Building the foundation for playful, healthful, and hopeful living for children and families in Palm Beach County.
ABOUT US...

Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health has been the foundation of Center for Child Counseling’s mission in Palm Beach County since being founded in 1999.

Through implementation of best practice and evidence-based interventions, we focus on the youngest children in our community because research shows that this period of life provides the foundation for health and learning throughout the lifespan.

We also work on building the capacity of our community to address early childhood trauma through education for caregivers and professionals.

AWARDS

- 2018 Hats Off Nonprofit of the Year
- 2018 Nonprofit of the Year, Great Nonprofits
- 2017 HeadStart Partner of the Year
- 2017 Hats Off Executive of the Year Award
- 2008 Blue Foundation Sapphire Award for Excellence in Health
- 2006 National Easter Seals Award of Excellence
OUR PROGRAMS

Child and Family Center: Provides a safe place for children and families to heal, resolve problems, learn new skills, and find the joy in being a family again.

Child First Program: A national, evidence-based model that works with vulnerable young children and their families, providing intensive, home-based services.

Infant Mental Health Program: Counseling for pregnant women, new mothers, and young children experiencing stress and trauma.

Childhood Trauma Response Program: Assessment and counseling for children, aged birth to 6, entering the foster care system or relative caregiving.

Children's Behavioral Health Collaborative (CBHC): Counseling and support for at-risk children and families in need of behavioral health services throughout Palm Beach County.

Institute for Clinical Training: Clinical workshops for professionals, a year-long internship program for students, and community-wide workshops for teachers, parents, and caregivers.

Childcare and Community Social-Emotional Wellness (CCSEW) Program: Prevention, early intervention, and treatment for children in childcare centers, schools, and shelters throughout Palm Beach County.

Fighting ACEs Initiative: Education, advocacy, outreach, and intervention that focuses on Adverse Childhood Experiences which impact physical and emotional health throughout the lifespan.

School-Based Mental Health Program: Counseling in elementary schools for children living in high-risk communities, including the Glades.
The Science

Our work is based on the latest research on ACEs (Adverse Childhood Experiences), the neurobiology of toxic stress, and the brain architecture of a developing child.

Information on the impact of ACEs is based on multiple studies that show the effect of traumatic experiences on the developing brain and life-long health. Research shows that people with higher ACE scores have much higher risk for...

- Heart disease, cancer, alcoholism, attempted suicide, and serious mental illness.
- Divorce, unwanted pregnancies, prescription drug abuse, broken bones, and obesity.

Without positive intervention, people with 6 or more ACEs (out of 10) die, on average, 20 years earlier than those with no ACEs. High doses of exposure to ACEs dramatically increases the risk for 7 of the 10 leading causes of death in the United States.

The Neurobiology of Stress

Frequent or extreme experiences that cause excessive stress can be toxic to the architecture of a child's developing brain. Significant adversity early in life sets up the body's systems to be more susceptible to stress throughout life, with long-term negative consequences for physical and emotional health, educational achievement, economic success, social relationships, and overall well-being.

Brain Architecture and Brain Plasticity: First 1,000 Days of Life

- Brain architecture is comprised of trillions of connections among neurons across different areas of the brain. These connections enable lightning-fast communication among neurons that specialize in different brain functions.
- The basic architecture of the brain is constructed through a process that begins early in life and continues into adulthood. Simpler brain circuits come first and more complex circuits build on them later. Genes provide the basic blueprint, but experiences influence how or whether genes are expressed.
- Working together, this circuitry shapes the quality of brain architecture and establishes either a sturdy or a fragile foundation for all future learning, health, and behavior.
- Plasticity, or the ability for the brain to reorganize itself and adapt, is greatest during the first 1,000 days of life. This plasticity decreases with age.
HOW EXPERIENCES SHAPE US

The Role of Epigenetics

- Epigenetics is the study of changes in gene expression caused by the modification of genes that do not include changes to the underlying genetic code.
- Our experiences may be woven into our child’s, and even our grandchild’s, genetic code.
- Early identification and prevention of mental health concerns for families, as well as for children, can have a profound impact on life-long success.
- Research on maternal depression shows that children are particularly at risk if women with depression remain untreated.

Intergenerational Transmission of ACEs

ACEs perpetuate generation after generation based on genetic make-up, learned behaviors, and parental experience or exposure to ACEs.

The Importance of 'Serve and Return'

- When an infant or young child babbles, gestures, or cries, and an adult responds appropriately with eye contact, words, or a hug, neural connections are built and strengthened in the child’s brain.
- Given the foundational importance of the first few years of life, the need for responsive relationships in a variety of settings, starting in infancy, cannot be overstated.

"The most important emotional accomplishment of the toddler years is reconciling the urge to become competent and self-reliant with the longing for parental love and protection."

Alicia F. Lieberman
A PUBLIC HEALTH APPROACH

The American Academy of Pediatrics calls the impact of ACES the "greatest public health issues of our time."

So, our unique model uses a Public Health Approach to prevent and heal childhood trauma and adversity. Why? Because the science shows that this approach works.

We refuse to wait until a child falls apart emotionally before we do something.

Research tells us what puts a child at risk for future problems...exposure to abuse, violence, neglect, poverty, and other circumstances children should never have to endure.

Our model targets everyone in a child's life, promoting responsive adult relationships to stimulate healthy brain development while providing the buffering protection needed to prevent challenging experiences from producing a toxic stress response.

Our Model is Comprehensive

We provide therapeutic services to support the healthy development of sturdy brain architecture.

We provide individual, classroom, small group, and family therapy and support.

We provide treatment, education, and training to promote emotional competency, self-regulation strategies, social-emotional wellness, and healthy attachment.

We provide training for system partners serving children. This training includes information on trauma, its effects, and how to adopt a trauma-informed lens.

We will help over 4,500 children through our programs in 2019.
OUR FUTURE

- We will continue to educate communities on trauma and its effects on children and families.
- We will continue to educate communities on a research-based and trauma-informed public health model for infant and early childhood mental health.
- We will increase access to evidence-based programs for infant and early childhood mental health in Palm Beach County.
- We will increase access to evidence-based mental health training for infant and early childhood clinicians in Palm Beach County.

WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT

Our children are in crisis. Rates of depression, anxiety, violence, teen suicide, and school shootings are rising. Our schools and families are not equipped to handle these issues on their own. The time has come to focus on prevention and early intervention. Children are struggling and need our support. Families are under extraordinary pressure...financial, psychological, and societal. They need support, too. We can address all these issues through our work in schools, the ideal place to identify problems early and prevent children from falling through the cracks.

The Solution

We're bring a fresh, new solution to an escalating issue. Our evidence-based programs help children succeed by not only healing trauma, but equipping them with skills needed to self-regulate, encouraging the development of autonomy and resilience.

We help teachers and caregivers by building skills to address children's social-emotional growth, ensuring an environment where all are free to learn.

Please join us in our fight against childhood adversity and trauma.

Contact our CEO, Renée Layman, at 561-530-4545 or renee@centerforchildcounseling.org to support our work or get involved today.

www.centerforchildcounseling.org