

## **Connections Organization History**

Counseling Connections, one of the largest private group practices serving Lake and Northern Cook Counties, was founded in 1982. The group consists of Child/Adolescent Psychiatrists, Adult Psychiatrists, Clinical Psychologists, Social Workers and Professional Counselors. This practice is dedicated to providing individual, family, and group therapy for a variety of mental health problems and presenting issues.

In order to further our service to our communities, the owners of Counseling Connections started Connections Day School in 1998, in Libertyville, Illinois, with a mission to promote the academic and emotional success of children with special needs. This location serves students ages 8-21 with behavioral and emotional disabilities, as well as a few developmental disabilities. The mission continued to grow as South Campus Day School was founded in 2001 in Palatine, IL. This school serves a similar population to Connections Day School; however, the age range includes ages 6-21 and the location affords us the opportunity to reach more students at need in Illinois.

Over time it became evident that there was a need for a therapeutic day school that focused solely on children with high functioning Autism. As a result, New Connections Academy was founded in 2006 in Palatine, IL with the purpose of serving the high-functioning Autism Spectrum Disorder population. These children, ages 6-21, have a diagnosis or a special education eligibility of Autism Spectrum Disorder; and therefore, require a specialized setting to meeting their specific sensory and social needs to promote academic success. As the special education needs continued to grow in Illinois, Connections Academy East was founded in 2015 in Lake Forest. This location houses our largest census of students ages 6-21 and serves both emotional and behavioral disability needs as well as high-functioning Autism Spectrum Disorder in two programs within the same building.

To further enhance services for students with special needs, it became clear that there were many children who were having difficulty attending school due to a variety of reasons, including anxiety, depression, and other emotional challenges. Many of these students refused to attend school and often tended to drop out of school. As a result, Virtual Connections Academy was founded in 2016 in Palatine, IL to promote the academic and emotional successes of students who were not able to physically attend their public school. One goal of Virtual Connections Academy is to help students overcome their challenges in order to once again integrate into a school building, or at a minimum, be able to complete their school work so they can graduate and become a productive member of society.