

# Cognitive-Behavioral Intervention for Trauma in Schools (CBITS)

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Logic Model created by the Evidence-based Prevention and Intervention Support Project (EPIS) at Penn State University's Prevention Research Center

## The Problem

A **traumatic event** is one that threatens a child or their loved one's life, safety, or well-being. Examples include: community/school violence, accidents and injuries, physical abuse and domestic violence, or natural/man-made disasters.

More than half of all youth will experience a traumatic event by age 18. A national survey of U.S. teens found:

- 8% experienced sexual assault
- 22% experienced physical assault
- 39% witnessed violence

([National Center for PTSD](#))

### Impact

While many children are very resilient in the face of trauma, research has repeatedly shown that childhood trauma is associated with a wide range of negative outcomes, including anxiety and depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, problems with peers and family, and impaired learning.

Multiple traumas and low social support put children at increased risk for poor outcomes.

## CBITS Overview

### Target Population

- Youth in 5<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade and their caregivers.
- Youth are identified for participation using a universal screening tool, to detect symptoms of PTSD and assess exposure to traumatic events.
- Delivered in school settings to increase accessibility.

### Treatment

- 10 group sessions for 6-8 youth at one time
- 1-3 individual sessions to process trauma narrative
- 2 caregiver sessions to provide psycho-education and process caregiver reactions to youth trauma
- 1 teacher educational session
- Homework for youth and caregivers

### Training

Mental health professionals, preferably masters level, complete 2 days of in-person training, 5 hours of on-line training, and participate in a series of bi-weekly consultation calls with a CBITS expert, during the initial implementation. Consultation calls reduce to monthly once initial implementation is completed and program is established.

### Core Values

- Skills-based
- Respectful of Cultural Values
- Feasible and Acceptable in Schools
- Strengths Oriented

## Outcomes

### Child Outcomes

- Decrease in youth PTSD symptoms
- Decreased depression
- Decrease in behavioral problems at school and at home
- Improved coping skills
- Improved social functioning
- Enhanced peer, teacher, and parent support

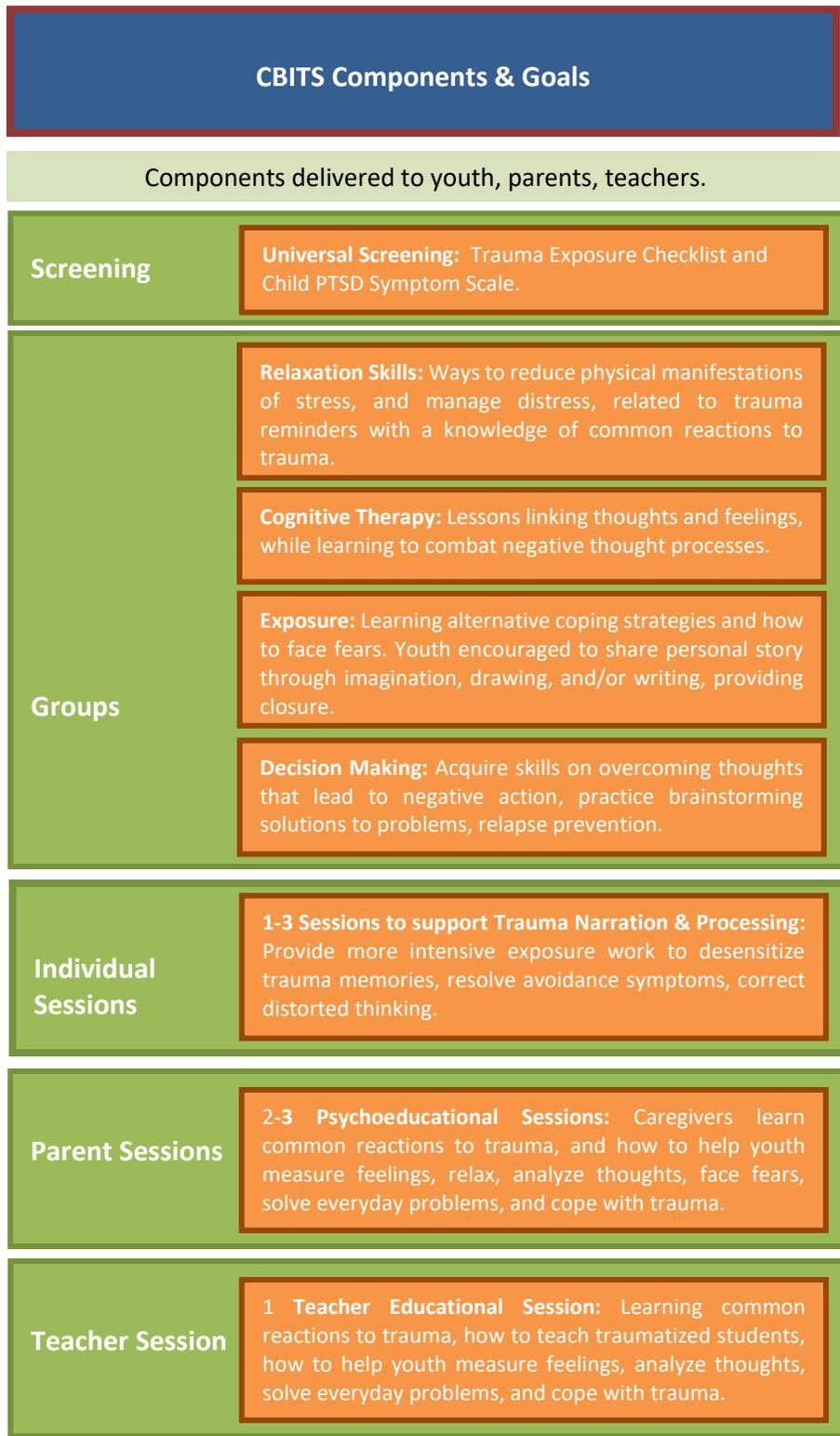
### Caregiver Outcomes

- Improved understanding of common youth reactions to trauma
- Decreased stress regarding youth trauma
- Improved ability to help youth cope with trauma

### Follow-up studies show

- PTSD symptom improvement
- Depression symptoms improvement

Gradual exposure and habituation to traumatic memories occurs throughout CBITS.



### Change Mechanisms

These factors, addressed in CBITS, are shown to impact child outcomes.

- Desensitization to trauma memories and reminders
- Peer support and connectedness
- Correction of cognitive distortions about the trauma (e.g., self-blame, stigma)
- Providing support to the caregiver, and increasing caregiver support of the child
- Improving school staff understanding and use of trauma informed approaches

### Outcomes

2 RCTs compared CBITS to control groups.

- Youth report decreased PTSD and depression symptoms at 3 months post treatment.
  - Parents Report improved functioning at home, significantly better than control group.
  - 10 Month follow up showed statistically significant improvement in depressive symptoms, with scores moving into normative range post CBITS.
- Rated as promising by Blueprints for Healthy Youth Development <https://www.blueprintsprograms.org/factsheet/cognitive-behavioral-intervention-for-trauma-in-schools-cbits>
- Rated as promising by California Evidence Based Clearinghouse for Child Welfare <http://www.cebc4cw.org/program/cognitive-behavioral-intervention-for-trauma-in-schools/>

Please see the developers' website, <http://cbitsprogram.org>, for official information about CBITS training, access to free resources, and learn about CBITS Dissemination and Sustainability.