

**ACTION 4.3**

*With a focus on racial and geographic equity, expand the NC Child Treatment Program, which trains mental health clinicians in evidence-based child treatment models to serve children across NC.*

# EXPAND the NC CHILD TREATMENT PROGRAM

Soaring rates of mental health challenges among children and adolescents highlight the importance of investing in preventative mental health care for young children to provide them a strong start to life. Training clinicians that specialize in child and adolescent mental health grounded in evidence-based treatment models is a key step in working to address this issue, and the [North Carolina Child Treatment Program](#) is prioritizing this work. This is a statewide investment in training mental health providers in evidence-based treatment models addressing childhood trauma, behavior, and attachment.

## WHAT WE KNOW

Research shows that children who have [a strong mental health foundation](#) have better oral language development and skills, better interpersonal skills, fewer behavioral problems, are more successful in elementary school and beyond, have better physical health, and have better lifetime employment outcomes and higher income. Research also informs us that children in racial and ethnic minority and low-income families, those with the greatest need for professional supports, [are the ones least likely to receive mental health care](#). Therefore, expanding equitable access to high-quality mental health services for children birth-to-age-eight within the NC CTP framework is critical for families and the future of our state.

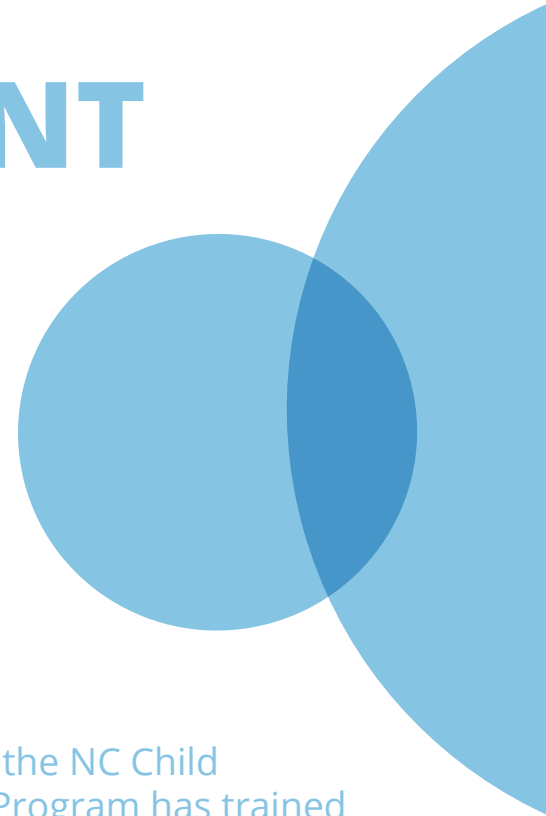
### Dive Into the Data

Approximately 10% percent of all children birth to five years old experience emotional, relational, or behavioral disturbances, such as aggression, disruptive behaviors, or inability to manage emotions, handle conflict or make friends. A much higher 35% of children in low-income

Since 2006, the NC Child Treatment Program has trained **MORE THAN 900 CLINICIANS** who now **PROVIDE SERVICES IN OVER 100 COUNTIES.**

families may experience these challenges. It is estimated that some 91,000 young children in North Carolina experience challenges in social-emotional development.

More information is needed on children in North Carolina who are being screened, referred for, and receiving mental health services. [The Children's Social-Emotional Health Data Workgroup](#) met in 2019 and 2020 to draft recommendations for a portfolio of measures to capture young children's social-emotional health.



## WHAT WE NEED

Assessments of parents' perceived barriers to receiving services for their children's mental health problems found that the top barrier was lack of information about and availability of providers offering services. The NC Child Treatment Program is working to reduce this barrier by providing competency-driven training, clinical coaching, and implementation support across the state, with an emphasis on racial and geographic equity.

Expanding this program is an investment that will pay off! When young children have positive early life experiences and other needed mental health supports, they are set up for life-long well-being and success. Building a well-trained and adequate workforce of infant and early childhood mental health clinicians, with a focus on increasing the number of providers of color, is a key strategy for ensuring this is possible for all North Carolina children.

## HOW TO SUPPORT

Since 2013, the North Carolina Child Treatment Program has received \$1.8 million per year in state funds to train clinicians in evidence-based models for children that are involved in or at risk of involvement in the child welfare system. However, [a recent analysis of the NC CTP found that because of low reimbursement rates there is a lack of providers willing to be trained and/or offer these services, which is a barrier to state-wide coverage.](#) Medicaid rates cover between 20% to 75% of the actual cost of providing evidence-based mental health treatment to fidelity.

When asked what would best support the program's expansion, NC CTP leaders emphasized the need for improved reimbursement, funding, and infrastructure. Further, NC CTP leaders agreed that if health insurance providers implemented a cost-based reimbursement rate, it would help to cover the true cost of delivering evidence-based treatment to children and families who need it.

Establishing a strong and accessible mental health workforce is a crucial step towards supporting babies' and young children's mental health. Expanding The NC Child Treatment Program is a key area to support young children's mental health in the state.

## INITIATIVES WORKING IN THIS AREA



The [North Carolina Child Treatment Program](#) (NC CTP) is a platform for the dissemination and sustainment of an array of evidence-based treatment models (EBTs) that address psychological trauma, child-caregiver attachment, and disruptive behaviors among children. NC CTP engages licensed clinicians in clinical training, case-level consultation, and post-training supports, while providing implementation training and support to agency leaders. NC CTP also collaborates with public mental health policy leadership, third-party payers, and state and local System of Care professionals to increase child and family access to high-quality, cost-effective mental health assessment and treatment in communities and residential settings.

[Visit the Pathways Action Map](#) to learn more about these and other initiatives leading efforts in this area.