

Not all children who experience a traumatic event will experience traumatic stress.

With effective, trauma-informed treatments and supportive caregivers, children can recover and thrive.

What Does Trauma Treatment Look Like?

Trauma treatment for kids often involves both the child and the caregivers.

During the sessions:

Children and caregivers receive *psychoeducation* about the prevalence of trauma, common reactions to trauma, and what treatment will look like.

Caregivers learn *parenting skills* to strengthen the parent-child bond and help manage child behavior challenges.

Caregivers and the child learn *relaxation skills* to help manage the feelings of fear and anxiety that can be felt in the body, and *cognitive coping skills* to help the child challenge inaccurate and unhelpful thinking.

Therapists help the child build *skills to identify, verbally express, and regulate their emotions*.

With a therapist, the child writes a *trauma narrative* of the events that happened to help them approach memories, thoughts, and feelings connected to the events. The narrative story helps the child to process the events, reduce levels of negative emotions while thinking of the events, and to move forward in their lives.

These are common elements of effective treatments for trauma. However, there are variations in treatment components depending on the child's traumatic experiences, developmental age and stage, and their emotional and behavioral presentation.

The METRIC Grant at The Baker Center

We have received a grant to help identify and treat kids who have experienced traumatic stress. Clinicians trained in evidence-based, trauma-informed treatments will be providing assessments and services for children through our Center for Effective Therapy.

To participate in the MetroWest Evidence-based Trauma-Informed Referral & Treatment Initiative for Children (METRIC) project, caregivers will be asked to complete a short survey at the start of treatment, every six months while in treatment, and when treatment is over.

All treatment services provided will be exactly the same, whether families choose to participate or not.

Our hope is that kids who participate in METRIC will get better through therapy and help us learn about how to provide better treatment for kids who are experiencing traumatic stress.

Where Can I Learn More?



NCTSN
About
Trauma



NCTSN
Trauma
Categories



NCTSI Understanding
Child Trauma Fact
Sheet (2019)

How Can I Get Help?



To schedule a phone screen with our Program Assistants, follow the link below or scan the QR code.

bakercenter.org/cet

About Child Trauma



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THE BAKER CENTER
FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Improving care. Changing lives.

What is trauma?

Trauma is the experience of an event(s) where a person experiences a threat to their life, sense of safety in their body, or a threat to the life of a caregiver or family member.

Can trauma happen to kids?

When children experience traumatic events, it means that they are faced with very real safety concerns. These dangerous events can overwhelm their ability to regulate emotions, and they are often on guard, looking out for additional threats to safety. Kids experience and respond to trauma in different ways depending on their age and environment.

Can trauma be diagnosed in kids?

Yes, we can diagnose trauma in children and diagnoses are important to help professionals match kids with treatment.

Trauma in kids can look different based on their developmental stage. To diagnose trauma, kids and families will partake in an interview to discuss history and symptoms, as well as filling out questionnaires.

The good news is that kids are really resilient. Lots of kids experience bad things and don't have lasting trauma symptoms. An assessment can still be helpful to figure out the best next steps to support your child.



The Stress Response

Our bodies have an alarm system that activates when we feel stress or a sense of danger. This is one of the incredible ways our bodies communicate to us so we know how to respond. When faced with danger, our heart rate goes up, we breathe faster, and we may feel a sense of fear. Under normal stress, once the threat is gone our body calms down.

Traumatic Stress

When experiencing a traumatic event, our stress response involves both physical and emotional sensations that are so strong we feel "frozen" and too overwhelmed to re-establish a sense of calm. We become so affected by these stress responses that our body shuts down even when there is no threat of danger.

How can I help keep my kids safe from experiencing traumatic events?

- Learning how to manage stressful events in a calm way
- Connecting to community resources
- Strengthening close relationships with others
- Leaning on natural supports
- Predictable and consistent disciplinary strategies at home
- Effective communication strategies
- Encouraging school participation and attendance
- Caregiver involvement in school and extracurricular activities

Even though we work hard to keep our kids safe, they may still experience dangerous events both from within and outside the family.

Some examples of traumatic events are:

- Natural disasters
- Car accidents
- School shootings
- Community violence
- Domestic violence in the home
- Physical or sexual abuse
- Serious accidents or illnesses
- Loss of a loved one
- Military family related-stressors
- Witnessing substance abuse
- Neglect

These are common trauma signs and symptoms for children at different developmental stages.

Preschool Children:

- Fear of separating from caregivers
- Crying or screaming a lot
- Eating poorly or losing weight
- Having nightmares
- Sexualized or aggressive behavior
- Irritability

Elementary School Children:

- Becoming anxious or fearful
- Feeling guilt or shame
- Difficulty concentrating
- Difficulty sleeping
- Sexualized or aggressive behavior
- Irritability
- Social problems with peers

Middle and High School Children:

- Feeling depressed or alone
- Developing eating disorders
- Self-harm behaviors
- Abusing alcohol or drugs
- Risky sexual behavior
- Social problems with peers