

# TREATING TRAUMA IN CHILD WELFARE WITH MATCH

The recently released NC Child 2023 Child Health Report Card clearly demonstrates that the mental health service system in North Carolina is in critical need of additional effective child mental health services. Levels of anxiety, depression, and suicidality have reportedly increased, and over half of all North Carolina youth have experienced one or more adverse childhood experiences. Both locally and nationally, there is an emergency in child and adolescent mental health. Increased access to effective child mental health services that are based in science and adaptable to the needs of individuals and communities is crucial to healthy children and families.

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## WHAT IS MATCH?

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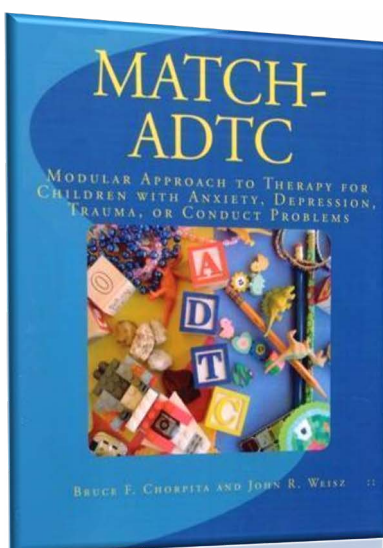
The Modular Approach to Therapy for Children is a modular trauma-informed evidence-based psychotherapy (EBP) that is scientifically proven to address the complex comorbidities of anxiety, depression, traumatic stress, and disruptive behavior disorders that encompass 70 to 80% of diagnoses for children ages 5 to 17 served in community-based mental health agencies. MATCH is composed of 33 skills derived from well-established EBPs (i.e., TF-CBT, Coping Cat, PASCET, Defiant Children). As a modular treatment, MATCH can be adapted to address the unique symptom presentations of each child, family, and community. It includes detailed decision-making tools, such as session sequencing flowcharts, to guide clinicians as they create these customized treatment plans. The end result is an effective, yet flexible, intervention program that can address comorbidity and be adapted to each child. Training providers in MATCH also creates a mental health workforce that is effective, resilient, and flexible.

MATCH is a recognized evidence-based treatment for youth who have experienced trauma by the SAMHSA-funded **National Child Traumatic Stress Network**. It is also categorized a well-established treatment for children in the child welfare system by the **California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse for Child Welfare**. MATCH has a specific set of recommended skills for children displaying posttraumatic stress symptoms.

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## MATCH FOR TRAUMATIZED YOUTH

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For youth exposed to trauma, posttraumatic stress disorder is often not the only mental health challenge. Research also shows that 60% of youth who develop symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder also have co-occurring diagnoses. Specifically, rates of co-occurring depressive, anxiety, and disruptive behavior disorders are 37%, 43%, and 36%, respectively. Additionally, youth involved with the child welfare system, are 3-4 times more likely to have anxiety, depression, or disruptive behavior disorders than youth in the general population. As an intervention, MATCH is uniquely positioned to address the array of challenges faced by youth involved with the child welfare system. Furthermore, MATCH is a modular approach that is flexible and can be adapted easily to address the individual, cultural, and community needs of youth and families.

MATCH is both an effective and efficient treatment for youth involved with the child welfare system who suffer from the negative impacts of trauma exposure. MATCH can be used:

- prior to a trauma-focused intervention (e.g., TF-CBT) to address co-occurring challenges that prevent engagement in trauma-specific work
- during the course of the trauma-focused intervention to address issues that arise mid-treatment
- following trauma-focused intervention to address remaining challenges

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## MATCH IN NORTH CAROLINA

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The State of North Carolina has already invested in implementing MATCH in 14 community-based mental health agencies across the state. Among trained agencies, MATCH has been provided across a range of service programs, including outpatient, outpatient plus, intensive in-home, and school-based services, and with youth involved in the child welfare system. To date, **90 providers have been trained as MATCH therapists through state-funded training initiatives**. To support sustainability, **35 providers have also been trained as MATCH Agency Supervisors**, which allows them to train and support additional providers within their agencies. These MATCH Agency Supervisors continue to train additional providers. A MATCH steering committee, composed of senior leaders and administrators of agencies providing MATCH, is also established in the State to further support the sustainability of MATCH. To date, **over 1,000 youth in North Carolina** have received MATCH, and the number continues to grow. Approximately 70% of children and adolescents who complete the MATCH program show **improvement in their mood, reductions in anxiety and stress levels, and/or improvements in behavior**. Mental health providers trained in MATCH also report increased self-efficacy in their counseling role and greater job satisfaction.

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## RESEARCH ON MATCH

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Youth receiving MATCH:

- **Improved more quickly** than those in usual care,
- **Had a shorter treatment duration** vs. those receiving usual care services (about 210 days vs. 275 days for those in usual care),
- **Had a greater reduction in number of problem areas** faced by youth following treatment,
- **Utilized fewer additional services** during treatment and a year following treatment,
- **Used fewer types of psychotropic medications.**

Therapists who utilized MATCH demonstrated **higher satisfaction with the treatment** than those who did not.

MATCH is **more cost-effective** to implement than other evidence-based practices.

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