

## Creating Connections

# Updates for our Learning Community

Issue 3

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### INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

<b>CHET Conference/ Trainings</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Ongoing Mental Health Screener to</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Youth Voice</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>DBHR updates</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Expanding our Core Team</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Alliance for Child Welfare Excellence Mental Health Training</b>	<b>4</b>

## PHASE II Underway : Focus on Implementation

Our Creating Connections (CC) team has worked hard over many months to develop a solid plan that represented a culmination of work completed during our Phase I year and outlined actionable steps to undertake that work towards bringing a trauma-informed system-level change to enhance the wellbeing of children and youth in care.

**After incorporating feedback we received from our federal project officer, we received approval of our Phase II Plan!**

Now we will focus on accomplishing our major goals and objectives for our implementation stage of the project.

As you will see in the next few sections, our team has already achieved major milestones and is making significant progress!

First, a statewide training of all Child Health and Education Tracking (CHET) Screeners and Supervisors took place on April 21st and 22nd, 2014. During this conference, CHET screeners reviewed existing screening tools, participated in multiple workshops including a training on the new trauma symptoms tool. The tool is scheduled to go live in June 2014.

Second, CA recently hired three full-time Ongoing Mental Health Screeners who will be re-administering the trauma and mental health tools to obtain a better picture of the mental health needs of children and youth in out-of-home care. This program will work closely with the information collected from the CHET screeners.

Lastly, our project presented the first of several Mental Health Trainings for the Alliance for Child Welfare Excellence. This training was attended by social workers, caregivers of foster children, and Foster Parent trainers.

Now that Phase II is underway, we look forward to continuing our efforts to “move the needle” on critical indicators of wellbeing for children and youth in the foster care system. This year is sure to be a busy one for our Creating Connections project!

## STAY TUNED!

- ◆ **New Creating Connections website:**
  - ◆ <http://depts.washington.edu/pbhjp/>
  - ◆ **Then click on: Creating Connections**
- ◆ **On-going mental health training with the Alliance for Child Welfare**
- ◆ **Evidence Based Practice Institute Workforce Initiative Lectures**
  - ◆ <http://depts.washington.edu/pbhjp/training/EBPIectures.php>

## CHET Conference/Trainings

One of the first major milestones we achieved during our Phase II plan was the successful execution of a statewide training of all Child Health and Education Track (CHET) screeners that took place on April 21st and 22nd, 2014.

This two-day conference included approximately 44 CHET staff statewide, including three new on-going mental health screeners. CA and screening experts covered information on how to gather, interpret screening information, and ensure screening data is shared with the social

worker. Refresher trainings on the exiting screening tools such as the PSC-17 and the ASQ/ASQ-SE were also provided.

CHET screening staff and the new OMH screeners were also trained on the new trauma-symptoms tool: the Screen for Childhood Anxiety-Related Disorders. The go-live screening date of the implementation of the trauma symptoms assessment into the CHET process is June 2014.

Another CHET conference in 2016 is planned to provide continued trainings around administration of tools, trauma, and compassion fatigue.



## Ongoing Mental Health Screeners

We are moving forward with embedding a trauma screening tool in the Child Health and Education Track (CHET) program.

We have expanded the screening platform by embedding an ongoing screening process (called Ongoing Mental Health [OMH] Screeners) for a cohort of identified children and youth (ages 3-17) who remain in care longer than 30-days. The newly hired OMH Screeners will be administering the mental health screening tools by phone. These screenings will occur on an ongoing basis every 6 months.

Initially, the OMH Screeners will be centralized in Olympia where they will be supervised and the volume and pace of work monitored under the CA Co-Principal Investigator and the CA Project Coordinator. With the additional screenings, we aim to:

1. Increase the identification of children and youth with mental health concerns;
2. Increase the number of appropriate referrals to mental health for assessment and treatment; and
3. Increase communication between the family, caregiver, social worker, and therapist.

Our goal is to increase the screening of children and youth in out-of-home care for trauma and mental health needs with well-researched and validated tools, and once identified, refer them into appropriate mental health services.

The OMH screeners are scheduled to start in their positions May 16th.

## Youth Advisory Board

One of the major things that Creating Connections will be focusing on during Phase Two is the incorporation of a “youth voice” into the project. Incorporating “youth voice” means building the capacity for youth to advocate effectively for changes needed in the systems that directly affect their lives.

Many foster youth have faced multiple life challenges and have interacted with more than one public agency when it comes to addressing, or not address-

ing, their mental health needs.

We see the value in hearing directly from those we hope to help through our work, and we want to dedicate time to make this possible. We want to hear from youth/alumni about their experiences with assessment, intervention, and treatment for mental health.

Jessica Sachara, one of our recent additions to the Creating Connections team, is spearheading this area of the project. She will be with us

through mid-June, during which time she hopes to lay a solid foundation and begin steps toward youth engagement.

Currently, she is contacting various organizations and individuals who work with or have connections to foster youth/alumni in order to make a plan for strategically reaching out to a diverse population of foster youth statewide.

More updates to come!

## DBHR updates

It is with great excitement that we welcome Patty King and Lorrin Gehring to our learning community. They will be an integral part of our learning community ensuring that family and youth voice are present in our work by helping recruit youth and family to be a part of our direct team.

Patty recently joined DBHR’s Children, Youth, and Family Programs Unit as the Family Liaison! Patty will be assisting in the *Creating Connections* and System of Care Grants, ensuring family voice is integrated in our work. Patty has assisted countless families in Pierce County and across the state in recognizing their strengths and navigating the mental health system. She comes to us from Comprehensive Life Resources,

where she worked as a Certified Peer Counselor for the past four years. Prior to that, she served as the Executive Director of Statewide Action for Family Empowerment of Washington State. Patty also spent 12 years simultaneously working for A Common Voice, an independently run family organization, and at Pearl Street Center a Children’s Long Term In-Patient Program as a Parent Advocate. She has also been a member of the CLIP Parent Steering Committee since 1998. Her skills and knowledge are vast and we will greatly benefit from having her on our team!

Lorrin also recently joined DBHR’s Children, Youth, and Family Programs Unit as the Youth Liaison. She has 15

years of experience in youth involvement, youth training and was one of the original members in Health in Action which is now known as Youth In Action. Lorrin recently relocated back to Washington State from Utah where she served as the Youth Involvement Resource Specialist for the National Federation for Families for Children’s Mental Health. She also worked as a Social Marketing Technical Assistance Provider for the Children’s Mental Health Campaign. Lorrin’s breadth of experience with youth will greatly enhance the work of Creating Connections efforts to ensure that youth voice continues to be integrated into the work we do.



## Changes on our Core Team

The project core team will be experiencing transition this spring, including welcoming three new members of our team!

Jessica Sachara is a new partner on the project team. She is a student at the University of Washington majoring in social work and is also an alumni of care. She has been involved in many organizations such as FosterClub, Treehouse, Swedish Medical Center and UW Minority Association of Pre-health Students. She is currently developing a youth advisory board and evaluation tools. Jessica will be vital to implementing the perspective of alumni of care into the day-to-day operations for the project. Welcome Jessica!

Andie Uomoto is a recent hire as a Research Study Assistant and as well as a recent graduate of the University of Washington. She will help manage the day-to-day operations of the project, while Sarah Holland is on maternity leave. She has worked extensively with children throughout her undergraduate career and hopes to continue to serve children of diverse populations in the future. The team is lucky to have her on board— and wishes Sarah a happy maternity leave (congratulations!)

Kari Mohr, RN, BSN has also joined the team as our representative from the WA Health Care Authority (HCA). She is a clinical consultant for the Office of

Health Care Benefits and Utilization Management, Division of Health Care Services. Her expertise will be very welcome!

Finally, we have bittersweet news that Anne Buher left the project as of early April. She has taken a new job as Manager of Measurement and Learning at Building Changes, a non profit dedicated to ending homelessness in Washington State. Anne has made numerous contributions to the project and will be missed! She looks forward to opportunities to work together in the future.



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## CREATING CONNECTIONS

Children's Bureau Grant  
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## Mental Health Training for the Alliance for Child Welfare Excellence

On March 26<sup>th</sup>, Sue Kerns and Barb Putnam presented the first of several Mental Health Trainings for the Alliance for Child Welfare Excellence. This training was attended by social workers, caregivers of foster children, and Foster Parent trainers.

The three hour curriculum was designed as a soft-launch, to have an opportunity to get feedback about the curriculum and refine it for broader implementation in June. The training is designed to provide an overview of key considerations related to children's mental health services, including identification and classes of behavior problems, referral process for treatment, and matching to effective services (including EBP's).

Course topics included assessing mental health strengths and needs, prevalence of trauma within the child welfare population, use of screening tools, characteristics and behavior indicators of developmental and mental health concerns, psychotropic medications, coordinating mental health services within the community, understanding the elements and criteria of Evidence-Based and Promising Practices, and matching available EBP's with specific client needs. This course also

described key signs, symptoms and impacts of trauma, disrupted attachment, and childhood adversity and ways to incorporate trauma informed care into their day-to-day work.



To measure the success of the training, attendees were asked to complete a short survey before and after the training. Attendees reported a considerable gain in knowledge about mental health over the three hour training. They also reported an increased comfort level in their ability to ask the right questions of mental health providers in order to monitor children's progress. In addition, many reported that

they were more comfortable incorporating information about a child's progress received on Ongoing Mental Health Screeners into case planning. On average, a gain in understanding about the qualities of EBP's for trauma treatment and use of screening assessment tools used by the Children's Administration was reported.

Stay tuned for updates about more trainings coming up in June 2014!

	Rated from 0 (not at all) to 10 (completely)				
	Pre-Training		Post-Training		Change from pre-post
	Mean	N	Mean	N	
How much knowledge did you gain from today's training about mental health?	--	--	7.40	10	--
Ask the right questions of mental health providers in order to monitor the child or youth's progress	6.60	10	8.25	8	1.65
The qualities of EBPs for trauma treatment	5.60	10	7.00	10	1.4
Incorporate information about the child's progress received from OMH screener into case planning process	5.60	10	6.89	9	1.29
Use and interpret screening assessment tools used by CA	5.10	10	6.27	11	1.17