on refugee mental health issues. He also serves as a consultant to private and governmental organizations in Brazil and Bosnia on the development of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and programs for at-risk youth and families. Hunt has published articles and developed a wide range of training materials and programs on cross-cultural mental health issues. Hunt is an affiliate professor at George Mason University, where he teaches a graduate seminar on cross-cultural issues in clinical psychology. He also provides direct clinical services to children and families.

Hunt has served on many local, national, and international boards and task forces, and is a member of the American Psychological Association, the World Federation for Mental Health, and the Virginia Academy of Clinical Psychologists.

### N. Thomas Connally, MD

**Chair of the Board**

Dr. Tom Connally has more than 30 years in health care practice and advocacy. He had a private internal medicine practice for over 30 years in the District. For the last four years of his practice, he was affiliated with Georgetown University Medical Center, where he served as Clinical Associate Professor of Internal Medicine. He was also on the full-time staff of Sibley Hospital for 20 years, including three years as Chief of the Department of Medicine. He also served as Clinical Instructor in Internal Medicine and Health Care Sciences at George Washington University Medical School.

Connally is deeply committed to health care advocacy through his role as a board member and volunteer of the Virginia Association of Free Clinics and his involvement with the Progressive Policy Institute.

Connally received his bachelor's in philosophy at the University of Virginia and his medical degree at UVA's School of Medicine, and has a long record of dedicated service to his alma mater. He served as a member of the university's governing board, the Board of Visitors, where he also served on the Executive Committee, and as chair of the Health Affairs Committee.

In addition, he has been recognized with a number of awards and honors throughout his career, including the establishment of The N. Thomas Connally Chair of Clinical Excellence at UVA.

Connally's extensive interest and practice in geriatric medicine led him to write *The Third Third: A Physician's Guide to a Healthy, Happy, Longer Life*, and he has published numerous articles in a variety of news media, medical and policy journals, including *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, *Roll Call*, and *The Internist*.



Connally is a fellow of the American College of Physicians, a diplomate of the American Board of Internal Medicine, and a member of both the American Society of Internal Medicine/American College of Physicians and the Clinico-Pathological Society of Washington. He currently serves on the Committee on Health and Public Policy, American College of Physicians and is a former Trustee of the American Society of Internal Medicine, where he has held a variety of leadership roles.



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