Building Connections: Supporting Mothers of Young Children Experiencing Violence in Relationships Through Community-Based Interventions

Director, Child and Family Services, Mothercraft

Dr. Mary Motz, PhD., C.Psych.
Clinical Psychologist, Mothercraft

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BUILDING CONNECTIONS
Supporting Community-Based Programs to Address Interpersonal Violence and Child Maltreatment
Breaking the Cycle

Building Connections: Supporting Community-Based Programs to Address Interpersonal Violence and Child Maltreatment

- An early intervention program that promotes women’s mental health and the development of infants and young children who are at risk for maladaptive outcomes due to maternal substance use and related issues, including trauma and intimate partner violence.

- Funded through the Public Health Agency of Canada – Community Action Program for Children (CAPC) and Canada Prenatal Nutrition Program (CPNP) and the Ontario Infant and Child Development Program (ICDP) – MCCSS
Admission Criteria

Women/Mothers
- Who are pregnant and/or parenting children 6 years;
- Who are experiencing problems of substance use and recovery;
- Who desire support around their substance use or recovery.

Infants/Young Children
- Who have been exposed to alcohol and/or other substances during the prenatal period;
- Who have been exposed to parental alcohol/substance use in postnatal period.
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BTC Partners

Mothercraft
St. Joseph’s Health Centre
St. Michael’s Hospital
Children’s Aid Society of Toronto

MotheRisk - Hospital for Sick Children
Toronto Western Hospital - Mental Health and Addictions
Toronto Public Health
Ministry of Community Safety and Corrections

Catholic Children’s Aid Society of Toronto
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BTC Programs and Services

Addictions
- Relapse Prevention Group
- Recovery Group
- Life Skills Group
- Individual Counselling
- Connections Group

Developmental Clinic
- Screening and Assessment
- Developmental and Interactional Guidance
- Parent-Child Psychotherapy
- Home Visiting
- Early Intervention

Mental Health Counselling

Health/Medical Services
- FASD Assessment/Diagnostic Clinic
- Pre-Postnatal Counselling

Child Care

Pregnancy Outreach Program

Probation and Parole Services

Parenting
- New Mom’s Support Group
- Nobody’s Perfect Parenting Program
- Cooking Healthy Together
- Parent-Child “Mother Goose” Program

Basic Needs Support
- Food
- Clothing
- Transportation

- Hanen “You Make the Difference”
- “Learning Through Play” Group
- Access Visits
Theoretical Frameworks

- Attachment Theory
- Developmental Theory
- Relational Theory
- Historical Trauma Theory
Why we developed the **Connections** group intervention

Profile of BTC Families

- Maternal-child separations
- Parenting difficulties
- Early childhood development/mental health problems
- History of trauma
- Poverty
- Homelessness
- Mental health problems
- Isolation
- Polysubstance use
- Conflict with the law
- Family violence
- Family substance use history

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The prevalence of interpersonal violence in families at BTC

- Almost 95% of mothers at BTC reported experiencing physical, sexual and/or emotional abuse in their lifetime.
- Almost 50% of mothers at BTC reported that they were currently in a relationship that was abusive.
- 33% of the mothers who reported they were in abusive relationships rated their relationship as “good” (vs. “fine” or “poor”).
In her own words ......

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Jennie
Responding to the impact of interpersonal violence: The Connections intervention

**Connections** is a group intervention that examines the relationship between family violence and:

- Substance use
- Parenting/parent-child relationship
- Child development and child maltreatment
Overview of the Connections Intervention

**Week 1:** Learning About Healthy Relationships
**Week 2:** What Happened When We Were Kids Matters Now
**Week 3:** Recovering From My Past
**Week 4:** Child Development and Behaviour
**Week 5:** Building Self-Esteem
**Week 6:** Positive Parenting – Building Self-esteem in Our Children
Building Connections
October 1 2015 – September 30 2020

Funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada’s *Family Violence and Child Abuse Prevention Initiative*

- Develop resources and deliver training on family violence and child abuse prevention to all CAPC/CPNP/AHSUNC projects in communities across Canada
- Deliver intensive training on the delivering of the *Connections* intervention to a subset of 30 projects
- Develop and delivering a community of practice/consultation group to support service providers delivering *Connections*
- Conduct intervention research to evaluate and share learnings from the national dissemination of this intervention.
Building Connections: Goal
October 1 2015 – September 30 2020

Disseminate an intervention that enhances the capacity of CAPC/CPNP/ AHSUNC projects to identify and respond to mothers and/or children (birth - 6 years) impacted by, family violence or child abuse, and to evaluate the replication through a multi-method, multi-informant, longitudinal research design.

Funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada’s Family Violence and Child Abuse Prevention Initiative
Building Connections: Objectives

1. To build awareness, capacity and confidence among CAPC/CPNP/AHSUNC project staff regarding family violence and/or child maltreatment;
2. To deliver intensive certified training on the delivery of the Connections intervention to 30 CAPC/CPNP/AHSUNC projects;
3. To develop a community of practice to support certified facilitators to deliver the Connections intervention to community-based projects across Canada;
4. To conduct evaluation through a multi-method, multi-informant, longitudinal research design.
5. To translate and disseminate knowledge broadly and to a wide range of audiences.
Interpersonal Violence (IPV)

- Mothers who experience violence in adult relationships have often experienced childhood abuse and trauma, or have witnessed violence in their own families.
1. Enhancing Knowledge and Awareness

- Resource development and dissemination to all 800+ CAPC/CPNP/AHSUNC projects:
  - Resource Manual
  - National Training Webinar
- Establishing interest
2. Delivering Certified Training and a Community of Practice

- Delivered an intensive 3.5 day certified training module delivered in partnership with Breaking the Cycle in Toronto;
- Certified 75 facilitators from 34 projects (January 2017 – present);
- Offered a weekly community of practice to certified facilitators;
3. Delivering the *Connections* Intervention

- Certified facilitators are delivering the *Connections* intervention in communities in British Columbia, Yukon Territory, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, New Brunswick, Nunavut, Nova Scotia, PEI
4. Evaluating Building Connections

We anticipated that, compared to reports collected prior to the intervention, the post-intervention measures will reveal that:

- Certified facilitators report being satisfied with the intervention, and observe positive changes in the functioning and knowledge of participants.
- Participants experience improvement in their sense of self in relationships, social supports, mental health symptomatology, and parenting capacity, as well as decreased interpersonal violence.
5. Translating and Disseminating Knowledge

- Knowledge has been translated and disseminated throughout the initiative through:
  - Published research papers
  - Evaluation updates
  - Workshops and presentations

- Knowledge has been disseminated to a wide range of audiences, across multiple sectors and jurisdictions.
Evaluating *Connections*: Outcomes for Mothers Experiencing IPV

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Study Objectives:

1. Describe women from community-based programs who participated in *Connections*
2. Understand their level of satisfaction with the intervention
3. Assess changes over the course of the intervention
Between February 2017 and December 2018 \textit{Connections} was delivered:

- In 18 communities: (7 provinces and 1 territory)
- 35 times
- To between 2-14 women per group (average of 5)
Study Participants

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195 Recruited and Consented

144 completed Connections

11 did not complete

137 T1

7 No T1

131 T2

6 No T2
Procedure

- Training and ongoing CoP supported recruitment, readiness, and consent processes
- Questionnaires prior to group 1 (T1)
- Weekly satisfaction ratings
- Questionnaires following group 2 (T2)
- Data collection via tablet computer
- ID codes to anonymize responses
- No DV questionnaire
Measures

• Satisfaction (measured weekly and T2)
• Self esteem (Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale)
• Self efficacy (Self Efficacy Scale)
• Relationship capacity (Revised Adult Attachment Scale)
• Parenting stress (Parenting Stress Index)
• Knowledge of community services
• Understanding of Connections concepts
Results: Who attended the groups?

• 18-71 years of age (M=30)
• Canadian born (93%)
• English speaking at home (87%)
• Identified primarily as: North American, Indigenous and European
• Completed high school (73%)
• Not employed (74%)
• Monthly income <$1500 (53%)
• Single (46%)
Results: Satisfaction

- 4-pt scale
- Weekly rating
  - Topic, usefulness, and supported
  - M = 3.7-3.9 for all constructs, each week
- T2 overall rating
  - M = 3.9
Results: Outcomes

- **Significant Increases:**
  - Self esteem
  - Self efficacy
  - Ability to feel closeness in relationships
  - Ability to depend on others in relationships
  - Knowledge of community services
  - Understanding of **Connections** concepts

- **Significant Decreases:**
  - Anxiety in relationships
  - Parenting stress
What We Learned

**Building Connections:** Supporting Community-Based Programs to Address Interpersonal Violence and Child Maltreatment

- CAPC/CPNP projects are ideally suited to engage families, deliver *Connections*, and support the evaluation of the intervention.
- A base level of stability may be required for women prior to an IPV intervention.
- *Connections* supported changes for women in areas that are known to be important indicators of healthy mothers and children.
- Women were able to incorporate the key messages from *Connections* and were very satisfied with their experience of the group.
Limitations and Future Directions

- Longer term outcomes
- Control group
- Including a component for mothers and children together
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