



Contact:

Jan Moss, Executive Director, 928.443.9505

Rosemary Tippet, Public Affairs Director, 770.435.8464

State Licensure and Oversight Necessary

Therapeutic Schools and Programs Association Testifies on the Hill

WASHINGTON, D.C. (Oct. 10, 2007)—State regulatory agencies have an important role to play in the protection of at-risk children and teens enrolled in therapeutic schools and programs, according to testimony by the head of the industry’s national trade association.

“The need to protect our children and provide for their well being is not a topic for debate—the question is how we can work together to safeguard and help those who need specialized schools and programs,” said Jan Moss, Executive Director of the National Association of Therapeutic Schools and Programs (NATSAP), in testimony before the House Committee on Education and Labor. “There is no room for programs or schools that provide substandard and inadequate care, or those who seek to avoid accountability.”

Residential placement programs and schools serve teenagers, young adults, and families who are coping with behavioral, mental health, and substance abuse issues, when public schools and community-based programs have failed. Hundreds of well-run programs across the country have brought thousands of children and families back from the brink of destruction, according to NATSAP.

“As the numbers of kids who attempt suicide, engage in destructive and criminal behavior, and fail to graduate from High School rise, concerned parents have turned to therapeutic schools and programs,” said Moss. “We are committed to working with Congress, the states, other organizations, and parents to ensure that regulations and legislation provide for realistic and workable therapeutic programs that meet the highest standards of care.”

The National Association of Therapeutic Schools and Programs represents more than 180 programs and professionals assisting young people with emotional and behavioral difficulties. According to NATSAP, parents considering placement of a child at a private residential treatment program should look for licensed and accredited facilities with a longstanding record of safety and a licensed and qualified staff of therapists, teachers and administrators.

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For more information, or a copy of Jan Moss’ testimony, please go to www.natsap.org.