When ARBEST was created 10 years ago, we knew it had the potential to improve mental health treatment for children who had experienced trauma, but we had no idea just how transformative the program would be for our state.

In 2009, a family could drive halfway across Arkansas and not find a mental health professional trained in evidence-based treatments (EBTs) for trauma. Today, because of ARBEST’s work with many partners, a Children’s Advocacy Center (CAC) can refer a victim of sexual abuse to an onsite therapist for treatment. A mother can receive services in her rural county for her foster child with trauma symptoms. A child can be surrounded with best practices in her home and school.

This kind of access to trauma-informed environments and treatments has allowed thousands of children and families to recover from trauma and has transformed the mental health landscape of Arkansas. We are grateful for our partners and are proud of our joint efforts to support the healing of the state’s most vulnerable.

Sincerely,

NICOLA EDGE, PH.D.
ARBEST Co-Director

SUFNA JOHN, PH.D.
ARBEST Co-Director
OUR CHARGE

over 9,000 children in Arkansas are victims of maltreatment each year, and more than 50% of children will experience a traumatic event.

1 in 3 children who have experienced maltreatment will develop PTSD.

In 2009, less than 50 therapists in the state were trained in evidence-based treatments for children with PTSD and other trauma-related problems. Today, because of ARBEST’s work, families can access appropriate treatment in every corner of the state.

ARBEST’S MISSION is to improve outcomes for traumatized children and their families through excellence in clinical care, training, advocacy, and evaluation.

The ARBEST Team has grown under the leadership of founding Director, Teresa Kramer, Ph.D. Today, it includes UAMS psychologists, licensed clinical social workers, and staff members who bring varied expertise to our shared mission. ARBEST boasts seven national or statewide trainers in evidence-based treatments for trauma and has contributed 19 publications and over 300 presentations on trauma treatment and trauma-informed care. ARBEST is now regarded as a national leader in trauma treatment dissemination.

Founding Director Dr. Terry Kramer receiving the Malone Child Protection Award from Senator Malone, April 2018.
EVIDENCE-BASED TREATMENTS (EBTS) for trauma are therapies that have demonstrated success in reducing trauma symptoms in children and adults and improving coping mechanisms of families. ARBEST has trained therapists in three EBTSs throughout the state: TF-CBT, CPP, and PCIT.

TRAUMA-FOCUSED COGNITIVE BEHAVIORAL THERAPY (TF-CBT) is a therapy for youth (ages 3-18) and their caregivers that has been shown to successfully resolve emotional and behavioral difficulties associated with trauma. To date, there are 785 fully-trained TF-CBT therapists in Arkansas who were trained by ARBEST.

“My adoptive daughter came from a dangerous living situation. She was frightened and would scream for hours. There was nothing we could do to console her. After four months of TF-CBT, she had a complete turn around. To go from where she was, to where she is now—less worried, happier, a normal little girl—in such a short time...It’s amazing.”

ANONYMOUS
PARENT OF TF-CBT CLIENT
ARKANSAS
**CHILD-PARENT PSYCHOTHERAPY (CPP)** is a therapy for trauma-exposed children (ages 0-5) and their caregivers that has been shown to reduce emotional and behavioral difficulties, enhance safe caregiving practices and strengthen the parent-child relationship. To date, there are 48 fully-trained CPP therapists in Arkansas who were trained by ARBEST.

**PARENT-CHILD INTERACTION THERAPY (PCIT)** is a therapy for families with children (ages 2-7) with disruptive behaviors, including those with a history of trauma, that improves child behavior and strengthens the parent-child relationship. To date, there are 25 full trained PCIT therapists in Arkansas who were trained by ARBEST.

“When we adopted our daughter, she had memories of traumatic events from when she was just 19 months old. Going through CPP was critical for both of us. My daughter’s trauma behaviors went away in 6 months, and I learned how to help her. It completely changed our family dynamic.”

**AMANDA ADAMS**
PARENT OF CPP CLIENT
RUSSELLVILLE, AR

“Going through PCIT was the best decision I’ve ever made for my son. I felt like someone understood where I was coming from for the first time and could develop a plan for us. Because of PCIT, his behavior is transformed. I think he has healed [from trauma], and our bond is so much stronger today.”

**ELIZABETH MCGEE**
PARENT OF PCIT CLIENT
LITTLE ROCK, AR
ARBEST provides technical assistance to stakeholders who work with trauma-exposed children and families. The team has developed several tools, programs, evaluations, recommendations and articles in response to community needs.

**MANAGING YOUTH TRAUMA EFFECTIVELY (MYTE)**
MYTE is an eight-session group curriculum that helps caregivers understand the impact of trauma, learn trauma-sensitive parenting approaches, and create a safer home environment. The intervention was developed by the ARBEST team for substance-abusing mothers in treatment through the Division of Behavioral Health Services (DBHS), and the curriculum has since been expanded for foster/adoptive and general audiences. ARBEST published a primary evaluation\(^1\) of MYTE and has trained 79 facilitators who hold ongoing caregiver groups in their communities.

**CLINICAL CONSULTATION**
ARBEST trainers and consultants have provided thousands of hours of consultation to mental health providers throughout the state. Through training calls, targeted webinars, community presentations, and publications, the team seeks to provide evidence-based recommendations to aid in clinical decision-making. For example, trainers of three EBTs came together to publish a paper\(^2\) helping clinicians choose the right early childhood trauma treatment for each client.

**SELECTED PUBLICATIONS**


COMPLEX TRAUMA ASSESSMENT PROGRAM (CTAP)
ARBEST developed CTAP in partnership with the Division of Child and Family Services (DCFS) to provide comprehensive psychological evaluation services and treatment recommendations for high-risk youth in the child welfare system. Feedback from evaluations is shared with foster families, DCFS personnel, attorneys ad litem, and youth to ensure that a team of trusted adults understands the results and recommendations. ARBEST has completed over 36 evaluations and published an article reviewing diagnostic decision-making in complex trauma cases.

COMMERCIAL SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN (CSEC) PILOT STUDY
In order to develop screening tools for victims of commercial sexual exploitation (CSEC) at CACs, ARBEST launched a pilot study. Over a six-month period, advocates from four CACs collected data on youth ages 12 to 18 using the adapted Screening Questionnaire for the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Youth in CACs. A total of 1,556 youth were screened and 329 youth in 46 counties were identified as High-Risk. ARBEST published initial findings on the adapted screener tool which is now available for CACs to use.
**OUR MILESTONES**

**2009**
- ARBEST established at UAMS.

**2010**
- First TF-CBT Training with national trainers held for 134 therapists.
- Trauma-Informed Care Training rolled out to DCFS frontline workers.

**2011**
- ARBEST WebPortal launched to track trauma symptoms and needs in CACs and beyond.
- Online Clinician Directory created allowing those in need to find therapists trained in EBTs for trauma across the state.

**2012**
- Expanded Trainings of Trauma Treatments for Young Children including CPP and PCIT.

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**GLOSSARY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CAC</td>
<td>Children's Advocacy Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>CPP</td>
<td>Child-Parent Psychotherapy</td>
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<tr>
<td>CPT</td>
<td>Cognitive Processing Therapy</td>
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<tr>
<td>CSEC</td>
<td>Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children</td>
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<tr>
<td>CTAP</td>
<td>Complex Trauma Assessment Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>EBT</td>
<td>Evidence-Based Treatment</td>
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<tr>
<td>MHP</td>
<td>Mental Health Professional</td>
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<tr>
<td>MYTE</td>
<td>Managing Youth Trauma Effectively</td>
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<tr>
<td>PCIT</td>
<td>Parent-Child Interaction Therapy</td>
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<tr>
<td>TF-CBT</td>
<td>Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy</td>
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“I’ve worked with every TF-CBT dissemination project in this country. The ARBEST program is second to none.”

**Dr. Anthony Mannarino**

*Founding Director, Terry Kramer, Ph.D., 2014 Therapist of the Year, Keri Timmons, LPC, and TF-CBT developer Anthony Mannarino, Ph.D.*
Webinar Series created to offer monthly trauma-related continuing education in the state.

First CAC Retreat held to offer training and support for Advocates and MHPs.

CTAP established to provide evaluations for high-risk youth in the child welfare system.

First CPT Training held to increase access to EBTs for adult trauma.

MYTE psychoeducational curriculum created for parents of young children with trauma.

CSEC Pilot Study implemented to identify youth at CACs who are at high risk for CSEC.

2015

2016

2019

“ARBEST got our staff thinking about trauma. They began educating people across different partnerships, which created a shared vision and a shared value in the state.”

“ARBEST has contributed to all of our centers in a unique way so that kids in rural and urban areas can receive excellent mental health services.”

MISCHA MARTIN

Mischa Martin, J.D., M.P.A., Director of Arkansas DHS Division of Children and Family Services

ELIZABETH PULLEY

Elizabeth Pulley, M.A., Executive Director of Children’s Advocacy Centers of Arkansas
Sherese Hicks, a therapist formerly at the Wade Knox Children’s Advocacy Center, has been in the business of helping kids heal for over 25 years. But it was not until she learned TF-CBT that she had a game plan to treat children with trauma.

One of Sherese’s clients, a rape survivor, came to the CAC feeling dejected and alone. Over the course of TF-CBT treatment, she helped the teen normalize her thoughts and feelings, develop coping skills, and gain confidence along the way.

“The biggest joy was helping her have a voice. These treatments help kids get unstuck. They help them want to live life. You cannot beat that. It’s just awesome,” shared Sherese.

“Before, you believed you were doing something good, but it was hard to be sure. With evidence-based treatments, there’s a clear direction with a beginning and an end. Kids can see their progress. They graduate and know they’ve really accomplished something.”

SHERESE HICKS
“Elizabeth didn’t know she had a voice. We did a lot of work to help her understand that she deserved to be heard. Over the course of TF-CBT, I watched her blossom. To get to where she could testify in court and face this man that for years was her monster—that’s powerful.”

CHRISTA NEAL

“Elizabeth didn’t know she had a voice. We did a lot of work to help her understand that she deserved to be heard. Over the course of TF-CBT, I watched her blossom. To get to where she could testify in court and face this man that for years was her monster—that’s powerful.”

CHRISTA NEAL

Break the cycle

Abuse thrives in silence, and Elizabeth’s abuse was no different. For years, her father sexually abused her, and for just as long, it was a secret. But one day she summoned the courage to tell her mother.

Her brave disclosure led her to the Percy and Donna Malone Child Safety Center where she started therapy with the center’s therapist and executive director, Christa Neal.

They worked through TF-CBT together, which helped Elizabeth have a breakthrough: she believed for the first time that the abuse was not her fault. Her new footing allowed her to testify against her father in court. “It was the hardest thing I’ve ever done in my life,” Elizabeth shared.

Today, Elizabeth is a confident young woman with dreams of helping others. “I’m the first to break the cycle in my family and I want to walk with others and help them do the same, just like the center walked with me.”
OUR IMPACT: By the Numbers

1,949 Mental Health Professionals Trained in Evidence-Based Treatments for Trauma

10,183 Professionals Trained in Trauma-Informed Care

47,606 Children Registered in ARBEST WebPortal by Advocates & Mental Health Professionals

327 Presentations & Webinars for Professionals, Community Members and Caregivers

19 Publications by ARBEST Faculty on Child Trauma and Evidence-Based Treatments
$3.26 Million
Appropriated to CACs for Mental Health Services

63%
Reduction in Wait Time to First Mental Health Visit at CACs, from 5 to 2 Weeks

Arkansas Counties with Therapists Trained in Evidence-Based Trauma Treatments by ARBEST

64

15,712
Children Registered in ARBEST WebPortal Received Mental Health Services

49%
of Children Receiving Treatment Were Within the Normal Range of Trauma Symptoms by Their First Follow-Up Evaluation
“Parents often have had their own traumatic experiences and it’s so important that we find a way to support them. We’ve had a lot of success doing MYTE groups with parents. It’s wonderful to see parents grow in their knowledge and confidence. You know that you’re helping heal the entire family.”

BROOKE GILLUM

“After getting trained as a CPP supervisor with ARBEST, I became passionate about infant mental health and made sure other therapists in the area got trained in CPP as well. It was refreshing to know that there’s something that treats this young age group, and that works so closely with caregivers.”

KRISTIN LEHNER

THANK YOU to our PARTNERS for your dedication to our state’s youngest and most vulnerable. Our achievements would not have been possible without support from many partners, including but not limited to:

- Arkansas Legislators and Leaders, such as First Lady Susan Hutchinson and Percy and Donna Malone
- UAMS Psychiatric Research Institute
- National Treatment Developers and Trainers
- DHS and other State Agencies
- The Commission on Child Abuse, Rape and Domestic Violence
- Children’s Advocacy Centers of Arkansas and all CACs in the State
- Community Mental Health Centers
- Courts, Schools and other Community Partners
- Therapists, Consultants and Local Champions
- Children and Families
THANK YOU to ARBEST ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS past and present who have served towards our shared mission.

Current Advisory Board Members:

- Phyllis Bell
  Office of the Governor
- Janice Church
  UAMS Family Treatment Program
- Michelle Cline
  Arkansas Commission on Child Abuse, Rape, & Domestic Violence
- Karen Farst
  ACH Center for Children at Risk
- Carol Fletcher
  Arkansas Court Improvement Team
- Brooke Gillum
  Zero to Three
- Christin Harper
  Arkansas DCFS
- Kathy Helpenstill
  Children’s Safety Center of White County
- Tiffany Tackett Kell
  Zero to Three
- Betsy Kindall
  Arkansas Department of Education
- Jennifer Long
  Children’s Protection Center
- Sherri Jo McLemore
  Division of Child and Family Services
- Christa Neal
  Percy and Donna Malone Child Safety Center
- Teri Patrick
  Arkansas Association of Infant Mental Health
- Lori Poston
  Arkansas Mental Health Council
- Elizabeth Pulley
  CACs of Arkansas

THANK YOU to the ARBEST THERAPISTS OF THE YEAR who champion evidence-based treatments in their communities.

Karrah Dickeson, MS, LPC  2011
Robin Williford, LPC  2012
Karen Wright, LPC  2013
Keri Timmons, LPC  2014
Janelle Von Storch, LPC  2015
Lisa Abuja, MS, LPC  2016
Julie Dickerson, MA, LPC  2017
Liam Costello, LMSW  2018
Elizabeth Light, LCSW  2019