



## What is Trauma-Focused Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy?

### What is Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT)?

- TF-CBT is a conjoint child and parent psychotherapy approach for children and adolescents who are experiencing significant emotional and behavioral difficulties related to traumatic life events.
- It is a components-based treatment model that incorporates trauma-sensitive interventions with cognitive behavioral, family, and humanistic principles and techniques.
- Children and parents learn new skills to help process thoughts and feelings related to traumatic life events; manage and resolve distressing thoughts, feelings, and behaviors related to traumatic life events; and enhance safety, growth, parenting skills, and family communication.

### Who is TF-CBT for?

- TF-CBT has proved successful with children and adolescents (ages 3 to 18) who have significant emotional problems (e.g., symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder, fear, anxiety, or depression) related to traumatic life events.
- This treatment can be used with children and adolescents who have experienced a single trauma or multiple traumas in their life.
- Children or adolescents experiencing traumatic grief can also benefit from this treatment.
- TF-CBT can be used with children and adolescents residing in many types of settings, including parental homes, foster care, kinship care, group homes, or residential programs.

### How long does TF-CBT typically last?

- TF-CBT is designed to be a relatively short-term treatment, typically lasting 12 to 16 sessions. Over 80 percent of traumatized children show significant improvement after 12 to 16 weeks of treatment.

- Treatment may be provided for longer periods depending upon individual child and family needs.
- TF-CBT can be used as part of a larger treatment plan for children with complex difficulties.

### Is TF-CBT flexible and can it be adapted for diverse and special populations?

- TF-CBT is best delivered by creative, resourceful therapists who have developed close therapeutic alliances with their clients.
- This treatment is designed to be provided in a flexible and developmentally appropriate manner to address the unique needs of each child and family.
- It has been evaluated with Caucasian and African American children, and it has been adapted for Latino and hearing-impaired/deaf populations. It is currently being adapted for Native American children and for children in many other countries (e.g., Zambia, Uganda, South Africa, Pakistan, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Germany, and Cambodia).

### Does TF-CBT work?

- Multiple treatment outcome research studies and much clinical evidence indicate that TF-CBT helps children, adolescents, and their parents overcome many of the difficulties associated with abuse and trauma.
- TF-CBT has proven to be effective in addressing posttraumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety, externalizing behaviors, sexualized behaviors, and feelings of shame, and mistrust. The parental component increases the positive effects for children by reducing parents' own levels of depression and emotional distress about their children's abuse.

and improving parenting practices and support of their child.

- TF-CBT was rated a “1-Well-supported, efficacious treatment”, the highest level of empirical support in the U.S. Department of Justice sponsored report *Child Physical and Sexual Abuse: Guidelines for Treatment*. Similarly,
- The California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse for Child Welfare rated TF-CBT a “1-Well-supported, effective practice” its highest score for Scientific Rating and its highest score for Relevance to Child Welfare Rating.
- TF-CBT was selected as a “Best Practice” for cases of child abuse in the *Kaufman Best Practices Task Force Final Report* sponsored by the National Child Traumatic Stress Network.

### Who can deliver TF-CBT?

- This treatment can be used by a variety of mental health professionals including clinical social workers, professional counselors, psychologists, psychiatrists, or clinical counselors.

### Where can I get more information about TF-CBT and child trauma?

- **TFCBT Web:**  
[www.musc.edu/tfcbt](http://www.musc.edu/tfcbt)
- The Center for Traumatic Stress in Children and Adolescents:  
[www.pittsburghchildtrauma.com](http://www.pittsburghchildtrauma.com)
- CARES Institute:  
<http://www.caresinstitute.net/index.php>
- National Child Traumatic Stress Network:  
[www.nctsn.org](http://www.nctsn.org)
- Child Welfare Information Gateway:  
[www.childwelfare.gov](http://www.childwelfare.gov)
- The California-Evidence-Based Clearinghouse for Child Welfare:  
[www.cachildwelfareclearinghouse.org](http://www.cachildwelfareclearinghouse.org)

**Project BEST** is a 10-year state-wide collaborative effort to use innovative community-based dissemination, training, and implementation methods to dramatically increase the capacity of every community in South Carolina to deliver evidence-supported mental health treatments (ESTs) to every abused and traumatized child who needs them. Phase 1 of the project is a Community-Based Learning Collaborative for TF-CBT.

### Coordinating Centers:



**MUSC**  
MEDICAL UNIVERSITY  
OF SOUTH CAROLINA

National Crime Victims  
Research & Treatment Center

### Participating Centers:

**Hope Haven of the Lowcountry**  
Beaufort, SC

**The Family Resource Center**  
Camden, SC

**The Child's Place**  
Greenwood, SC

**Children's Advocacy Center  
of Spartanburg**  
Spartanburg, SC