

Montana Rural Telemental Health Program



The Project

Children who have experienced abuse and neglect benefit from trauma-informed therapy. Unfortunately, child victims in rural and underserved areas often do not have access to trauma-informed therapy by trained and experienced therapists or face other barriers to accessing therapy.

The Montana Rural Telemental Health Program (MT RTMHP) connects children in rural & underserved areas with trauma-trained therapists via secure videoconferencing platforms.

- Children are referred by a CPS worker, victim advocate, or other child-serving professional.
- MT RTMHP identifies a therapist from its network.
- The therapist connects with the referrer & caregiver to conduct the in-take process.
- Therapy takes place virtually over a secure platform.
- Therapists may incorporate apps and activities to help make sessions more engaging and interactive.

How it works

iPad Loans

- Children need access to a tablet, laptop, or computer that connects to the internet.
- Children without a device can borrow a secure iPad for the duration of their treatment.
- The caregiver will return the iPad at the end of treatment.
- Children can only access the therapy platform and relevant apps - all other iPad features are disabled.

Caregivers play a critical role in helping a child heal from trauma, and treatment is most effective when caregivers are engaged in the process.

- A caregiver is required to be present during home-based telemental health sessions and participate as needed. This includes:
 - Checking in with the clinician at each session
 - Supporting the child
 - Encouraging the child to practice skills.

Caregiver Role

Referring a Child

If you know a child who has experienced abuse, faces barriers to accessing in-person therapy, and may benefit from trauma-informed therapy via telemental health, talk to the child's CPS worker, Victim Advocate, Victim Witness Specialist, or Local Children's Advocacy Center about being referred to the MT RTMHP. For more information, visit <https://childrensalliancemt.org/montana-rural-telemental-health-program>.

TF-CBT*

Trauma-focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT) helps children and families overcome trauma and move on with their lives. TFCBT is:

- **Trauma-focused:** It incorporates trauma-sensitive interventions to help children manage their trauma.
- **Brief & structured:** It is typically 12-25 sessions.
- **Evidence-based:** Numerous studies have documented its effectiveness in helping children overcome trauma.
- **Age appropriate:** It is adapted to a child's age.
- **Family-centered:** It includes both individual child sessions and joint caregiver/child sessions.

It's important that caregivers understand the process and expectations of TF-CBT so they can support their child's treatment. Below are questions caregivers may want to ask their child's therapist during the initial meeting:

- What is your experience working with children with trauma?
- How will I or family members be involved in treatment?
- What are the goals of treatment?
- How long will treatment be needed?
- How will I know if my child is getting better?

Caregiver Questions*

Telemental Health Advantages

- TF-CBT via telemental health is as effective as in-person therapy (Stewart et al., 2007).
- Telemental health provides **greater flexibility for families** with busy schedules, without reliable transportation, or who live far from in-person therapy options.
- Therapy via telemental health **promotes greater consistency in therapy attendance**, leading to improved outcomes and reduced treatment length.

TF-CBT Treatment Process*

Building Skills

Through TF-CBT, therapists help children:

- Learn about trauma
- Learn & practice relaxation techniques
- Develop skills to manage thoughts, feelings, & behaviors
- Learn effective parenting strategies

Talking About What Happened

Children become more comfortable:

- Discussing the details of the trauma in a safe & nurturing environment
- Using tools to manage feelings & trauma reminders
- Replacing negative thoughts with helpful ones

Moving Forward

TF-CBT helps children heal & move forward by:

- Improving communication & interpersonal skills
- Developing a plan for personal safety
- Practicing techniques to manage future stressors
- Assessing progress & concluding treatment

For more information visit

<https://childrensalliancemt.org/montana-rural-telemental-health-program>

*TF-CBT information & process adapted from:

- Arkansas Building Effective Services for Trauma program of the University of Arkansas for Medical Science. (n.d.) *Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT): Roadmap to Treatment for You and Your Child* (Flyer).
- The National Child Traumatic Stress Network. (2012). *TF-CBT: General Information* (Fact Sheet). Retrieved from https://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/interventions/tfcbt_fact_sheet.pdf