

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network: Our Nation's Response to Childhood Trauma

Childhood trauma is one of the most pervasive yet overlooked public health challenges in the United States, disrupting healthy development for millions of children each year. Established by Congress in 2001, the National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN)—funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)—expands access to evidence-based, trauma-informed care, helping children and families heal and thrive.

From Federal Funding to Real-World Impact

In many rural communities, children exposed to trauma are not connected to care due to limited resources and training. Through SAMHSA funding for the NCTSN, providers at the University of Utah developed a simple, practical screening and response tool—the Care Process Model for Pediatric Traumatic Stress (CPM-PTS). The tool can be used by pediatricians, Children's Advocacy Center staff, and other non-clinical providers to identify trauma, traumatic stress, and suicide risk—and connect children to care in real time. What began as a solution in rural Utah quickly spread to other states and is now used nationwide. To date, the model is used by more than 260 sites across 38 states. Users have screened over 200,000 children and connected more than 30,000 to trauma-focused treatment. This is one example of how federal investment through SAMHSA's NCTSN translates into scalable trauma care and suicide prevention across the country.

About the NCTSN

WHAT IS IT?

A SAMHSA-funded national initiative solely focused on addressing childhood traumatic stress.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

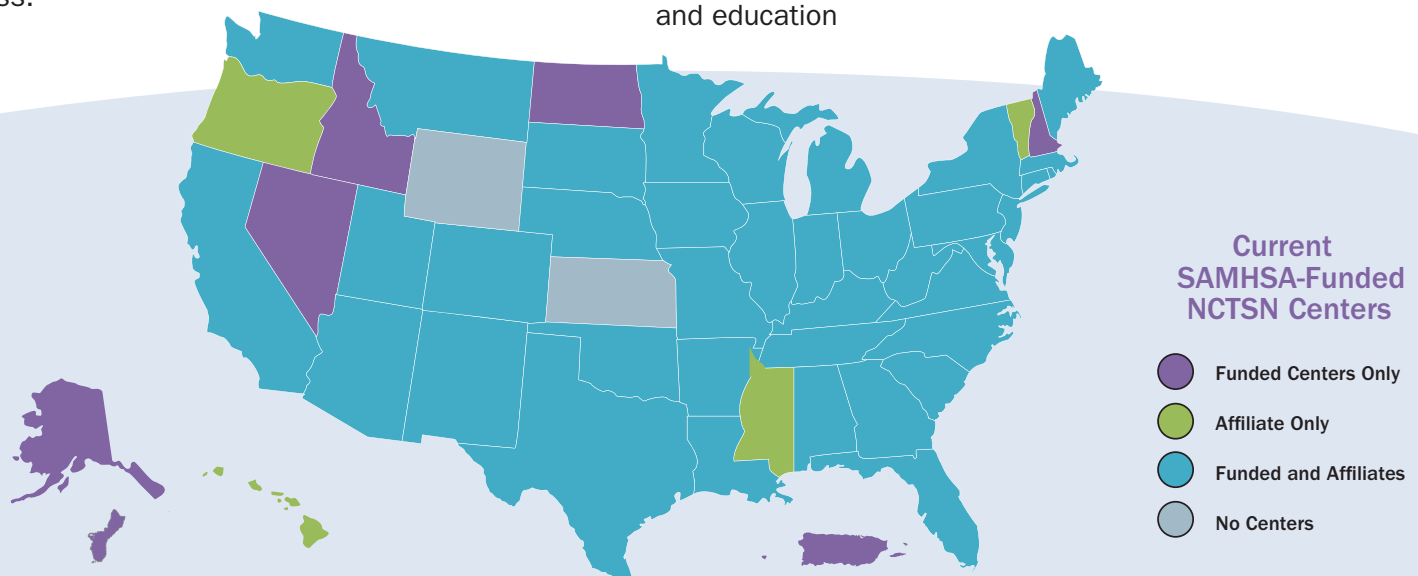
The NCTSN is a network of **193 currently funded centers** and **200+ formerly funded affiliates** located across **48 states, DC, Puerto Rico, and Guam**.

Centers translate science into practice, gather data on reach and impact, and raise the quality of care for all children and families experiencing traumatic stress.

WHAT DOES IT DO?

Together, the NCTSN:

- Trains **87,000+** providers every quarter
- Serves **116,000+** children and families every quarter
- Builds trauma-informed systems through treatment delivery, workforce training, consultation, and community education
- Rapidly mobilizes in response to disasters and crises nationwide by bringing together national experts with local responders
- Reaches **1.5 million+** people annually through community outreach, website resources, webinars, and education



Impact of the National Child Traumatic Stress Network

NATIONWIDE REACH AND RESULTS

Since 2002, the Network has:

- Trained **2.5 million+** professionals
- Built **20,000+** local and state partnerships that help children and families
- Embedded trauma-informed practices across child-serving systems, including healthcare, juvenile justice, child welfare, and schools
- Responded to every major national crisis since 9/11, including hurricanes, wildfires, tornadoes, mass violence events like the Boston Bombing, school shootings like Sandy Hook and Uvalde, and public health crises like COVID-19

DOCUMENTED EFFECTIVENESS

Children and families served through NCTSN centers experience reduced trauma symptoms, stronger coping skills, and improved day-to-day functioning.

IMPORTANT FEDERAL INVESTMENT

Bipartisan federal investment through SAMHSA has built a national infrastructure that:

- **Connects** research to frontline practice
- **Strengthens** state and local systems
- **Mobilizes** during national crises
- **Aligns** with SAMHSA priorities by strengthening the behavioral health workforce, integrating mental health across systems, and expanding access to care for children and families

Let's Connect: Strengthening Caregiver-Child Connection Through Trauma-Informed Practice

“ One father reflected joyfully on how his parenting has transformed, sharing examples of how the "old dad" would have reacted compared to the patient, more self-aware parent he is now. A mother described how her daughter now seeks her out, sharing her interests and feelings - "You can tell she trusts me more." These stories highlight the far-reaching and deeply human impact of our NCTSN work: building trust, emotional regulation, and connection - one relationship at a time. ”

— Center for Resilience and Well-Being, University of Colorado Boulder

How the NCTSN Collaborative Model Works



ILLUMINATION

Spotlighting childhood trauma as a solvable public health issue

The NCTSN is the nation's singular coordinated response to childhood trauma—one of the most widespread yet treatable public health challenges affecting children and families today.



ACTIVATION

Translating research into evidence-based care with real-world impact

The NCTSN accelerates the translation of scientific advances into practical tools and evidence-based interventions. By connecting providers and supporting systems, the NCTSN strengthens the capacity to deliver trauma-informed care that promotes recovery and resilience.



COLLABORATION

Bringing child-serving experts together to deliver coordinated care

The NCTSN connects researchers, clinicians, policymakers, families, and communities who might not otherwise work together. This unique network ensures best practices are implemented across systems nationwide.