

# EVALUATION UPDATE



## Children's Mental Health Awareness Day, May 3, 2011

April 2011

This Evaluation Update provides an overview of Awareness Day and the relationship between early childhood trauma and children's mental health. Below you will find a preview of national events and profiles of two system of care communities that used evaluation data to increase awareness and understanding of this important issue.

National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day (Awareness Day) is an annual event sponsored by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. It began in 2005 as a grassroots effort among the SAMHSA Children's Mental Health Initiative (CMHI) system of care communities. It is now part of SAMHSA's Public Awareness and Support Strategic Initiative. The goals of this annual event are to raise awareness of the effectiveness of community-based mental health services for children, youth, and their families; to demonstrate how children's mental health initiatives promote positive youth development, recovery, and resilience; and to showcase how children and youth with mental health needs thrive in their communities. Awareness Day's message is that positive mental health is important to a child's healthy development from birth.

The national focus for 2011 is **building resilience in young children dealing with trauma**. In 2011, more than 1,000 communities will be participating and more than 100 collaborating organizations will be actively involved. This year's national "calls to action" are to:

- Integrate mental health and model resilience skills in every environment that has an impact on child development from birth.
- Enhance resilience and nurture social and emotional skills in young children from birth.
- Provide information to the public and teach them to recognize the signs of traumatic stress.
- Raise awareness that treatment for trauma is critical to achieving the milestones of child social and emotional development from birth.
- Promote trauma-informed services and supports in all child-serving settings.



In its sixth year, Awareness Day's popularity connects organizations and communities as they work together year-round to promote awareness and understanding of children's mental health. As a result of Awareness Day collaborations, system of care communities report new and stronger partnerships with other community agencies, leading to better coordination, enhanced outcomes for children and youth and their families, and increased sustainability. Evaluation findings can play a central role in increasing the impact of your community's Awareness Day efforts—continue reading to learn more!

## Building Resilience for Early Childhood Trauma

Even from as young as 18 months, children can be affected by traumatic events and have serious problems later in childhood and adulthood. The good news is that, with help from families, providers, and the community, children and youth can demonstrate resilience when dealing with trauma.

Traumatic experiences can range from a one-time incident, such as a sudden death of a loved one or a natural disaster, to ongoing exposure to experiences, such as bullying or family violence. Identifying that a child has experienced trauma is not always easy because emotional and behavioral responses to trauma vary depending on a child's age, personality, the type and severity of the incident, and

availability of adult support.

Studies on stress response in children show that there can be physiological and structural changes in the brain and neurological systems and can, without treatment, result in problems such as depression, anxiety, aggression, impulsiveness, delinquency, hyperactivity, and substance abuse.

With the support of caring adults, children can recover from traumatic events, reestablish a sense of well-being, and obtain treatment and other services if needed.

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# Building Resilience for Early Childhood Trauma (continued)

(continued from page 1)

Research has shown that caregivers can lessen the impact of these risks and support more healthy development for children, when “protective factors” are present (1). These factors include caregiver resilience, social

connections, parenting and child development knowledge, and help with meeting basic needs. An additional protective factor for toddlers and school-age children is the ability to interact positively with others and communicate their emotions effectively, making it more likely that they can better handle stress and trauma. (Learn more at [www.strengtheningfamilies.net](http://www.strengtheningfamilies.net).)

Local and national Awareness Day activities will bring an increased understanding of these risks and how they can be addressed for the children in your community.

(1) Horton, C. (2003). *Protective factors literature review. Early care and education programs and the prevention of child abuse and neglect*. Washington, DC: Center for the Study of Social Policy.



## TIP OF THE QUARTER!

Visit the Awareness Day Web site (<http://www.samhsa.gov/children>) for social messages, event ideas, graphics, resources and other information that will help your community sponsor the best Awareness Day ever!

And as always, the release of the SAMHSA “Short Report” will coincide with Awareness Day. The 2011 Short Report will feature the successes of systems of care and the National Child Traumatic Stress Network in working with children and youth who have experienced traumatic events.

## 2011 Children’s Mental Health Awareness Day National Events



Children’s Mental Health Awareness Day national activities begin on May 3 with an art exhibit sponsored by the American Art Therapy Association at the Shakespeare Theatre Company’s Harman Center for the Arts in Washington, DC. The exhibit will feature projects made by youth who have used art as a way to cope with traumatic experiences. The event will continue with a tribute to youth who have experienced trauma in early childhood and demonstrated their resilience. It will feature the personal stories of youth told in their own words.

Golden Globe award-winning actress and *New York Times* best-selling children’s book author Jamie Lee Curtis will serve as the honorary spokesperson for Awareness Day. She will be recognized with an award from Kathleen Sebelius, Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and Rocco Landesman, Chairman of the National Endowment of the Arts, for her efforts to raise aware-

ness and understanding about the impact of traumatic events on children. The tribute to youth will be nationally Webcast from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. EDT. To join the Webcast go to [www.samhsa.gov/children](http://www.samhsa.gov/children)

The 2011 annual “Short Report” on the impact of traumatic events of children and youth served in CMHI and in the National Child Traumatic Stress Initiative will be released at 9:00 a.m. EDT on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC. For a copy of the “Short Report,” go to [www.samhsa.gov/children](http://www.samhsa.gov/children) on May 3.

In addition to national activities in Washington, DC, SAMHSA grantees and communities will combine national resources and their own ideas to create local year-round mental health awareness partnerships and activities. Communities around the country will participate by holding their own Awareness Day events, either focusing on the national theme, or adapting it to the children, youth, and families they serve. The following sections describe how two communities have used evaluation findings in their Awareness Day efforts.



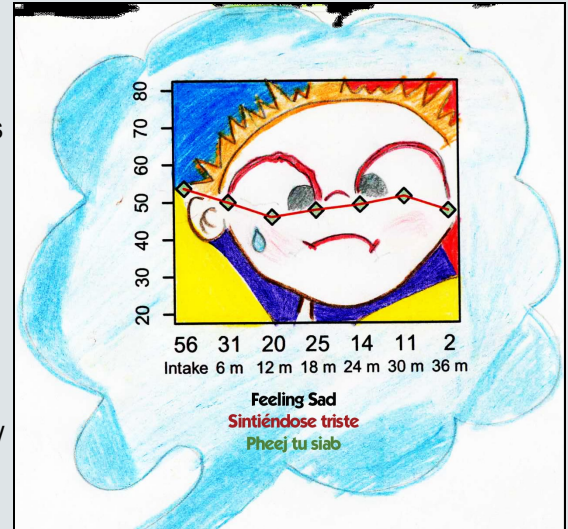
# Using Data to Tell the Story

**Laurie Dana, Social Marketer**  
**Connecting Circles of Care**  
**Butte County, CA**

National and local evaluation data are important tools in raising awareness about the need to build resilience in young children who experience trauma. However, without a personal stake in the numbers, statistics may seem trivial. At Butte County Connecting Circles of Care (CCOC), located in rural Northern California, we have learned that our job as evaluators and social marketers is to determine 1) who has a stake in the data we hold, 2) how to communicate so that stakeholders understand its significance, and most importantly, 3) what we want to achieve by communicating that data.

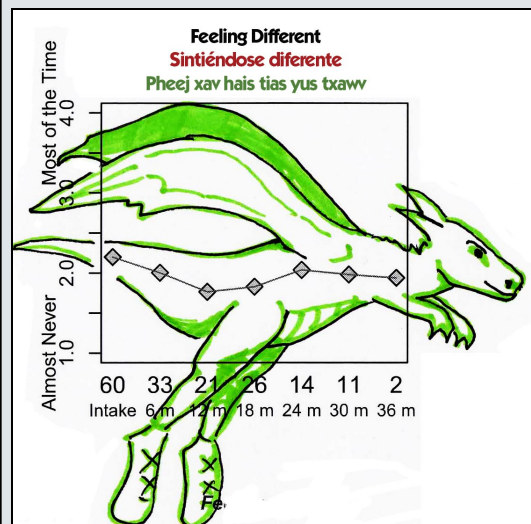
One challenge is to use data in ways that make the data relevant. This was one of the

It is challenging to present data so that they are interesting. A list of facts is impersonal, reducing its effectiveness. If we incorporate the same facts into local human-interest stories that illustrate the importance of mental health care in our community and for our own families, those statistics become more significant. One way our community attempted to improve the dissemination of data at community events was through a “wheel of fortune” type game, like that designed by CCOC’s Social Marketing Committee for a health fair held last year. The activity provided an opportunity to strike up conversations about children’s mental health and discuss how the information on the wheel relates to the well-being of our own community and families.



program. Parents attending the presentation testified that their children were functioning significantly better in school, at home, and in the community since enrolling in CCOC. The parents helped put a face on the statistics, and the evaluation data gave the program credibility.

“Children’s Mental Health Matters” is our primary message on Awareness Day. That message will be lost if we disseminate statistics and evaluation data as if they are the whole story.



Too often we make the mistake of presenting data as if the data are the whole message. For example, the statistic “one in five children has a mental health problem” conveys that such problems are common. Parents may hear this fact but still have young children with mental health problems and mistakenly believe it is “just a phase.” Therefore, in raising awareness about the importance of mental health care, we must explain healthy and unhealthy behaviors as well as show the possible need for, and positive outcomes of, treatment.

Children’s Mental Health Awareness Day provides an opportunity to present data to the media, government and community agencies, and civic organizations. Dialogue is the most effective way to use statistics in raising awareness and reducing stigma about mental health care, whether in a radio interview, community forum, policy meeting, or face-to-face meeting. CCOC also combined data and personal advocacy to gain local government and agency support for sustainability. When budget cuts threatened to undermine the integrity of the program’s cultural focus, staff presented the county supervisors with data supporting both the need for and the success of our innovative

objectives of our Web site, <http://www.ourmentalhealthmatters.com>, developed by the CCOC Social Marketing Committee to raise awareness about children’s mental health. The site incorporates national statistics with a definition of mental health that youth on the committee found helpful in overcoming stigma. The youth also selected data that were meaningful to them for inclusion on the site. The CCOC newsletter is another way that our community strives to increase support for mental health care by combining information about children’s mental health needs with relevant statistics and evaluation data.

## Upcoming Evaluation Activities

The following Webinars will be offered for 2009 and 2010 funded communities:

- ⇒ ICN Data Management Reports: Data Issue Report, Duplicates Report, Cumulative Report, & EDIF Issues — May 2011
- ⇒ CQI 101: Understanding the Basics of the Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Progress Report — August 2011

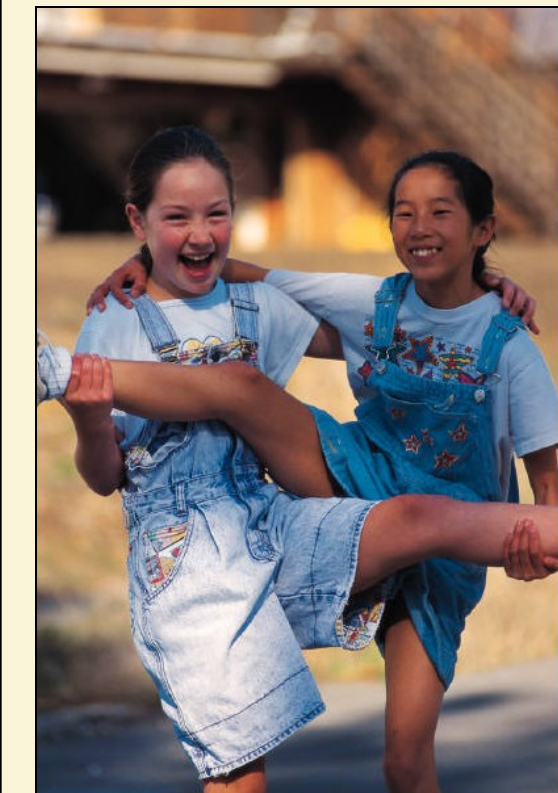
Look for e-mails providing registration details, or contact your site liaison for more information.

# Using Data to Raise Awareness, Georgia Style

**Wendy Bonner, Social Marketer**  
**Wraparound Initiative Northwest (WIN)**  
**Georgia**

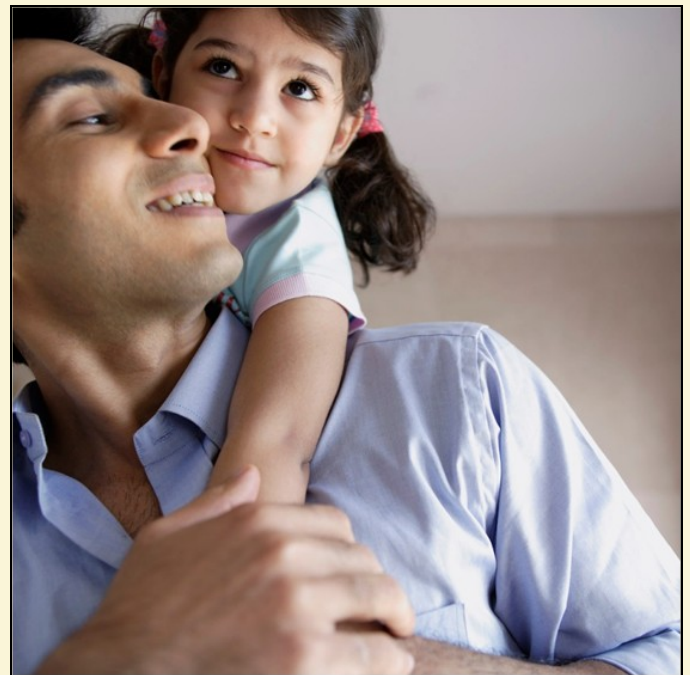
Wraparound Initiative Northwest (WIN) Georgia serves children ages 6 to 21 years, focusing on those at risk for out-of-home placement. Located in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains where Georgia borders Tennessee and Alabama, WIN Georgia serves children and families in 15 counties. Most of these counties have poverty levels in double digits, the mix of ethnic groups varies across counties, and several counties are quite rural while others have large towns or cities. In this part of Georgia, “cultural” issues are more related to differences in urban versus rural sites, with families in more rural areas being less open to receiving services.

WIN Georgia has found the information available from local evaluation efforts and the national evaluation to be invaluable in reaching both urban and rural families to raise their awareness and understanding of children’s mental health. For last year’s “Mental Health Month,” a take-off and expansion of the SAMHSA-sponsored Children’s Mental Health Awareness Day, local WIN Georgia staff worked with community partners to share evaluation findings in all 15 counties of the region throughout the month of May. Fact sheets and posters presenting evaluation data were developed for informational displays at community festivals, local public agencies, libraries, and health centers. Facts and figures from evaluation efforts were used to spark discussion and engage student interest and imaginations in art activities, at 7 elementary schools, 5 middle and high schools, 2 Boys & Girls Clubs (reaching over 250 children and youth alone), and 5 youth support group meetings. Over 3,000 school children, as well as many youth and adults in public venues, received valuable information regarding children’s mental health needs in their own backyards.



The use of evaluation data to raise awareness, increase understanding, and train providers and community members, continues for WIN Georgia all

year round. Activities that will incorporate evaluation data planned for this year include:



• “Mental Health First Aid” trainings

- “Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children” (CSEC) training for mental health providers through the Governor’s Office for Children and Families, along with multiple 1-hour “Introduction to CSEC” sessions for general audiences
- School assemblies and adult sessions on bullying
- A Mental Health Fair, art activities at multiple schools, and educational displays at various partner venues and community events around the region
- A songwriting competition for youth receiving wraparound services that related evaluation findings to their personal experiences

WIN Georgia also has plans to engage local media by using evaluation data to get the word out about all of these activities and opportunities over the coming year.

WIN Georgia has learned how to use evaluation findings to increase awareness in both their urban and rural counties, with these simple, face-to-face approaches to raising family and community awareness of children’s mental health needs. Urban or rural, or both, your community can do it, too!

## Next Evaluation Update

⇒ Child Welfare,  
Juvenile Justice,  
Education:  
Partners for  
Success in  
Children’s Mental  
Health