

SADDLEBACK VALLEY NEWS

New Mission Viejo office treats child behavior

BY WILL JASON
STAFF WRITER

South County parents who struggle with their children's temper tantrums have a new place to go for help.

The Child Guidance Center, A Santa Ana-based nonprofit, has opened a Mission Viejo office that uses one-way mirrors and earpieces to treat children's behavior problems. Using a technique known as parent-child interaction therapy, a therapist watches through a mirror while parents with their child in the next room.

"At first it's a little awkward," said Lori Pack, a therapist and the executive director of the center.

But Pack said the method works because it lets clients practice new parenting techniques while they are being coached, instead of practicing afterwards when the therapist is gone.

"They're hearing it, learning it, doing it all at the same time," Pack said.

Founded in 1967, the guidance center has always offered family counseling. But several years ago it started offering the interaction therapy, which was de-

Inside the play room at the Family Guidance Center's Mission Viejo office, the therapist is hidden from view by a one-way mirror. Pictured is Executive Director Lori Packy.



veloped by psychologists in the 1980s. The center's therapists received training in the new technique from researchers at U.C. Davis.

One of the researchers, Anthony Urquiza, said interaction therapy hasn't always used one-way mirrors and earpieces. But the technology lets the parent and child focus on each other rather

than the therapist, he said.

"There's nothing magical, Secret Service or James Bond about it," Urquiza said. "It's just a way to take the therapist out of the picture so that the change happens to the parent and the child, not with the therapist in the mix."

Interaction therapy is aimed at children ages 2 to 10. It can include any-

where from six to 14 weekly sessions, depending on the child's behavior and progress, according to Pack. Therapy sessions at the guidance center in Mission Viejo cost about \$80 to \$125 each, depending on the client's income. Lower cost treatment is available for Medi-Cal subscribers at the center's North County locations for Medi-Cal subscribers.

Child Guidance Center

Address: 27451
Los Altos,
Suite 240,
Mission Viejo,
CA 92691
Phone: 949-
582-3958 or
714-953-
4455 (head-
quarters)
Web site:
www.cgoc.org