

Announcement from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's
Guide to Community Preventive Services

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy Proven to Benefit Symptomatic Children and Adolescents Following a Traumatic Event

The U.S. Task Force on Community Preventive Services (Task Force) recommends individual cognitive behavior therapy and group cognitive behavior therapy to reduce psychological harm to youth who show psychological symptoms following exposure to traumatic events. The Task Force recommendation and related findings are published in the September 2008 issue of the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*.

Every day, children witness, hear about, or directly experience traumatic events. These can be single or repeated events, on an individual or a mass scale (e.g., a homicide versus a plane crash); they can be natural or manmade (e.g., a tsunami versus a bombing); and they can be intentional or unintentional (e.g., rape versus severe illness). Before this review was conducted, many professionals who work with youth who have been exposed to trauma did not know whether the therapies they used were effective.

The Task Force—a non-federal volunteer group of public health and prevention experts appointed by the Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)—assessed Community Guide systematic reviews of 7 interventions to reduce psychological harm (e.g., depression, post-traumatic stress disorder) to youth following exposure to a traumatic event. The Task Force based its findings on systematic reviews conducted by CDC's Community Guide staff in collaboration with federal and non-federal experts in research, practice, and policy.

Based on their assessment of the evidence of effectiveness of these interventions, the Task Force recommended two interventions on the basis of strong evidence, and found insufficient evidence to determine the effectiveness of five others. Note that "Insufficient Evidence" does not mean that the intervention does not work, only that there is not yet enough evidence to determine whether or not it is effective.

Interventions designed to reduce psychological harm among youth who have experienced, witnessed, or otherwise been exposed to a traumatic event:

- **Recommended:**
 - Individual cognitive behavior therapy
 - Group cognitive behavior therapy
- **Insufficient Evidence:**
 - Play therapy
 - Art therapy
 - Psychological debriefing
 - Psychodynamic therapy
 - Pharmaceutical therapy

Learn more about this systematic review. Visit www.thecommunityguide.org and see Wethington H, Hahn RA, Fuqua-Whitley D, Sipe TA, et al. The Effectiveness of Interventions to Reduce Psychological Harm from Traumatic Events among Children and Adolescents: A Systematic Review. *Am J Prev Med*. 2008;35(3): 287-313.

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