

# Training **MATTERS**



A PUBLICATION OF THE NC DSS FAMILY SUPPORT AND CHILD WELFARE SERVICES STATEWIDE TRAINING PARTNERSHIP

Volume 6, Number 3 • June 2005

*Training Matters* is produced by the North Carolina Division of Social Services Family Support and Child Welfare Services Statewide Training Partnership, an organization dedicated to developing and delivering competency-based, job-relevant, accessible child welfare training. Partners include:

- N.C. Division of Social Services
- N.C. Association of County Directors of Social Services
- Appalachian Family Innovations at Appalachian State University
- Independent Living Resources, Inc.
- N.C. State University Department of Social Work
- N.C. A & T State University Social Work Program
- Resources for Change, Inc.
- UNC-Chapel Hill School of Social Work (Jordan Institute for Families)
- UNC-Chapel Hill School of Medicine
- UNC-Greensboro Department of Social Work

## **We Want To Hear from You!**

If you have questions or would like to comment about something that appears in *Training Matters*, please contact Teresa Turner, Family Support and Child Welfare Services Staff Development, N.C. Division of Social Services, 2412 Mail Service Center, 325 N. Salisbury Street, Suite 735, Raleigh, NC 27699-2412, State Courier: 56-20-25, E-mail: [Teresa.Turner@ncmail.net](mailto:Teresa.Turner@ncmail.net), Tel: 919/733-7672.

## **Visit Our Website**

Go to <[www.trainingmatters-nc.org](http://www.trainingmatters-nc.org)>.

This issue of *Training Matters* was produced by John McMahon of the UNC-Chapel Hill School of Social Work.

References for this issue can be found at <[www.trainingmatters-nc.org](http://www.trainingmatters-nc.org)>

## **Child Welfare Resources Related to Traumatic Stress**

To improve mental health and other outcomes in children, the National Child Welfare Resource Center for Family-Centered Practice (BNP, 2002) urges child welfare agencies to provide training on the following topics:

- How history, personality, age, support system, etc., contribute to the traumatic experience and its aftereffects in children.
- How to work with birth, foster, and kin parents to identify and address behavioral challenges that result from trauma.
- Handling mistrust and other symptoms during screening, assessment, case planning, and intervention.
- Strategies of intervention for helping children.
- Cultural factors that impact the

traumatic experience and ethical considerations for dealing with them.

- Integrating assessment, intervention, and evaluation findings into court reports and court testimony.

Supervisors and others responsible for the development of child welfare staff may find this list to be rather daunting. Fortunately, there are many resources out there to help expand trauma-related knowledge and skills in child welfare workers.

## **North Carolina Resources**

To ensure county DSS employees have information about how post-traumatic stress disorder affects children, the North *continued* →

**Training can help agencies improve outcomes for traumatized children.**

## **Responding to a Child's Acute PTSD Reaction**

Following is advice for child welfare workers and birth, foster, and adoptive parents.

- If you can, find out ahead of time what upsets a child and how to calm the child down.
- Use calm words and, when appropriate, gentle touch; reassure the child that he or she is safe.
- Remind the child that you are there to take care of him and keep him safe.
- Remind the child (and yourself) that these difficult episodes will pass, and, in time should become less frequent and less severe.
- Don't shame the child for "babyish" behavior that is young for his or her age.
- If certain things trigger a PTSD reaction (e.g., dark rooms, closed doors, TV violence) identify these things so that you can help the child anticipate these in the future and learn to cope with them.
- Respect the child's wishes about whether to talk about the trauma.



Photo Illustration

Sources: MBHP, 2003; McNally et al., 2003

## Resources Related to Traumatic Stress from p. 1

Carolina Division of Social Services continues to offer *Understanding Child Mental Health Issues*, a three-day course designed to provide a basic understanding of the childhood mental health problems most commonly seen in child welfare settings. Participants will learn the causes, symptoms, prognosis, risks, treatments, and interventions for PTSD and for pediatric depression, juvenile bipolar disorder, ADD/ADHD, and oppositional-defiant and conduct disorder. This curriculum was developed by Family and Children's Resource Program, part of the Jordan Institute for Families at the UNC-Chapel Hill School of Social Work. For course times, locations, and to register, go to <[www.ncswtrain.org](http://www.ncswtrain.org)>.

The current issue of *Children's Services Practice Notes* (vol. 10, no. 3) is another example of the Division's efforts to help agencies and workers prevent and manage traumatic stress. You can find it online at <[www.practicenotes.org](http://www.practicenotes.org)>.

### Online Learning

Child welfare agencies, foster parents, and others should also know about the Child Trauma Academy, a Texas-based nonprofit working to improve the lives of at-risk children through service, research, and education. The academy's website ([www.ChildTraumaAcademy.com](http://www.ChildTraumaAcademy.com)) contains articles on trauma, child development, and child maltreatment and features the work of Dr. Bruce Perry.

Of special interest will be the academy's free online "university," which offers four courses:

- *Surviving Childhood: An Introduction to the Impact of Trauma*, which teaches about the physiological and psychological aspects of trauma, the effects of this trauma on our society, and how you can help.
- *The Cost of Caring*, which explores secondary traumatic stress (STS) and the impact of working with high-risk children and families.
- *Bonding and Attachment in Maltreated Children*, which provides an overview of attachment and bonding, discusses the impact maltreatment has on attachment, and explores ways to help at-risk children.
- *The Amazing Human Brain and Human Development*, which explores the hows and whys

of the human brain and helps learners gain a better understanding of brain functioning in maltreated children.

These free courses offer participants the opportunity to discuss course content with instructors and other students via interactive message boards.

### A National Child Trauma Network

Child welfare professionals should also know about the National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN). Funded by the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, the NCTSN's mission is to raise the standard of care and improve access to services for traumatized children and their families. As part of this mission the NCTSN makes various publications available at <[www.NCTSNet.org](http://www.NCTSNet.org)>, including the following:

- Understanding Child Traumatic Stress
- Complex Trauma in Children and Adolescents
- Facts on Traumatic Stress and Children with Developmental Disabilities
- Helping Children in the Child Welfare System Heal from Trauma: A Systems Integration Approach
- Facts on Trauma and Homeless Children
- Child Traumatic Grief Educational Materials

### Additional Resources

The box below contains additional resources for those wishing to learn more about PTSD, STS, and child welfare.

### More Learning Resources

- **Children, Families, and Workers: Facing Trauma in Child Welfare**, the Winter 2002 issue of *Best Practice/Next Practice*. <[www.cwresource.org](http://www.cwresource.org)>
- **Caring for Kids after Trauma and Death: A Guide for Parents and Professionals**, by Robin F. Goodman (2002). <[www.AboutOurKids.org](http://www.AboutOurKids.org)>
- **Helping Children and Adolescents Cope with Violence and Disasters**, by the National Institute for Mental Health. (2001). <[www.nimh.nih.gov](http://www.nimh.nih.gov)>
- **PTSD in Children and Adolescents**, a fact sheet from the National Center for PTSD. (1999). <[www.ncptsd.org/facts/specific/fs\\_children.html](http://www.ncptsd.org/facts/specific/fs_children.html)>