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**NYS OFFICE OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES FUND PUBLIC/ PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP  
WITH MOUNT VERNON CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT AND ANDRUS**

**First Public School District in New York State to Build a Safe and Healing Community in the Classroom**

Mount Vernon, N.Y. – With the goal of creating a trauma sensitive environment for students, families and staff, ANDRUS, a leading provider of children and family resources, and the Mount Vernon City School District began today a one-year project, *“Creating Sanctuary in Mount Vernon Schools,”* designed to produce improved expertise to positively address early signs of students’ problematic behaviors. The goal of the program is to improve classroom management, decrease student suspensions and unfounded calls to Child Protective Services (CPS), and reduce the number of children being placed in special education classes.

ANDRUS, based in Yonkers, and the Mount Vernon School District were awarded \$100,000 from the NYS Office for Children and Family Services to fund the innovative project. The program will be implemented for the 2013- 2014 school year at the Williams and Grimes Elementary Schools and Longfellow and Davis Middle Schools.

“This is both recognition of the great work our programs currently provide to children and families and an endorsement of our ability to enhance those services,” said Mimi Corcoran, President of ANDRUS. “We are excited for the partnership to help the school district achieve inherent capacity for greatness and success. The program will support teachers and faculty using tools of the Sanctuary Model to create a safe and nurturing environment for them to learn. This partnership holds promising futures for both community institutions.”

Professional development services will be provided for elementary and middle school teachers, administrators and support staff regarding mental health and behavioral strategies for responding to students’ needs. The Sanctuary Model will be used in workshops and tailored trainings for school staff to gain a fuller awareness of the impact of trauma and adverse experiences on student behavior and academic performance. They will learn to use Sanctuary tools, to recognize and address the needs of students with traumatic histories.

"We believe the ANDRUS partnership supports our strategic goals and objectives for providing positive school experiences essential for academic success," said Interim Superintendent of Mount Vernon City Schools, Judith Johnson. "We look forward to continuing to cultivate nurturing teaching environments where educators have a deep understanding of mental health indicators. With ANDRUS's expertise and our trained staff, we plan to work together to help our students achieve overall wellbeing □ ultimately paving the way for positive behaviors in adulthood."

“Our approach will focus on creating a trauma informed school community. Sanctuary creates a system-wide understanding recognizing the impact trauma has on human behavior and develops an ecological

approach to addressing trauma and adversity at all levels – from children and families, to teachers and staff,” said Kerron Norman, Vice President Community Based Programs at ANDRUS.

"Research shows when teachers and administrators receive professional development training on how to recognize and respond to children and families affected by trauma, schools become more productive learning environments with improved educational outcomes," said state Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) Commissioner Gladys Carrión. "To continue to make strides in this arena, OCFS is proud to partner with the Andrus Memorial through a Public/Private Partnership designed to increase educational outcomes for at-risk children and youth in the Mount Vernon City School District."



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#### About ANDRUS

ANDRUS provides a broad range of social services for families and children through research, training and innovative programs. Founded in 1928, ANDRUS today is a family-centered organization offering an array of innovative programs to help children, families and communities meet their full potential. Based in Yonkers, N.Y. ANDRUS operates 14 locations in Westchester County. ANDRUS also operates the Andrus Center for Learning and Innovation and the Sanctuary Institute, which has provided training and consultation to over 250 organizations worldwide in the use of a trauma-sensitive model for treatment.