

# RESEARCH SPOTLIGHT

## Effects of Child-Centered Play Therapy for Students with Highly-Disruptive Behavior in High-Poverty Schools<sup>1</sup>.

**Highly-disruptive behavior was defined as:** “causing significant and persistent interference with one’s own and peers’ learning and instruction, through frequent aggression toward peers or teacher and/or noisiness and frequent refusal or failure to follow directions.”

**The diagnostic criteria this definition may match –**

- *Oppositional Defiant Disorder*
- *Childhood onset of Conduct Disorder*
- *Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder*

**Reason for the study:** “CCPT was provided... for students who were not showing a decrease in highly disruptive behavior in spite of multiple other intervention facets, including social work resource assistance, parent programs, teacher support, alternative disciplinary programs, extensive mentoring, and school counselor services.”

### **Treatment:**

- 30 Minute CCPT sessions twice weekly. The sessions were a full 30 minutes, not including travel time from classroom to therapy room.
- Play therapy areas ranged from a section of an empty classroom, a section of a short hallway, some administrative offices, and some providers had to change locations throughout the study.

### **Participants:**

- 52.4% - Kindergarten to second grade
- 47.6% - Third grade to fifth grade
- 76.9% - Male
- 52.3% - identified as Caucasian
- 38.5% - identified as African American
- 7.7% - identified as Hispanic

### **Providers:**

- Many were graduate students with one semester of CCPT instruction.

### **Results:**

- Teacher reports found that students significantly improved from a clinical rating to a normal rating during the nine-week treatment.
- A 47% reduction in disciplinary referrals;
- A 61% reduction in suspensions;
- A 40% reduction in absences.

### **Conclusion:**

- Most school administrators doubted that the students treated in this study would ever change and were surprised with the results.
- The approach to limit-setting in CCPT encourages students become self-motivated in limit setting, translating to greater control and attention during school hours.

For more information about Play Therapy or Child Centered Play Therapy, see “A4PT.org”.

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<sup>1</sup> Cochran, J. L., & Cochran, N. H. (2017). Effects of child-centered play therapy for students with highly-disruptive behavior in high-poverty schools. *International Journal of Play Therapy*, 26(2), 59-72.