



## **JF&CS Awarded \$2 Million SAMHSA Grant**

**WALTHAM, September 19, 2016** - Jewish Family & Children's Service (JF&CS) has been awarded a \$2 million grant over five years from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) through their National Child Traumatic Stress Initiative in support of Early Connections/Conexiones Tempranas (EC/CT), a project of the JF&CS Center for Early Relationship Support<sup>®</sup> (CERS). EC/CT is designed to address traumatic stress and build resilience in children birth to five, while reducing disparities in mental health access among marginalized populations, particularly Latino immigrant families living in Waltham, MA and nearby communities.

EC/CT will serve pregnant women and families with young children coping with multiple adversities including

- Parental substance use or mental illness;
- Domestic abuse;
- Community violence;
- Homelessness;
- Separation from a primary caregiver; and/or
- Immigration.

Very young children face disproportionate rates of trauma exposure; child welfare data identify infants and toddlers as the group at highest risk for serious maltreatment. For young children in immigrant families, the risks of trauma-exposure are compounded by high rates of poverty, discrimination, and the threat of immigration enforcement, placing them at high need for mental health treatment while facing barriers to seeking and obtaining appropriate services.

EC/CT is a multi-level project informed by scientific evidence that underscores the importance of intervening early in life to buffer and counter the effects of traumatic stress. At the direct-service level, EC/CT will treat 160 children over five years, offering Child-Parent Psychotherapy (an evidence-based practice designed for treating traumatic stress in very young children and their families), augmented by evidence-informed Circle of Security-Parenting groups to promote engagement and build interpersonal connections.

At the community and systems level, EC/CT will build a trauma-informed network of local organizations. Strategies will include:

1. Providing training to agencies serving young children
2. Creating an Early Childhood Resilience Network of providers to build community-wide awareness and collaboration that meets the needs of trauma-exposed and marginalized young children and families

3. Leading a Learning Community of three organizations to build sustained capacity for offering trauma-informed, culturally-sensitive treatment built on the principles of CPP

At all levels of service, EC/CT will seek to reduce the mental health disparities of underserved populations, with particular focus on Latino immigrant families through:

1. Bi-lingual/bi-cultural clinical staff trained in evidence-based practices
2. Multiple paths to engagement
3. Assistance with concrete needs
4. Sensitivity to the cultural values of Latino families
5. Development of a local trauma-informed network of providers that can sustain services beyond the grant period.

The work of EC/CT—both with clients and with the community—will be evaluated by researchers at Boston University School of Social Work.

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#### **About Jewish Family & Children's Service**

For 150 years, Jewish Family & Children's Service has provided exceptional human service and health care programs, guided by Jewish traditions of social responsibility, compassion, and respect for all members of the community. With an integrated network of more than 40 programs serving communities throughout Eastern and Central Massachusetts, JF&CS helps people of all faiths and backgrounds meet life's challenges. JF&CS programs focus on serving particularly vulnerable populations including children and adults with disabilities or mental illness, new mothers and their infants, seniors living with chronic conditions, and people experiencing financial crisis, hunger, or domestic abuse. Visit [jfcsboston.org](http://jfcsboston.org) for more information.

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