Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT)

The purpose of this document is to provide a brief overview of Parent-Child Interaction Therapy based on the information available in The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration’s (SAMHSA) National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices (NREPP). The content presented in this brief was retrieved from SAMHSA’s NREPP. For detailed descriptions of the outcomes and research mentioned, the quality of research rating, full program information, and a list of studies reviewed, visit [http://www.nrepp.samhsa.gov/](http://www.nrepp.samhsa.gov/).

What is it?
Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT) is a treatment program for young children with conduct disorders that places emphasis on improving the quality of the parent-child relationship and changing parent-child interaction patterns. PCIT was developed for children ages 2-7 years with externalizing behavior disorders. In PCIT, parents are taught specific skills to establish or strengthen a nurturing and secure relationship with their child while encouraging pro-social behavior and discouraging negative behavior. This treatment has two phases, each focusing on a different parent-child interaction: child-directed interaction (CDI) and parent-directed interaction (PDI). In each phase, parents attend one didactic session to learn interaction skills and then attend a series of coaching sessions with the child in which they apply these skills. During the CDI phase, parents learn nondirective play skills similar to those used in play therapy and engage their child in a play situation with the goal of strengthening the parent-child relationship. During the PDI phase, parents learn to direct the child's behavior with clear, age-appropriate instructions and consistent consequences with the aim of increasing child compliance. Ideally, during coaching sessions, the therapist observes the interaction from behind a one-way mirror and provides guidance to the parent through a “bug-in-the-ear” hearing device. PCIT is generally administered in 15 weekly, 1-hour sessions in an outpatient clinic by a licensed mental health professional with experience working with children and families. The treatment manual provides written outlines in checklist form for each session.

Who is it for? What presenting problems does it address?
The program has been used with families with a history of physical abuse, children with prenatal substance exposure, and children with developmental disabilities.

What outcomes are addressed in the research?
1. Parent-child interaction
2. Child conduct disorders
3. Parent distress and locus of control
4. Recurrence of physical abuse
How much does it cost?*
*The following information may have been updated by the developer and may not reflect the current costs or availability of items. Please check with the implementation point of contact for current cost information and implementation requirements.

1. Treatment materials: $1,000 per set
2. 1-week, off-site training plus 100 hours of additional training/consultation over 12 months: $3,000 - $4,000 per person

For additional information and resources on Parent-Child Interaction Therapy, visit:

- SAMHSA’s National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices, Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT)

- The California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse for Child Welfare: Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT)
  This webpage provides detailed information about PCIT, including its scientific rating on the CEBC’s Scientific Rating Scale.

- Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT)
  [http://www.pcit.org](http://www.pcit.org)

- The University of Oklahoma College of Medicine, Department of Pediatrics: Parent Child Interaction Therapy
  [http://www.okpcit.org](http://www.okpcit.org)

Implementation:
Beverly Funderburk, Ph.D • (405) 271-8858 • beverly-funderburk@ouhsc.edu

Research:
Sheila Eyberg, Ph.D., ABPP • (352) 273-6145 • eyberg@phhp.ufl.edu

---