

For Immediate Release
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Connecticut is Making Steady Progress in Addressing a Hidden Public Health Crisis: Child Trauma

*Trauma is the focus for this year's
National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day (May 9)*

Farmington, CT - A growing awareness of the effects of traumatic stress on children is resulting in changes across Connecticut. The [Child Health and Development Institute of Connecticut \(CHDI\)](#) released an [Issue Brief, Child Traumatic Stress: CHDI's Response to a Public Health Crisis](#), which briefly summarizes the issue and Connecticut's response. Childhood trauma is widespread. Nationally, 71% of children report exposure to one or more potentially traumatic events - including sexual abuse, physical abuse, violence, death of or separation from a caregiver, and others - by the age of 17.

Research shows that children exposed to trauma are at increased risk of mental health, behavioral, and substance abuse problems that can impair their development and ability to function in the community and at school. Further, these children are more vulnerable to negative health outcomes through adulthood, including heart disease, diabetes, substance abuse, mental illness, suicide, and early mortality.

"The single greatest way to prevent a traumatized child from developing future mental illness and other compromised health issues is to effectively treat their traumatic stress," said Bob Franks, trauma expert & Director of the [Connecticut Center for Effective Practice](#) at the Child Health and Development Institute of Connecticut.

The estimated costs to society of childhood trauma exposure are \$103 billion annually, (according to a [2007 Economic Impact Study by Wang & Holton](#)). In response to growing recognition about these personal, familial, and societal costs, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) [National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day](#) on May 9 is focused on increasing awareness about childhood trauma and treatment resources. Fortunately, there are evidence-based treatment models for child trauma victims that can reduce or eliminate the long-term health risks of trauma exposure. Unfortunately, until recently these treatments have not been widely available in Connecticut or throughout the nation.

Here in Connecticut, the [Child Health and Development Institute of Connecticut \(CHDI\)](#) has been instrumental in improving awareness and availability of effective treatments for child traumatic stress. CHDI has created a website for parents seeking information on children's mental health issues. The site, www.kidsmentalhealthinfo.com, includes information about trauma and trauma treatment resources. Over the past five years, in partnership with Connecticut Department of Children and Families (DCF), CHDI has helped build a statewide infrastructure to more effectively treat trauma related difficulties in kids. Over the next five years with funding from a \$3.2 million federal grant to DCF from the Administration for Children and Families, CHDI will help implement the statewide [Connecticut Collaborative on Effective Practices for Trauma \(CONCEPT\)](#) initiative. The goal of CONCEPT is to improve services for children suffering from traumatic stress in the child welfare system, including: workforce development, enhanced screening and assessment, cross-system collaboration, and increased access to evidence-based treatments for children and families.

For more information, contact Julie Tacinelli, tacinelli@uchc.edu or Cindy Langer at 860-679-1519. [Click here](#) for a list of providers offering the evidenced-based Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy in Connecticut.

[Child Health and Development Institute of Connecticut \(CHDI\)](#) works to advance policy, systems, program and practice changes that will result in better health and developmental outcomes for the children of Connecticut. [The Connecticut Center for Effective Practice \(CCEP\)](#), a division of CHDI, focuses on improving mental health care for children across Connecticut.

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