

Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy: An Overview for Children, Parents, and Families

What is Trauma?

Trauma refers to a stressful event such as sexual or physical abuse, a tornado or fire, a motor vehicle accident, violence at home or in the community, or removal from a home. All children who have experienced abuse and neglect have experienced a potentially traumatic event. Experiencing or witnessing trauma may make a child feel scared, upset, sad, or even angry. A special kind of therapy is needed to successfully treat these symptoms.

Isn't all Therapy the Same?

There are many kinds of treatment for mental health problems. Not all therapists are trained to work with children, or with children who have experienced trauma. Often symptoms of trauma, such as difficulty controlling emotions, disorganization or lack of attention, relationship conflicts, and poor learning, can be misdiagnosed or mistaken for other disorders such as Attention Deficit Disorder. It is very important that children who have experienced traumatic events like abuse or neglect be evaluated by a therapist who is trained to identify trauma and who understands effective treatment options.

What is Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT)?

- Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT) was developed almost 20 years ago to provide education about trauma, teach coping skills, and develop the tools children and families need to heal.
- TF-CBT is a brief treatment of 12-16 sessions that can help children begin their recovery quickly.
- The treatment can be used with children ages 3-18.
- Through TF-CBT, children and parents learn new skills to process thoughts and feelings about trauma and new ways of managing stress.

Does TF-CBT Work?

- TF-CBT is one of the most effective treatments for children exposed to trauma.
- TF-CBT has been recognized by the federal government as an effective treatment. Therapists across Arkansas have been trained by ARBEST to provide this evidence-based therapy to the families in our state.

How Do I Know If TF-CBT is Right for my Child?

- If a child has gone through any of the traumas listed above or others, they should see a trained therapist who will know how to conduct a trauma assessment and will be able to decide whether TF-CBT is appropriate.
- A thorough trauma-focused assessment will also help a therapist monitor a child's progress and consult with other professionals to improve outcomes for that child.

Where Can I Find a TF-CBT Therapist in Arkansas?

- Over the last five years, ARBEST has trained 1,060 Mental Health Professionals (MHPs) in TF-CBT. To find a TF-CBT therapist in your area, search our [online listing](#).
- If you need more help locating a TF-CBT therapist, or know someone who might want TF-CBT training, contact Chad Sievers at cmsievers@uams.edu or 501-526-8317.