

Title: Transforming Children's Mental Health Services by Training Pediatricians as "First-Responders."

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Background: Given urgent workforce shortages of child mental health specialists, the US Surgeon General issued a call for primary care providers (PCPs) to become "first responders" for pediatric mental health disorders. Unfortunately, pediatric residencies do not prepare graduates for this role, and continuing medical educational (CME) efforts use teaching methods that do not produce PCP practice changes (e.g., passive learning/lectures). Ironically, decades of research have identified effective methods for behavior change in diverse populations; yet these proven methods have rarely been used to help PCPs meet our growing needs for child mental health services.

Aims: To apply proven behavior-change strategies within a PCP-focused curriculum to teach E-B diagnostic/treatment methods for common childhood mental disorders.

Methods: Since 2006, the non-profit REACH Institute ([www.TheReachInstitute.org](http://www.TheReachInstitute.org)) has convened child/adolescent psychiatrists, pediatric leaders, education experts, and behavior scientists to develop/apply basic science-guided methods to help PCPs provide E-B child mental health care.

Results: To date, over 2200 PCPs have completed REACH's 6-month-long "mini-fellowship" in pediatric mental health. As a result, over these PCPs' careers, more than one million children who ordinarily would not have received mental health services will receive them, often in areas of the country where no other care is available. Multiple studies, including an NIMH-funded RCT, have demonstrated the impact of REACH's training methods on PCPs' application of E-B procedures, as well as cost-savings and reduced use of medications.

Conclusions: Basic-science- and adult-education-guided training methods are effective in producing major practice changes among PCPs. If broadly deployed, these methods can address workforce shortages and facilitate application of E-B practices for children with mental illnesses. REACH has now developed a successful "train-the-trainers" program, creating regional training teams to assist local PCPs in applying E-B child mental health practices.

Acknowledgements:

NIMH-MH088922-01, 2009-2012, PIs: Jensen PS; Hunter-Romanelli L: Enhancing Pediatric Psychopharmacology in the Medical Home.