

NCCTS Leadership: Child Trauma Policy

Everyone pays a price for child trauma. Children, families, neighborhoods, schools, communities, service systems, and—not least of all—taxpayers are all negatively affected when child trauma is left unaddressed. Untreated child trauma contributes to many of the most pressing problems that communities face, including poverty, crime, low academic achievement, addiction, mental health problems, and poor health outcomes. The cost of these problems is felt not only in human terms, but also in dollars and cents, affecting future generations as well.

Since Congress authorized the National Child Traumatic Stress Initiative in 2000, the National Center for Child Traumatic Stress (NCCTS) and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration have emphasized the importance of collaborative work with policymakers on child trauma-related issues as part of the mission of the National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN). During the past several years, NCCTS has worked closely with Network members who are interested in policy issues at the federal, state, and local level. At the federal level, NCCTS helps to coordinate requests from federal, state, and local officials for information, consultation, and resources related to child trauma. NCTSN members have been actively involved in responding to these requests and in coordinating such consultations in their own states and communities.

NCCTS policy activities and resources are focused on:

- The education of federal, state, and local policymakers and stakeholders regarding child trauma issues, including critical issues such as seclusion and restraint, evidence-based practices, mental health funding (public and private), culture and trauma, military families, school-based trauma programs, and public awareness
- Collaboration with national organizations involved in issues relevant to child trauma
- Integration of science-based information about child trauma into public policy
- Development of substantive resources for policymakers and child trauma professionals related to child trauma-relevant policies, and
- Raising awareness of child trauma issues with policymakers and the public through media and public awareness efforts

Accomplishments and Results

NCCTS has created materials to help policymakers understand the scope and nature of child trauma. These materials were based in part on early needs assessments with Network members and a national meeting of key stakeholders, including NCTSN Centers and state-level child welfare and mental health officials. These guides and briefs are intended for all those who work to develop and implement policies for child and family-serving systems, including federal, state, and local policymakers; agency and center staff; mental health clinicians, researchers, and service providers; child advocates, and families and consumers affected by trauma. They include:

Policy Guide: *Child Traumatic Stress: What Every Policymaker Should Know.* This guide is intended to educate policymakers about the scope and impact of childhood trauma, to offer effective solutions that can be implemented with the support of informed public policy, and to provide information about additional resources.

Policy Brief: *Supporting High-Quality Mental Health Services for Child Trauma: Family, Youth, and Consumer Involvement.* This policy brief describes some of the many benefits of partnerships among youth, families, caregivers, and professionals; outlines potential barriers to building them; and offers strategies for engaging youth and families and maintaining their involvement.

Policy Brief: *Supporting High-Quality Mental Health Services for Child Trauma: Workforce Strategies.* Making high-quality services available to children and families affected by trauma requires a workforce with the training, skills, capacity, and commitment that are crucial to providing effective care. This policy brief describes the child trauma workforce and the challenges faced by its members. It also offers strategies for empowering this workforce to deliver high-quality child trauma services.

NCCTS guides and briefs help policymakers understand the scope and nature of child trauma.

Policy Brief: *National and Community Partners.* Together with NCCTS, members of NCTSN work collaboratively within their communities to create and support sustainable, mutually beneficial relationships with governmental and non-governmental bodies. This brief report provides a summary of the scope and nature of these partnerships.

Trainings: NCCTS has offered trainings to NCTSN members on issues related to policy, advocacy, and strategies for working with policymakers. These trainings have been offered via the NCTSN All-Network Conference; through NCTSN webinars on developing community relationships, working with state agencies, and developing strong, data-informed, policy messages; and through individual technical assistance.

Child Trauma Policy

Consultation: NCCTS and NCTSN staff are regularly involved in responding to federal, state, and local policymaker requests for briefings and recommendations for experts to provide consultation, testimony, or comments on policy-related issues.

More policy-related information is available on the NCTSN website (www.NCTSN.org).

Vision for the Future

Because NCTSN members vary widely in their levels of expertise around policy work, NCCTS will continue to provide multiple levels of coordination and collaboration in the policy area. To enhance these efforts, NCCTS will reconstitute NCTSN policy working groups which will address specific policy issues, activities, and product development. NCCTS will help organize NCTSN policy working groups as specific needs arise, such as emerging policy issues. The working groups will:

- Help guide the Network in the development of advocacy training modules, which will be available through the NCTSN website and All-Network Conference workshops, and
- Identify key policy products for further development, in collaboration with an advisory subcommittee made up of selected members of the NCTSN Steering Committee, the NCTSN Advisory Board, and key representatives of national partner organizations

NCCTS will work with the NCTSN policy working groups to develop new resources and trainings, including:

- Guidance on how to work with federal and state agencies and officials
- Guidance on how to develop strong community partnerships
- Position papers on topics such as evidence-based practices, diagnosis of PTSD in children, seclusion and restraint in schools, trauma and foster care transitions, prevention of child trauma, and the integration of child trauma services in primary care and in all child-serving systems