

Project Harmony intends to end child abuse at all levels.

We are known for our response, we are shaping treatment, and we are committed to leading child abuse prevention. Just imagine if we could stop abuse and neglect before it starts. **Connections helps us do just that.**

Children with mental health problems often exhibit early warning signs. For example, **Alex**, a sixth grader, has trouble getting along with both his family members and peers at school. He is aggressive with others, swears at his mom when asked to help around the house and gets violent when angry.

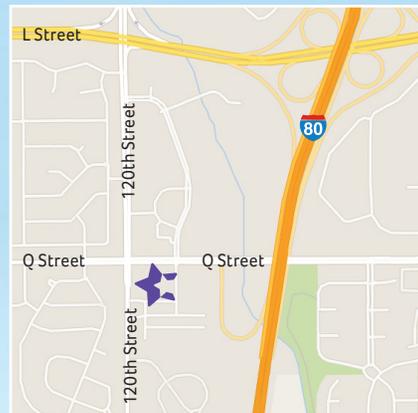
Jenna, an 8-year-old girl, is noted to be depressed and quiet. She's a good student who is no longer getting homework done and she has lost interest in afterschool activities. What she can't say is that her dad has been gone for three weeks and her mother isn't able to keep everyday routines going. She's worried about her parents and worried about the two younger siblings she tries to look out for.

Who's watching out for Alex and Jenna?



Connections MISSION

To promote hope, healing and resilience for children and families in need through coordinated screening and assessment, improved access to quality services and treatment, and commitment to community education and rigorous research.



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**Project
Harmony**
Child Advocacy Center

Hope, Healing & RESILIENCE




Connections
at Project Harmony

Connecting children and families to preventive and early intervention mental health services.

Don't wait to GET HELP.

Connections is based on the recognition that there is a need in our community to identify behavioral health concerns early in the lives of children, and offer timely, effective, and family-centered services.

It should be easy for schools, health providers, and parents to find services that help children do better at home, school and in the community.

The groundbreaking findings of the Adverse Childhood Experiences Study¹ make it clear that childhood experiences, both positive and negative, have a tremendous impact on lifelong health and opportunity.

Connections builds on the strengths of children, families and community systems to increase hope, healing, and resilience. Prevention and early intervention are crucial.

MORE THAN 60%

of all children and adolescents are victimized by violence each year.¹ This can cause trauma and toxic stress, leaving victims to suffer in silence or act out.



Despite this,

ONLY 20% OF CHILDREN with mental or behavioral disorders are identified and receive mental health services.²

Every child has the potential to thrive.

Connections is the link to excellent mental health services for children and families.

About Connections

Connections focuses on children in kindergarten through eighth grade with the earliest indicators of social and emotional difficulties; and works with their parents, schools, and health care providers to access quality mental health services. Our intention is to offer help to children before they are at risk of child welfare or juvenile justice system involvement. We help professionals recognize and refer children in need of services. Then we identify potential barriers to access, and actively work to resolve them.

Signs of Concern

- Mood problems
- Anxiety
- Sleep problems
- Family stress
- Family or community violence
- School behavior or attention problems
- Inattention or impulsivity
- Nightmares
- Irritability
- Difficulty concentrating

How it Works

The heart of Connections is an active, engaged and supportive referral process. It's distressing to know that only about 20 percent of children who are identified with a mental health need will eventually get treatment² and our mission is to promote access, build family engagement, and remove barriers.

Connections has formal agreements with specific referral sources. These include school districts in the Omaha metro area, as well as the Nebraska Help Line and Children's Physicians. We provide support and training to our referral sources in recognizing early signs of concern.

Connections creates agreements with community mental health providers to serve the children we refer. Our mental health providers are affiliated with established agencies, clinics and private practices in the community. Our providers reserve time in their schedules so that children don't face a long wait once referred. We support our providers with training in evidence-based practices that best fit the needs of the children we see.

The Mental Health Coordinator is the key to Connections. When a parent agrees to take part in Connections, the Mental Health Coordinator meets with the family to determine the nature of the child's needs and strengths, what is important to the family, and what changes they hope will result from services. The Mental Health Coordinator identifies with the family any potential barriers they foresee. These often include worries about the cost of treatment, transportation needs, or care for other children during appointments.

The Mental Health Coordinator then makes a match between child and provider. In some cases, the provider is located in the child's school; in other cases, the child is seen in the provider's office. Individual, group, and family therapy are available. During the early engagement stage of treatment, the Mental Health Coordinator checks in frequently so that support can be offered as needed. As services continue, the Coordinator monitors and supports progress.

Connect with Us

Connections is about growing the capacity of the community to recognize and support children and families with mental health needs. Growing capacity means that we are building a workforce of mental health providers, at available times and places, who can meet and engage with children and families at the first sign of need. Growing capacity means that our school, health care, and social service systems are more attuned to the pervasive stresses in the lives of children and families, and contribute to a stronger, trauma-resilient community for us all.

In the Future

An integral part of the Connections program is rigorous program evaluation. We work with Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago to determine the effectiveness of our interventions. As Connections finds the resources to expand, we will replicate the methods that produce the best results.

For more information about Connections, contact Deb Anderson at 402.595.1059 or danderson@projectharmony.com

¹ ACE study www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/acestudy/
² Finkelhor, Turner, Ormrod, & Hamby, 2009