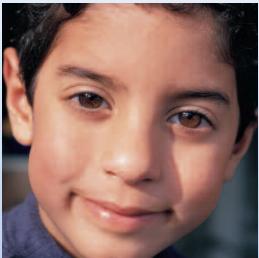


# NCTSN

The National Child  
Traumatic Stress Network



... raising the standard of care  
for traumatized children  
and their families ...

# traumatic stress

## What Is Child Traumatic Stress?

Thousands of children across the United States experience traumatic events each day. Children are exposed to many kinds of trauma, including:

- ◆ Physical and sexual abuse
- ◆ Accidental or violent death of a loved one
- ◆ Violence in families and communities
- ◆ Natural disasters and terrorism
- ◆ Life threatening illnesses, injuries, and distressing medical procedures
- ◆ Refugee and war zone trauma

## Rates of Exposure to Traumatic Events

Children's exposure to traumatic events is prevalent. In a nationally representative survey of 12-to-17-year-old youth\*:

- ◆ 8% reported a lifetime prevalence of sexual assault
- ◆ 17% reported physical assault
- ◆ 39% reported witnessing violence
- ◆ Among 500 elementary and middle school children surveyed in an inner city community, 30% had witnessed a stabbing and 26% had witnessed a shooting in the previous year.
- ◆ A longitudinal general population study of children and adolescents (9-to-16-year-old youth) found that 25% experienced at least one potentially traumatic event, 6% within the past three months.
- ◆ Each year between 20–25% of all children sustain an injury sufficiently severe to require medical attention, missed school, and/or bed rest.
- ◆ State child protective services across the United States received reports alleging the maltreatment of approximately three million children in 2000. Of those reports an estimated 879,000 children were substantiated cases of child abuse or neglect.

Each year, thousands of children and adolescents experience severe trauma including the loss of loved ones, homes, and schools due to natural disasters such as wildfires, floods, tornadoes, hurricanes, and earthquakes. In addition, thousands more who have come to the United States have experienced trauma through war, disaster, and terrorism in their countries of origin.

\*Citations available at [www.NCTSNet.org](http://www.NCTSNet.org).

# impact on the future

## Impact on America's Children and Their Future

Traumatic stress can have a serious impact on a child's functioning, disturbing many domains of normal child development, and affecting behavior at home, with friends, at school, and in the community.

- ◆ In early childhood, traumatic stress can impact a young child's development leading to long-term consequences. In this age group, traumatic reactions can:
  - ◆ Impact the development of the brain
  - ◆ Interfere with children's emotions and ability to regulate their emotions
  - ◆ Upset normal bodily functions
  - ◆ Introduce a lifetime of insecurities about safety and protection
- ◆ In school-age children, traumatic stress can impact a child's development in multiple areas and disrupt their functioning and behavior at home and in school. In this age group, traumatic reactions can:
  - ◆ Interfere with learning basic educational skills
  - ◆ Dramatically change a child's emerging personality
  - ◆ Introduce problems with aggression and inhibition
  - ◆ Lead to ongoing difficulties with sleep, startle reactions, and irritability
  - ◆ Impair a child's growing sense of self-confidence and trust in a law-abiding world
- ◆ In adolescence, traumatic stress can markedly change the course of development and the transition into young adulthood. In this age group, traumatic reactions can lead to behaviors with serious consequences, including:
  - ◆ Drops in academic performance and motivation for learning
  - ◆ Abrupt changes in close relationships
  - ◆ Withdrawing from normal, healthy activities
  - ◆ Reckless and high-risk sexual behaviors
  - ◆ Difficulties in moral decision making
  - ◆ Gang participation
  - ◆ Alcohol and drug abuse

# the National Network

## What Is the National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN)?

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN) is working to advance effective interventions and services to address the impact of traumatic stress. Our nation is in a position to take advantage of the full range of scientific knowledge, clinical wisdom, and service sector expertise to preserve and restore the future of traumatized children across the United States.

Comprising over 50 centers from across the United States, the NCTSN integrates the strengths of academic institutions that are dedicated to developing research-supported interventions and training people to deliver them, and community-based treatment and service centers that are highly experienced in providing care to children and families.

As an outgrowth of bipartisan federal legislation, the Donald J. Cohen National Child Traumatic Stress Initiative was funded in October 2001. Under the leadership of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), and the Center for Mental Health Services (CMHS), this Initiative has represented a unique opportunity to contribute to our national agenda to transform our mental health systems of care.

## NCTSN Mission

The NCTSN works to raise the standard of care and improve access to services for traumatized children, their families, and communities throughout the United States.

## NCTSN Vision

The NCTSN works to accomplish its mission of serving the nation's traumatized children and their families by:

- ◆ Raising public awareness of the scope and serious impact of child traumatic stress on the safety and healthy development of America's children.
- ◆ Improving the standard of care by integrating developmental and cultural knowledge to advance a broad range of effective services and interventions.
- ◆ Working with established systems of care, including the health, mental health, education, law enforcement, child welfare, and juvenile justice systems, to ensure that there is a comprehensive continuum of care available and accessible to all.
- ◆ Fostering a community dedicated to collaboration within and beyond the NCTSN to ensure that widely shared knowledge and skills become a national resource.

# collaborative activities

## Collaborative Activities: Making a Difference Together

The key to the success of the NCTSN is collaboration among its more than 50 centers from across the country, which work together to advance the understanding and treatment of child traumatic stress. To further the NCTSN mission, dozens of committees, working groups, and consortiums with established areas of expertise address the many aspects of this serious issue. Through these collaborative activities and the range of services NCTSN centers provide in clinical settings, neighborhoods, homes, and schools, a wide range of traumatized children and families are receiving needed services. Examples of NCTSN collaborative activities include groups addressing child sexual abuse, complex trauma, family interventions, medical trauma, traumatic grief, refugee trauma, trauma and developmental disabilities, and trauma in adolescence.

## Structure of the NCTSN

The NCTSN is comprised of over 50 centers from across the United States including universities, community-based mental health centers, hospitals, clinics, and other organizations that serve traumatized children and their families. The NCTSN is made up of three components:

- ◆ The National Center for Child Traumatic Stress (NCCTS) at the UCLA Neuropsychiatric Institute and the Duke University Medical Center coordinates the NCTSN's activities.
- ◆ Intervention Development and Evaluation Centers identify, support, improve, and develop treatment and service approaches to traumatic events.
- ◆ Community Treatment and Service Centers implement and evaluate effective treatment and services in community settings, among other important activities.

The Steering Committee, comprised of leadership from across the NCTSN, the Executive Committee, and SAMHSA/CMHS, provide vision and direction to the NCTSN, which is organized around functional units that address:

- ◆ Data
- ◆ Policy
- ◆ Service Systems
- ◆ Training
- ◆ Learning from Clinical Research & Practice
- ◆ School Crisis & Intervention
- ◆ Terrorism & Disaster
- ◆ Monitoring & Evaluation
- ◆ National Resource Center for Child Traumatic Stress

**National Center for Child Traumatic Stress  
UCLA-Duke University  
905 West Main Street  
Suite 24-E, Box 50  
Durham, NC 27701**

Non-Profit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
Durham, NC  
Permit No. 60

## How to Contact Us

The National Resource Center for Child Traumatic Stress (NRC) supports the NCTSN and the greater public by disseminating information and raising public awareness about child traumatic stress to a wide range of audiences. The NRC makes this information available through the NCTSN Website. Available information includes resources for professionals and the public about child traumatic stress, including informational guides, statistics, breaking information in the field, and access to the latest research and resources. For more information about child traumatic stress and the NCTSN, visit [www.NCTSNet.org](http://www.NCTSNet.org) or e-mail the National Resource Center at [info@NCTSNet.org](mailto:info@NCTSNet.org).

---

NCCTS-UCLA  
11150 West Olympic Boulevard  
Suite 650  
Los Angeles, CA 90064  
Phone: (310) 235-2633

NCCTS-Duke University  
905 West Main Street  
Suite 24-E, Box 50  
Durham, NC 27701  
Phone: (919) 682-1552

---

**[www.NCTSNet.org](http://www.NCTSNet.org)**

This project was funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The views, policies, and opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of SAMHSA or HHS.

Images are used for illustration only.