

Texas LAUNCH NEWS

Linking Action for Unmet Needs in Children's Health

APRIL 2017 – Edition 5

National Autism Awareness Month
National Minority Health Month
Child Abuse Prevention Month
Month of the Military Child
Sexual Assault Awareness & Prevention Month

Genes & Development in Autism Spectrum Disorder

The article [Genes and Development in Autism Spectrum Disorder](#), written by Joshua Gordon, Director of the [National Institute of Mental Health](#) (NIMH), summarizes what is known from research about the causes of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Autism Spectrum Disorder ([ASD](#)) is described as a spectrum due to the varying symptoms and severity that can result. ASD has been shown to be a heritable condition, with hundreds of genes that play a part in its expression. Some gene variations are very common and may lead to a slightly increased risk, while others are rarer and result in significantly greater risk. Gordon reports that NIMH-funded research has shown that many of these gene variations occur during the middle phase of prenatal development, and other research has demonstrated that children may show behavioral differences as early as infancy, long before a typical diagnosis is made. Subtle delays in motor development, differences in early gaze and attention, and certain vocal combinations have all been shown to predict children later identified with ASD. As our understanding of ASD grows and our ability to identify children earlier improves, families are able to be linked with appropriate interventions and supports.

Autism Awareness Month: Genes and Development in Autism Spectrum Disorder by Joshua A. Gordon, MD, PHD.,
Director of the National Institute of Mental Health, April 4, 2017.



Trauma Resources on Children of Military Families

The [National Child Traumatic Stress Network](#) (NCTSN) has devoted a section to [Military and Veteran Families and Children](#). The site provides resources for families, educators, professionals and policy makers. Children from military families may face stressors or challenging life events that place them at risk for traumatic stress or mental health problems. Potential stressors include family transitions, disrupted relationships, parental illness or injury, absence from a deployed parent, death of a family member, and parent behavioral health issues. With the right tools and skills, teachers, counselors, and other professionals can help children overcome these stressors, as well as help military and non-military parents serve as buffers to the challenges their children face. To learn more about the tools and resources available for supporting our nation's military children, please visit the [NCTSN website](#).



April is National Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Month. Prevention Month is a time to acknowledge the importance of families and communities working together to prevent child abuse and neglect, and to promote the social and emotional well-being of children and families. Please visit [childwelfare.gov](#) to obtain resources to utilize with families and communities. This information was taken directly from the Strengthening Families March 2017 e-update. To join their listserve, please visit the "[Stay Informed](#)" section of the linked page.

Key Resource for Promoting Equity & Reducing Disparities

As part of National Minority Health Month, the National Technical Assistance Network for Children's Behavioral Health (TA Network) is sharing resources that address the topic of behavioral health equity. The first resource shared in their April 4th [TA Telegram](#) is the [Key Resource for Promoting Equity and Reducing Health Disparities](#). This resource was published by the Center of Excellence for Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation. It is a compilation of web-based, equity-focused resources on topics such as development of social and emotional learning of children of color; implicit bias, countering prejudice, preventing discrimination, promoting diversity and inclusion; trauma and resilience; and addressing organizational and structural barriers to racial equity. This resource could be used for several purposes, such as building toolkits, informing state, tribal, and community conversations on disproportionate data, building awareness around the need for collaborations to promote transparency in outcomes for children of color, assist mental health consultants as they engage providers about implicit bias, and prepare councils for conversations on action planning.

Sexual Assault Awareness & Prevention Month

According to the [National Center for Victims of Crime](#), 1 in 5 girls and 1 in 20 boys are victims of child sexual abuse and children are the most vulnerable to child sexual abuse between the ages of 7 and 13. These statistics are staggering, and it is difficult to accept that they are likely underestimates of the actual prevalence because all too often child sexual abuse incidents are not reported. What can providers do about this? What impact can we have on these most vulnerable populations?

- **Get Educated:** In Texas, ALL adults are mandated reporters and need to stay informed about warning signs of abuse and ways to report. According to the [TEA](#), educators serve as the largest professional resource for reporting suspected child abuse and neglect in Texas. You can access information on child abuse prevention [here](#);
- **Report:** You can report suspected child abuse and neglect by calling 1-800-252-5400 or file electronically on the [Texas Department of Family and Protective Services](#) page. This page also contains information on recognizing the signs of abuse and legal definitions.
- **Support Evidenced-Based Parenting Programs:** There are several evidence-based parenting programs that work to reduce child abuse and neglect. Texas LAUNCH supports the use of the Incredible Years® program. You can find a list of evidenced-based models on the [California Evidence-based Clearinghouse for Child Welfare](#) (CEBC).



Announcement Area

Texas System of Care is asking communities across the state to join together in recognition of Children's Mental Health Awareness Day on May 6th. A variety of events, many focusing on family-friendly activities, will be held across the state. At each event, attendees will participate in a butterfly-release to represent the #Flight2Freedom from stigma associated with emotional challenges. For more information please visit the website: <http://www.txsystemofcare.org/flight/>