



# PREVENTION OF CHILDHOOD CONDUCT PROBLEMS: --- PARENT-CHILD INTERACTION THERAPY

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- Professor of Psychology, CMU
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- PCIT researcher and trainer for 25 years
- Vice President, PCIT International Board of Directors
  
- Research Program: To increase access to effective parent-child mental health interventions for underserved families.

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# Central Michigan University



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# Center for Children, Families & Communities at Central Michigan University



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# During Our Short Time Together

- The Cost of Child Conduct Problems
- Prevention Saves Money and Changes Lives
- Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT)
  - Theory & Strategies
  - Family Treatment Outcomes
  - Dissemination & Implementation

# Child Conduct Problems Have High Societal, Family, and Individual Costs

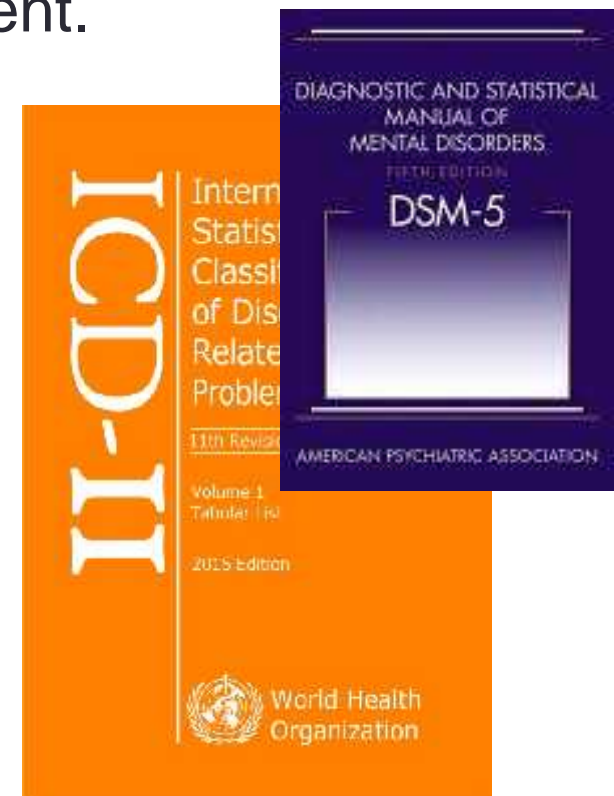


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# Children with Conduct Problems

Conduct problems are the most common reason children are referred for mental health treatment.

- ▶ Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD)
- ▶ Conduct Disorder (CD)
- ▶ Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)



# Children with CPs are at risk for...

- Parent-child conflict
- Attachment issues
- Child maltreatment
- School maladjustment
- Poor peer relationships
- Juvenile delinquency
- Incarceration
- Substance abuse
- Antisocial Personality





# Prevention: Parenting Interventions

- Behavioral Parent Training (Parenting Interventions) are highly effective in reducing child conduct problems.
- Behavioral parent training is selective prevention: treating children at-risk for ongoing, severe violence/aggression.
- Prevention using parenting interventions is cost effective.

(Bonin et al., 2011; Foster et al., 2005; Nystrand et al., 2019)

PREVENTION CHANGES LIVES

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IF THERE'S JUST ONE THING  
YOU CAN DO FOR A CHILD...



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# STRENGTHEN THE PARENT- CHILD RELATIONSHIP

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## Parent-Child Relationship: A buffer against adversity

- Supportive parenting buffers against impact of poverty on the developing brain (Brody et al., 2017).
- Healthy attachment = healthier self-esteem, emotion regulation, peer relationships.
- Positive parent-child interaction buffers against risk for poor health & mental health outcomes (e.g., obesity, conduct problems)

PCIT



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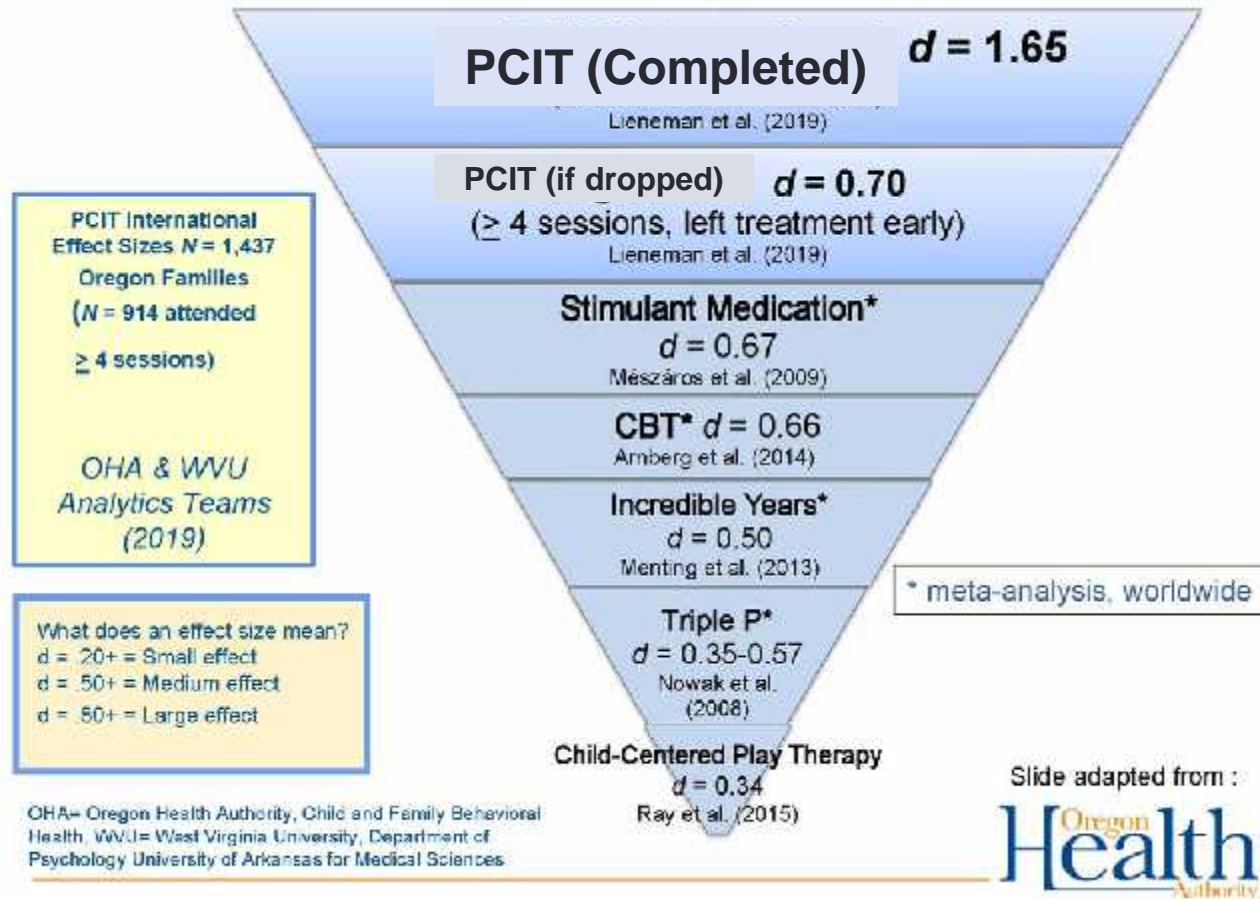
## What is Parent-Child Interaction Therapy?

- A transdiagnostic behavioral family intervention for children 2.5 years – 7yrs
- Attachment based.
- Uses play to facilitate healthy interaction between parents and children

## Why PCIT?

- **40 Years** of research supporting PCIT's effectiveness for children with DBDs
- **Trauma Informed** – Endorsed by the National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN)
- **Best Practice** for child conduct problems (Niec, 2018) and in cases of child physical abuse (Kauffman Best Practices Report, 2004)

# PCIT Shows Very Large Effects





# What makes parenting interventions work?

Parenting interventions work better when they...

1. **increase positive** parent-child interactions
2. **include the child in the session** with live practice of skills
3. teach parents to **use time-out** and to be consistent with limit-setting

Kaminski et al., 2008

# Why Early Intervention?

- Conduct problems are often stable— not just a “phase”
- Early intervention (before 8 years) appears to be more effective than later.
- Parent involvement is critical.

# Core Concepts: PCIT Empowers Parents

- Assessment driven
- Two phases:
  - Child-Directed Interaction (CDI)
  - Parent-Directed Interaction (PDI)
- Live coaching by therapist
- Behavioral observations (not just parent report)
- Goal-focused

# IN VIVO COACHING: Powerful Mechanism to Strengthen Parenting

PCIT = An evidence-based treatment with an innovative format



Two-way mirror.

Therapist coaches parents during parent-child interactions.

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# Goals of PCIT

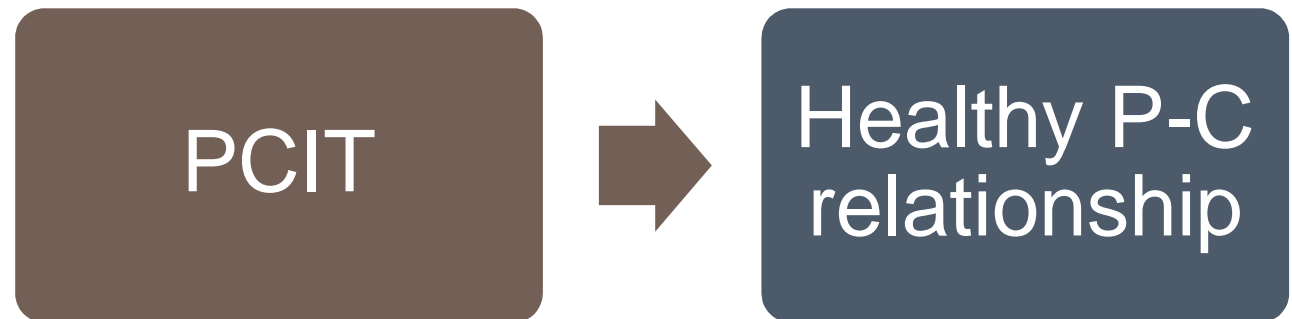
- Build a warm, responsive relationship between parents and children
- Increase prosocial behaviors in parents and children
- Decrease children's inappropriate behaviors

# PCIT: Theoretical Underpinnings

- Baumrind: parenting styles
- Attachment theory
- Behavioral principles
  - Social learning theory
  - Patterson's coercion model

# PCIT & Attachment Theory

- Improves parents' responsiveness and appropriate limit setting
- Increases positive parent-child interactions
- Children learn parents are available
- Parents & children enjoy each other



# PCIT Disrupts the Coercive Cycle

- Increases warmth & positive interactions
- Stops escalation of parent negative behavior
- Stops reinforcement of child for noncompliance
- Reinforces child for appropriate behaviors







# PCIT OUTCOMES

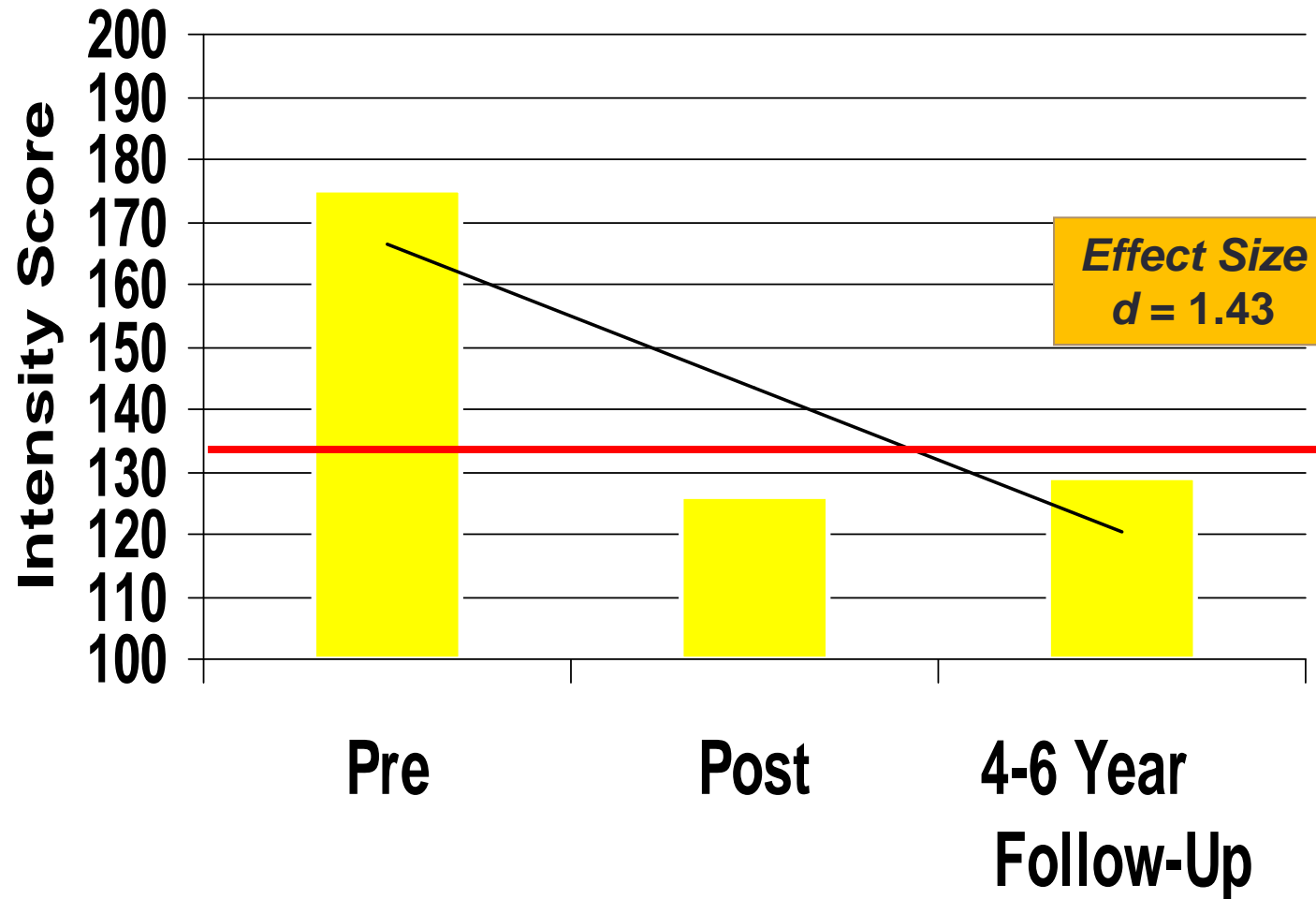


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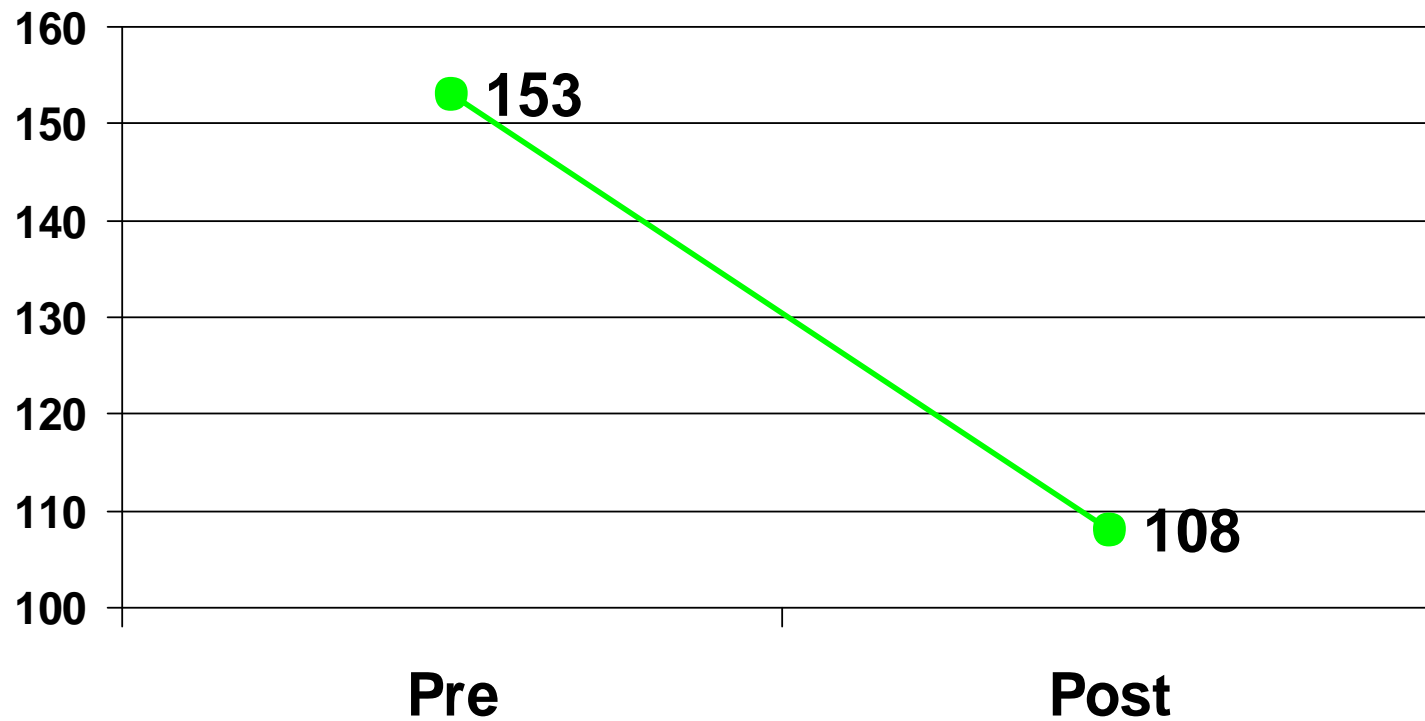
# Families Benefit From PCIT

- ▶ Reduction in disruptive behaviors to within normal limits.
- ▶ Increase in parent positive verbal interaction & discipline strategies
- ▶ Generalization of gains to school setting
- ▶ Generalization to untreated siblings
- ▶ Maintenance of treatment gains up to 6 years

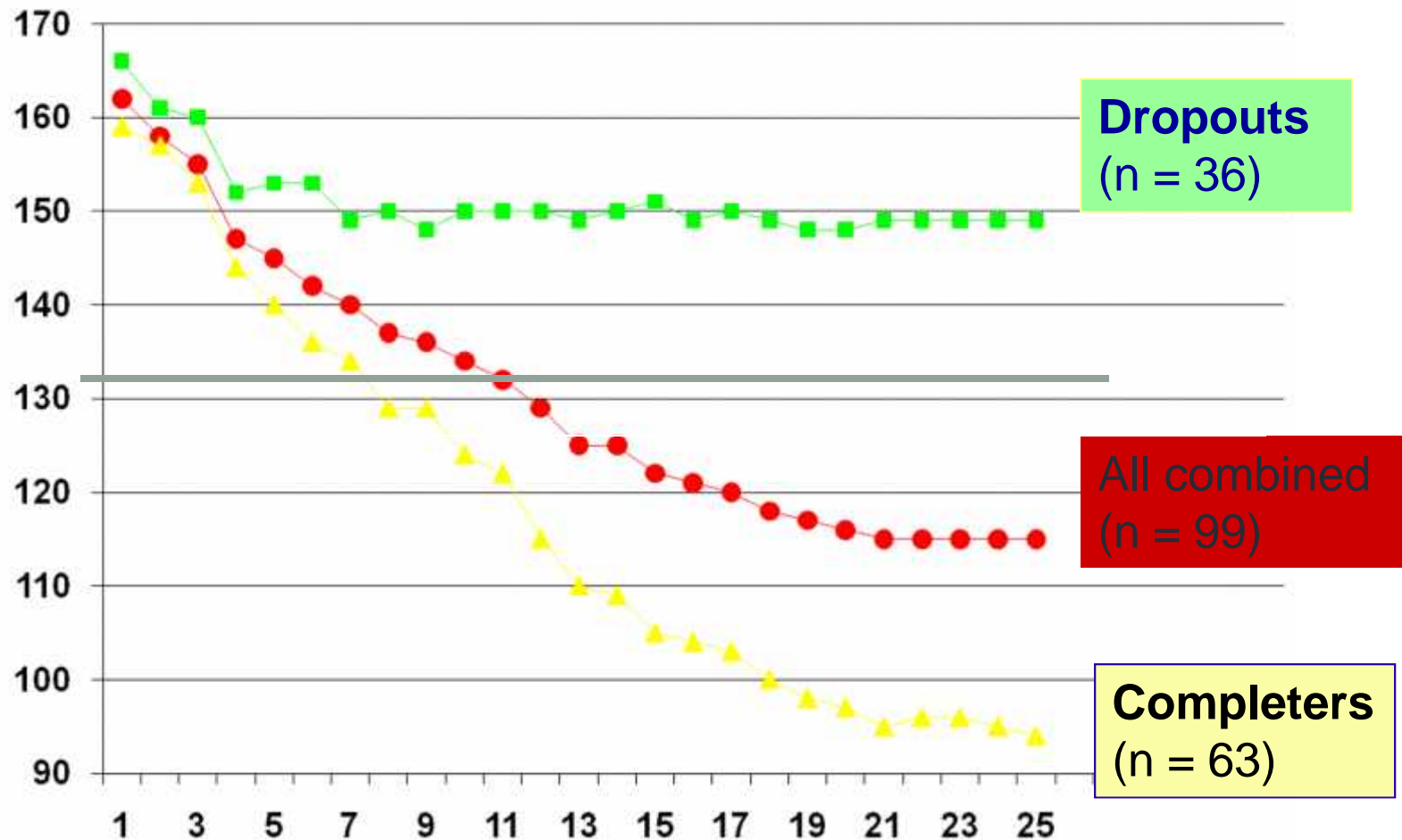
# Parent-reported Conduct Problems ~ 4-6 Year Effect Size



# Teacher-reported Conduct Problems

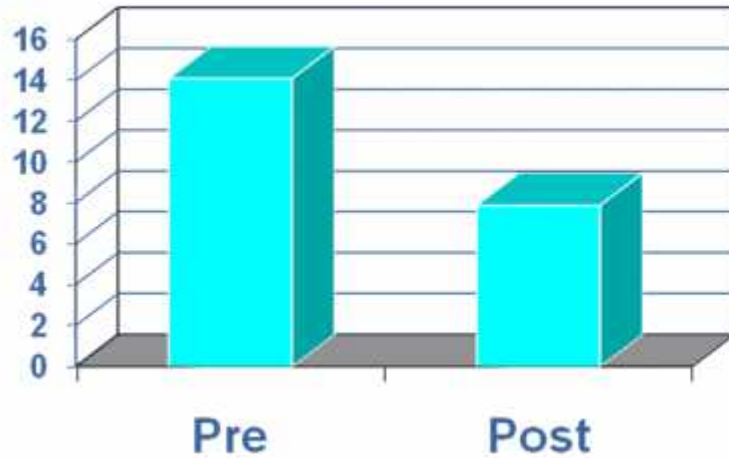


# Weekly Child Conduct Problems

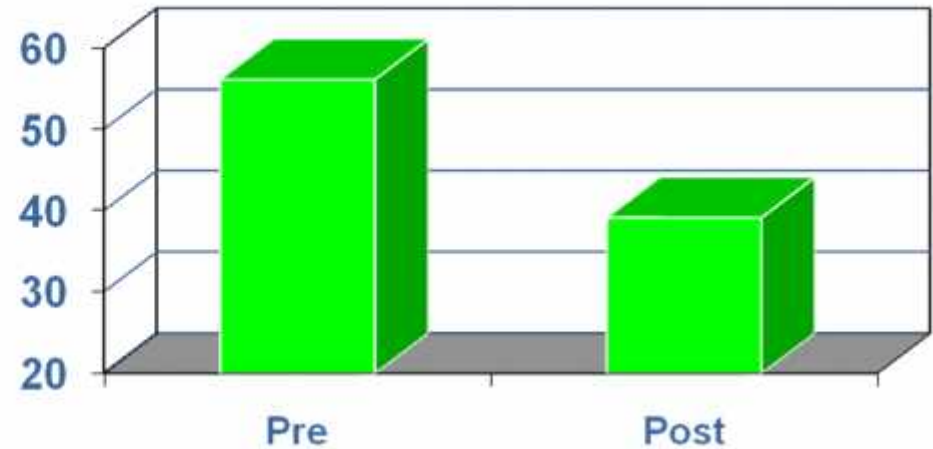


# Parent Self-Report

■ Beck Depression Scale



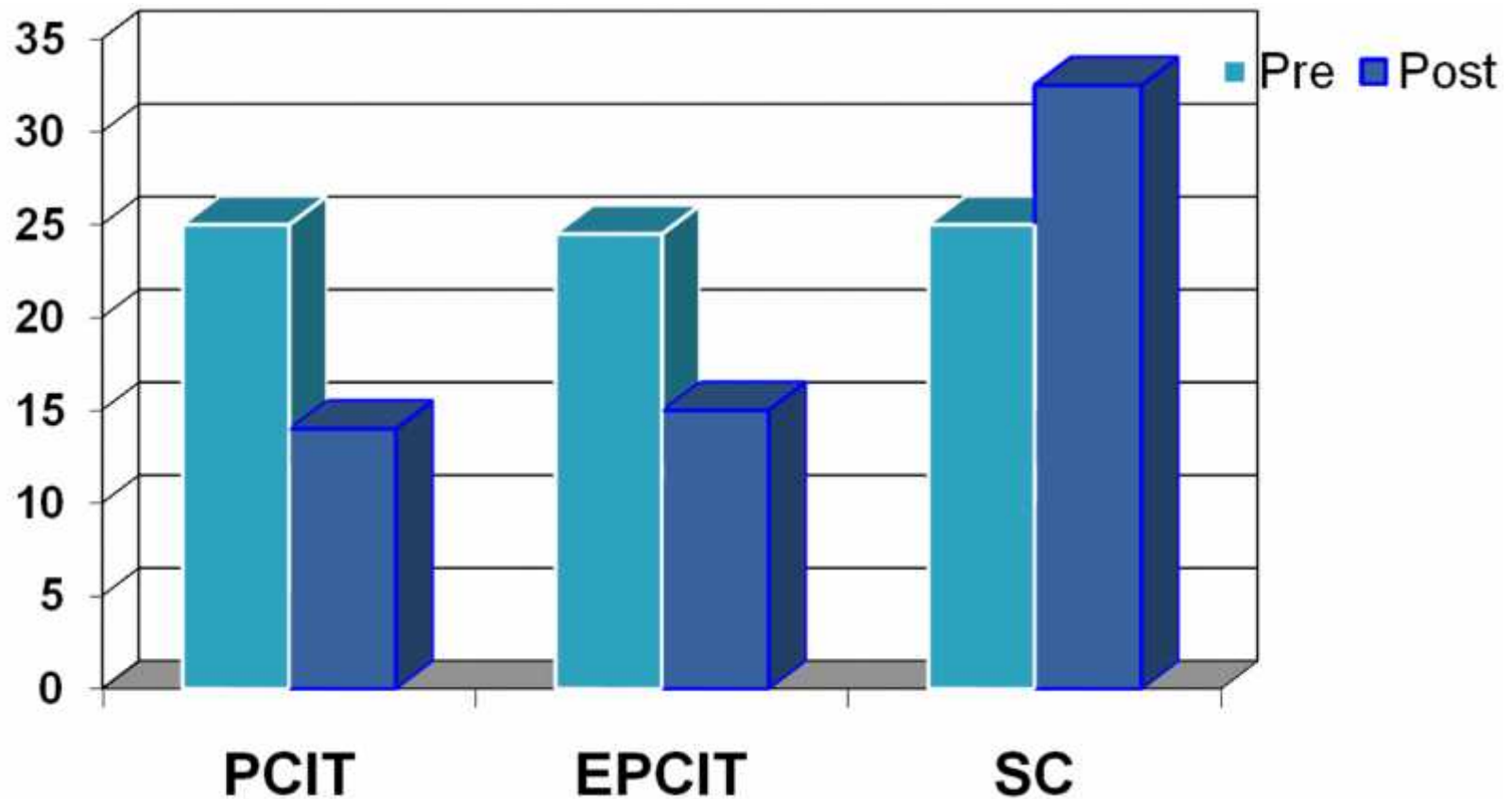
■ Parent Daily Hassles Intensity Scale



■ PSI Parent Domain  
Effect Size = .70  
2-year



# Child Abusive Parents Negative Verbal and Physical Interactions



Chaffin et al., 2004



## Dissemination & Implementation

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# PCIT International ([www.pcit.org](http://www.pcit.org))

- Founded by the developer of PCIT, Dr. Sheila Eyberg
- Develops and maintains the authorized, evidence-based protocol
- Maintains training requirements for therapists and trainers
- Administers the international certification process
- Coordinates & monitors large-scale dissemination efforts
- Three levels of trainers: Within-agency, Regional, Global

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# Training Readiness Checklist for Agencies

- Clinicians with at least master's degree & license in MH
- Supervisor(s) to support clinicians.
- Willingness to provide trainees with the time to learn.
- Referral stream of children 2-6 years old.
- Equipment to provide in vivo coaching & record sessions.
- Method to submit videos to the trainers (e.g., Google Drive).
- PCIT assessment materials (e.g., ECBI).
- Funding for start-up costs.

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# Readiness Continued

Do agencies have...

- The A/V equipment and two-way mirror necessary for in vivo coaching—or plans to install them *prior* to the training?
- Identified codes for reimbursement for PCIT services from third party payers?
- Administrative support for implementation of the new program?
- Commitment to supporting therapists' national certification through PCIT International?

# Program Fidelity and Outcomes

- Fidelity and outcome monitoring built into the PCIT protocol.
- Integrity checklists for every session.
- Therapists self-monitor or agencies monitor.
- Mandatory standardized measures of client outcomes.
- Graduation from PCIT = Successful completion

## PCIT Strives for Cultural Responsiveness

- ALL child caregivers are welcomed
- Caregivers are empowered as the agents of change for their families
- Caregiver-child relationship NOT therapist-child relationship is the focus
- Needs of each family identified and targeted with in vivo coaching

# PCIT works around the world





For More Information

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