

## Answers to Frequently Asked Questions:

### The NCTSN Core Curriculum on Childhood Trauma

#### Q: What is the Core Curriculum on Childhood Trauma (CCCT)?

A: The Core Curriculum combines four primary elements:

1. The Twelve Core Concepts for Understanding Traumatic Stress Reactions in Children and Families (“the 12 Core Concepts”)
2. In-depth case studies
3. Problem Based Learning (PBL) facilitation, and
4. Instructional tools, including lesson planning guides, learning activities, and assessment instruments

Learners gain understanding of the 12 Core Concepts by applying them to specially-designed cases under the guidance of a trained PBL facilitator. This fosters a highly interactive learning environment that promotes more effective learning compared to a didactic lecture format.

#### Q: What key role does the Core Curriculum play in helping the NCTSN pursue its mission?

A: The Core Curriculum helps the NCTSN pursue its mission of raising the standard of care for traumatized youth and their families nationwide. It supports the NCTSN mission by enhancing the quality and consistency of trauma training for care providers who serve traumatized youth and families across the entire Network. The NCTSN launched this major initiative in 2006 to deepen learners’ conceptual understanding of childhood trauma from the child’s perspective. The key role played by the Core Curriculum is underscored by the NCTSN position statement, [Prerequisite Clinical Competencies for Implementing Effective, Trauma-informed Intervention](#). The statement outlines basic, prerequisite competencies required for the implementation of any EBT, including case conceptualization skills, a primary focus of the Core Curriculum.

The CCCT is designed to increase practitioner, service provider, and administrative staff knowledge about childhood trauma; to improve case formulation, critical reasoning, and decision-making skills; and to apply these abilities to professional practice.

#### Q: How can the Core Curriculum benefit my site?

A: NCTSN sites use the Core Curriculum to promote conceptually-based trauma knowledge for all staff—ranging from front-line staff, clinicians, and administrative leaders—because it can help change the way they think about and respond to trauma’s impact. This change not only promotes better recognition of trauma it helps reduce reactivity to it. Consequently, this way of learning furthers an NCTSN site’s trauma-informed organizational development.

Core Curriculum learning experiences more effectively enhance critical reasoning and case formulation skills compared with didactic, fact-based “trauma 101” training. Many NCTSN sites are discovering that applying The 12 Core Concepts, a PBL approach, and the Core Curriculum instructional tools to their case conferences and clinical supervision strengthens and enriches staff learning.



The Core Curriculum helps teams to:

- Improve the ways in which they engage clients;
- Interact with consumers;
- Make the transition to being more trauma-informed; and
- Anticipate and prevent systems-induced trauma.

Common uses for the Core Curriculum include maintaining consistent training for new front-line staff and existing clinicians, and for a site's field practicums for social work students, clinical psychology interns, child psychiatry fellows, and licensed mental health and marriage and family counselors.

### **Q: Can we adapt the Core Curriculum to meet the diverse needs of our staff and community partners?**

**A:** The Core Curriculum is flexible and can be adapted for different professional and educational settings, levels of trauma expertise, time available, and the specific learning objectives of the training. Each element of the Core Curriculum has independent applicability. The 12 Core Concepts are frequently used as a primary learning component in trauma-informed service development as a way to introduce non-clinical audiences to trauma's widespread impact. For example, one NCTSN Category II center uses them extensively in its undergraduate education of Child Advocacy students and multidisciplinary team members. Many Core Curriculum trained sites use them in supervision and for education of consumers, board members, and administrative support staff. The 12 Core Concepts are freely available to anyone to use.

Once sites learn about the basic 4-step PBL cycle, they have applied this interactive adult learning method in numerous ways, such as in holding case conferences focused on their own "in-house" cases.

Please be advised that, although we are open to your site adapting the Core Curriculum to meet your needs, the Core Curriculum Leadership Consortium asks that you share your intentions and plans for new applications and adaptations with them before you take any concrete step to implement them. This will allow them to work with you from both a quality assurance and administrative perspective. Members of the Consortium can work to coordinate your efforts with those of other NCTSN groups in order to reduce redundancy and maximize efficiency across participating NCTSN sites. There may also be opportunities to contribute newly-created or adapted materials to the Core Curriculum itself.

### **Q: What is the purpose of hosting a Core Curriculum demonstration?**

**A:** Hosting a demonstration helps a site gain a full understanding of the value of the Core Curriculum. Hosting a demonstration does not obligate a site to do anything else.

The Core Curriculum's value often doesn't become clear until a site directly experiences it. Seeing how it engages the full range of learners from beginners to very experienced staff in a highly interactive critical reasoning process helps everyone understand the nature and utility of its unique approach.

Hosting a demonstration also permits key stakeholders to appreciate what is involved in building your own "in-house" Core Curriculum training capacity. Once a site becomes knowledgeable about the Curriculum and what it takes to deliver this type of intensive training, they can make a well-informed decision about whether they want to pursue building their own internal capacity to deliver it by sending members of their staff to be trained at an NCTSN-sponsored educational college.



**Q: Who is invited to host a live Core Curriculum demonstration at their site?**

**A:** All NCTSN sites—both currently funded and Affiliates—are strongly encouraged to host a half-day or full-day Core Curriculum demonstration at their site. If you decide to host a demonstration, the National Child Trauma Workforce Institute (NCTWI) will pair your site with an Advanced Facilitator, preferably someone located in your region in order to minimize costs and build local capacity.

**Q: What would hosting a demonstration require from our site?**

**A:** Before the training, you will collaborate with your assigned Advanced Facilitator to identify your site-specific learning objectives and the desired focus of the demonstration. The demonstration will be tailored to the time you have available (½ day to 1 full day) and the specific needs of your site. Your site will take the lead in choosing the best people to attend, i.e., clinicians, other direct service providers, administrators, administrative support staff, board members, and/or key community stakeholders. The National Child Trauma Workforce Institute (NCTWI) will cover reasonable Advanced Facilitator travel expenses (transportation, hotel), so your site's expenses for hosting a demonstration will be minimal and left to your discretion (e.g., snacks, etc.).

**Q: What can we expect to happen after a Core Curriculum demonstration?**

**A:** There are three possible outcomes following a demonstration:

- 1) A site can decide the Core Curriculum fits their needs and begin plans to build their own “in-house” capacity to deliver it;
- 2) You can decide not to build your own capacity, but instead seek a more extensive on-site Core Curriculum training for your staff (see hosting a full training, below).
- 3) If a site decides not to pursue either Options 1 or 2 above, they can be ambassadors of the Core Curriculum by simply telling others how to learn more about it.

**Q: What is the difference between the Core Curriculum itself, the 12 Core Concepts, and a Core Curriculum Facilitator College?**

**A:** The Core Curriculum consists of (a) The 12 Core Concepts, which provides the underlying conceptual framework, (b) detailed case studies depicting the effects of acute and chronic trauma, (c) a broad set of instructional tools, and (d) Problem Based Learning (PBL) as a primary method of engaging participants in a highly interactive learning process around each case study. The Core Curriculum is implemented by facilitators who have been trained at an NCTSN-sponsored training college for Core Curriculum facilitators.

The 12 Core Concepts for Understanding Traumatic Stress Reactions in Children and Families provides a conceptual framework and set of lenses through which to understand the impact of trauma and loss from a child's perspective.

The purpose of attending an NCTSN-sponsored Core Curriculum Facilitator College is to build each NCTSN site's (currently funded or Affiliate) capacity to train their own staff and partner agencies using the Core Curriculum. Basic Facilitator College participants learn how to apply The 12 Core Concepts using a Problem Based Learning interactive approach. The Basic Facilitator College provides intensive training and practice for participants, under the supervision of Basic College faculty members, to prepare them to facilitate the Core Curriculum at their site and their community partner sites. Those who complete the Basic Facilitator College requirements can become certified as CCCT Facilitators.



**Q: How can Core Curriculum Basic Facilitator College Training help my site build its own capacity to deliver CCCT training?**

**A:** An NCTSN-sponsored Basic Facilitator College training builds your site's capacity to deliver the CCCT by providing at least 2.5 consecutive days of training for (typically) two of your staff members. The College enables them to experience the CCCT both as a learner and a facilitator. The Basic Facilitator College will prepare your staff trainees to begin implementing the CCCT once they return from training with the ongoing support (via regular consultation calls) of a Basic College faculty member.

Basic College training consists of 3 phases: Phase 1: several pre-work sessions to orient participants to the PBL process and The 12 Core Concepts; Phase 2: 2½ days of in-person training, followed by Phase 3: a minimum of 6 monthly one-hour consultation calls.

Your basic facilitators-in-training staff members will be permitted to provide “in house” Core Curriculum training at your site and at community partner sites named in your SAMHSA grant as part of their basic certification requirements. Once a basic facilitator has received a Basic College Certificate of Completion, these staff members will be authorized to continue to offer the training within your agency, as well as to train your community partners.

**Q: What would be required to host a full Core Curriculum training, rather than a demonstration, at our site?**

**A:** You would engage an Advanced Facilitator who has received a certificate of completion from an NCTSN-sponsored Advanced College to provide the training. Advanced facilitators are permitted to charge a reasonable fee to cover their training time and travel costs. Where possible, the trainer will be recruited from your state or region to both build local capacity and minimize travel expenses. A typical training on a full Core Curriculum case can last between 3.5 hours and a full day. There are at least five full-length Core Curriculum case studies that collectively cover the full developmental age span (preschool through adolescence), and two brief case studies. Additional case studies are currently under construction.

The training audience can include clinical and non-clinical staff, senior administration, and key stakeholders, including your community partners. Assembling a mixed (diverse) training audience encourages the sharing of different perspectives between learners.

**Q: How can we arrange a Core Curriculum demonstration or full training at our site?**

**A:** If you are interested in hosting a demonstration or a full training at your site, contact **Laura Katz**, Project Director, at the National Child Trauma Workforce Institute (NCTWI), [laurakamermankatz@gmail.com](mailto:laurakamermankatz@gmail.com), and **Leslie Ross**, Director of Core Curriculum Implementation at the National Center for Child Traumatic Stress (NCCTS), [LeslieRoss@mednet.ucla.edu](mailto:LeslieRoss@mednet.ucla.edu), and **please CC Mary Swai-Williams**, Contract Administrator Associate, NCTWI, [ms5357@hunter.cuny.edu](mailto:ms5357@hunter.cuny.edu). They can answer any questions you may still have and work with you to pair you up with a Core Curriculum trainer from your state or region. They can also keep you informed when the next Basic Facilitator College training is scheduled.

