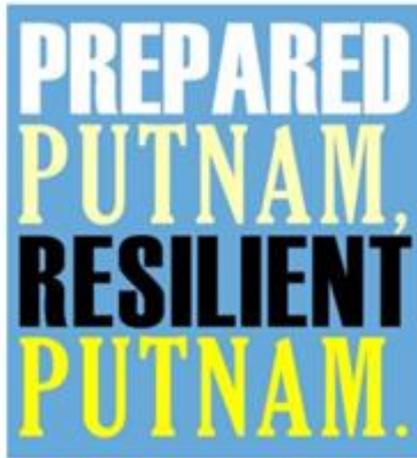


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COMMUNITY RESILIENCE COALITION

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Contacts:

Jonathan Sury, NCDP
jjs2154@cumc.columbia.edu

Erin Pascaretti, PCDOH
845-808-1390, x43262
erin.pascaretti@putnamcountyny.gov

Putnam’s Virtual Conference Draws Record Support for Children in COVID-19 Crisis

BREWSTER, NY—Physical and social distancing have changed our family, social and work environments. The consequences of this are affecting children now and will continue to do so for some time. This grave concern drew together nearly 300 child advocates—from parents and caregivers, to representatives from government agencies and community-based organizations—for a locally-focused webinar on April 28 hosted by Putnam’s Community Resilience Coalition. Entitled “Children of Putnam and COVID-19: CRC Actions,” the event featured Putnam panelists together with representatives from the National Center for Disaster Preparedness (NCDP) at Columbia University’s Earth Institute.

“Our Community Resilience Coalition in Putnam is a stellar example of how well our community organizations work together,” said Putnam’s CRC community champion Barbara Garbarino. “This organization has one mission—to help address children’s needs before, during and after a disaster. Our dedicated community organizations and county agencies collaborate on this common goal, demonstrating the power of public and private partnerships.”

Talking to children about COVID-19; addressing childcare, school, and summer camp concerns; meeting the rising need for social services, and handling domestic violence increases during a disaster were some of the universal concerns affecting Putnam that were discussed by local and national experts. How to handle the information glut surrounding the coronavirus was also addressed because how adults handle this challenge directly affects children.

“We have collected lots of scientific and public health data about the coronavirus” said Jeff Schlegelmilch, deputy director of the NCDP. “Still we don’t know enough to precisely answer many questions on true infection rates, fatality rates, and the role of people spreading the disease who show mild or no symptoms. When you pair that with a disaster that has no definitive end point, you can begin to see the public health and communications challenges we are facing. How we deal with this uncertainty affects children deeply. We have seen this repeatedly in our disaster research on hurricanes and other natural disasters and in post-9/11 investigations.”

Moderator Jonathan Sury, project director at the NCDP, pointed to the new media landscape, with 24-hour news cycles and social media. “The task is to try and limit the intake of excess information to focus on reliable sources and ‘actionable information,’” advised Mr. Sury. In other words, if there is no new action to take from the information, residents should remain focused on what can be done—social distancing, face coverings and hand washing.

In addition to Barbara Garbarino, speakers from Putnam included Ann Ellsworth, executive director of Putnam/Northern Westchester Women’s Resource Center; Michael Piazza, commissioner of the department of social services and mental health; Shanna Siegel, a public health nurse from the Putnam County Department of Health; Carol Sneyd, regional safety technician at Putnam/Northern Westchester BOCES, and Jessica Vanacoro, associate executive director at Camp Herrlich.

“Community concern over the topic was evident as registrations poured in over the three-day registration period,” said Barbara Garbarino, who has coordinated CRC efforts along with the Putnam County Department of Health, from before the CRC’s actual formation in 2015. “Participants were posing questions as they registered, and we extended the closing Q & A period as well.”

Everyone can now view the video or read the transcript by visiting the website of the National Center for Disaster Preparedness at Columbia University’s Earth Institute at <https://ncdp.columbia.edu/> or directly on the RCRC COVID-19 Webinar Series page: <https://bit.ly/rcrc-c19webinars>.

For information about the CRC visit: <https://putnamcountyny.com/health/community-resilience-coalition/>

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