

FAMILIES HELPED BY PCIT, continued

Child Protective Services removed “Karen” from her mother Jennifer’s care at age 6 months due to an unsafe home environment and her mother’s history of drug use. Her uncle and aunt cared for Karen for a period of three years while Jennifer completed a drug treatment program and other court mandated services. The caseworker then referred Jennifer and Karen for PCIT to enable the family reunification process. Following 6 months of PCIT, both Jennifer and Karen re-established their parent/child bond. Karen had a smooth transition in her return to the care of her mother. Jennifer is more confident in her parenting skills and Karen is now thriving at home.



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CHILDREN'S RESPONSE CENTER IS MANAGED BY HARBORVIEW MEDICAL CENTER.

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PARENT CHILD INTERACTION
TRAINING (PCIT)

CHILDREN'S RESPONSE CENTER

PARENT CHILD INTERACTION TRAINING (PCIT)

Parent Child Interaction Training (PCIT) is a treatment for families. The focus is on child behavioral problems, parenting skills and enhancing relationships.

PCIT uses a concrete, skill-based approach to teach parents and children new and appropriate ways to relate. In each session the parent learns to relate to their child through play. A PCIT therapist coaches the parent on appropriate interactions from behind a one-way mirror, utilizing a microphone attached to a “bug in the ear” worn by the parent. The therapist helps the parent practice and master new skills through this direct instruction.

There are two phases of PCIT. The first phase creates or strengthens a positive and mutually rewarding relationship between the parent and child. Parents learn to praise good behavior and interact positively with their child while starting to decrease the child's non-compliant behavior. The goal is for the child to experience the parent's focused and warm presence.

The second phase teaches specific and effective parenting skills for parents and caregivers to use in managing their child's behavior. Parents learn to use clear, positively stated, direct commands and to use consistent consequences for non-compliant behavior.

PCIT is an evidence-based intervention when the parent/child relationship is a focus for concern. Research has demonstrated the effectiveness of PCIT with families involved in the child welfare system. This level of treatment can also be used as part of a reunification plan, as long as the parent and child have daily contact or currently live together. PCIT is particularly effective in parent/child relationships in which the children range between two-and-a-half and seven years of age. Older children up to age 12 can also be helped. PCIT is not appropriate when there is evidence of ongoing domestic violence or extreme parental anger problems, and it is more effective if the parent is not actively involved in substance abuse.

REASONS THAT A CHILD MAY BE REFERRED FOR PCIT:

- Attachment problems or any prolonged separation between a parent and child
- Aggressive or antisocial behavior between the child and the parent
- Non-compliant and impulsive behaviors in a child
- Social skills problems or lack of social skills in a child
- Adjustment difficulties to a foster or adoptive home placement

REASONS THAT PARENTS/CARETAKERS MAY BE REFERRED FOR PCIT:

- History of verbal or physical abuse by the parent
- Families that have experienced child abuse or neglect
- Difficulty managing a child's behavior

PCIT IS APPROPRIATE FOR:

- Biological parents
- Foster parents
- Adoptive parents
- Kinship caregivers
- Single-parent and two-parent families

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“Jean” is a single mother in the process of adopting five-year-old “Justin.” Justin had a history of abuse and multiple foster placements, making it difficult for him to trust Jean and bond with her. He often ignored her, engaged in very little conversation and kept a physical distance. Through the relationship-building phase of PCIT, Jean learned ways of interacting with Justin that helped him feel comfortable, listened to and valued. As a result, Justin's negative behaviors towards Jean greatly improved — he initiated conversation, made eye contact, gave her hugs and began calling her “Mom.” At the conclusion of PCIT, Jean reported that Justin's favorite activity at home was to sit on the couch and cuddle with her as they read books together.

“Peter” was referred to PCIT because he had never learned to set limits with his seven-year-old daughter “Jenny.” He resorted to hitting as a way of managing her behavior. Peter felt more comfortable interacting with boys and was unsure how to communicate with girls. PCIT helped Peter learn how to interact with Jenny in new ways. Following PCIT, Jenny reported feeling good about her dad's newfound interest in her artwork and what she had to say. Peter reported that his improved relationship with his daughter was a “great gift.” He was now able to manage her occasional misbehaviors without resorting to physical punishment, and this made him feel good about himself and more in control.