

Core Curriculum on Childhood Trauma: An Introduction and Overview

The Core Curriculum on Childhood Trauma (CCCT) is an initiative of the UCLA/Duke University National Center for Child Traumatic Stress, developed in collaboration with the National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN). The CCCT is designed to elevate the standard of trauma-informed care across child- and family-serving systems by strengthening the clinical reasoning, professional judgment, and applied competencies of the workforce.

The CCCT is used across diverse training contexts, including community-based mental health settings, graduate and undergraduate academic programs, internship and residency placements, and a growing range of community-serving organizations. The curriculum can be flexibly adapted to meet the learning needs of professionals and paraprofessionals at varying stages of training and across disciplines.

Core Curriculum and CCCT Community Trainings

The CCCT offers two core branches:

Behavioral Health Professional Training: Full-length case-based trainings designed for clinicians, graduate trainees, and behavioral health professionals. These typically run 3–6 hours and emphasize the development of clinical judgment, trauma-informed reasoning, and conceptual clarity.

Community Trainings: Shorter trainings (1–3 hours) adapted for use in schools, after-school programs, juvenile justice, kinship care, and other youth-serving systems. These sessions use adapted cases and targeted discussion to build applied trauma knowledge across diverse workforces.

Core Curriculum General Learning Objectives

Each element of the Core Curriculum supports the acquisition of one or more of six general learning objectives:






- 1 Apply the 12 Core Concepts as conceptual lenses to frame information and guide critical reasoning about the case study.
- 2 Identify ecological factors hypothesized to influence children’s traumatic experiences and contribute to their post-traumatic adjustment.
- 3 Incorporate relevant ecological factors into a case conceptualization, and use that framework to evaluate the hypothesized contributions of different case factors and guide case-related reasoning.
- 4 Use critical reasoning to make judgments about the relative impact of various factors hypothesized to influence a child’s traumatic experience and post-traumatic adjustment.
- 5 Clearly and accurately communicate appropriate trauma information to fellow professionals, clients, and family members within and across settings.
- 6 Apply a trauma-informed conceptual lens to real-world aspects of professional practice, including assessment, case management, and treatment planning.



Collaborative Experiential Learning (CEL)

CCCT facilitation is grounded in a Collaborative Experiential Learning (CEL) model. CEL uses structured, facilitated case discussion and decision-making tasks to engage learners in collaborative problem-solving. Sessions are facilitated by trained instructors using a combination of instructional tools to support reasoning, hypothesis generation, and reflective communication.

Instructional tools used in CEL may include:

-  **Case Materials** in written, visual, or auditory formats
-  **Discussion Prompts** aligned with the 12 Core Concepts and six general learning objectives
-  **Problem-Based Learning Cycles** identifying Facts, Hunches and Hypotheses, Next Steps, and Learning Issues
-  **Graphic Organizers** for categorization and exploring thematic connections
-  **Communication and Reflective Practice Tools** to explore social emotional and relational factors

Facilitators select the tools that best support the site's learning objectives, audience expertise, and available time.

Core Curriculum Case Materials

Core Curriculum case materials are designed to build decision-making skills from a strength-based perspective. These case studies feature a diversity of factual evidence, which challenges learners to use and strengthen their perspective-taking, critical reasoning, decision-making, case formulation, and communication skills. The variety of CCCT case studies available allows facilitators to flexibly adapt the CCCT for a range of different training audiences, needs, and formats.

The 12 Core Concepts for Understanding Traumatic Stress Responses in Children and Families

The 12 Core Concepts for Understanding Traumatic Stress Responses in Children and Families form the central framework of the CCCT. These concepts help learners think flexibly and holistically about traumatic events and the ways in which children's development, relationships, and environments shape their responses and recovery. Concepts can be found at:

<https://www.nctsn.org/resources/12-core-concepts-understanding-traumatic-stress-responses-children-and-families>

Getting Involved

There are multiple ways to engage with the CCCT:

- **Host a Training:** Network members and allied sites may request live or virtual CCCT training tailored to their audience. CCCT Advanced Facilitators can customize training length, cases, and tools based on site-specific needs. A roster of our Advanced Facilitators can be found here: <https://airtable.com/appp3Wt0m4dn3dz1r/shr8OG6TtktwrSx6r>.
- **Join a Cohort:** Basic Facilitator training is conducted by our CAT II Partners at the National Child Trauma Workforce Institute. To learn more contact Allison Hrovat at ahrovat@uccs.edu.
- **Collaborate on Adaptations:** Community-serving organizations and system partners may co-develop CCCT adaptations to support emerging training needs (e.g., kinship care, paraprofessional development). To learn more contact Hannah Grossman at hmgrossman@mednet.ucla.edu.
- **For more general information:** Reach out to info@nctsn.org if you would like more information or to get in touch with the NCCTS CCCT team.