

Case For Support



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OUR PROMISE

MISSION

The mission of A Child's Light (ACL) is to provide immediate mental health support for children and adolescents, ages 2-to-18, who have experienced severe trauma on the first-step of their healing journey.

VISION

The vision of A Child's Light (ACL) is to increase long-term quality of life of sexual assault and domestic violence survivors by early and aggressive intervention.



OUR GUIDING VALUES

LIGHT

Only light can break the darkness. This is the aim of A Child's Light, to break apart the dire darkness in the lives of children.

HOPE

Hold On, Pain Ends. A Child's Light intervenes in the most painful moments to provide a lifeline to children.

HEALING

Healing is the pivotal change A Child's Light strives to achieve so that kids can once again be kids.

THE ROAD TO OUR FOUNDING

Starting in 2019, A Child's Light operated as a service program under TheRADARProject. As ACL has grown and expanded its offerings, a request was legally filed to change the 501(c)3 organization name from TheRADARProject to A Child's Light.

In 2019 founder Leslie Holt, having been a victim advocate for five years, had a striking 'aha!' moment in the realization that if you do not get to the genesis point of why youth are committing suicide, abusing substances or alcohol or lashing out at home or school, you will never be able to elevate them out of risk.

Leslie recognized early on that agencies and systems put in place on behalf of abused and traumatized children that were established decades ago to serve hundreds are simply overwhelmed and unequipped to do the critical trauma-informed care and treatment required by thousands of children today.

“We need to stop just pulling people out of the river. We need to go upstream and find out why they're falling in.”

-Desmond Tutu

OUR ARMS OF OUTREACH



EARLY INTERVENTION

To fund early mental health interventions during times of crisis



TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE

To use a trauma-informed approach to accurately validate the experiences of children



AT-RISK BEHAVIOR PREVENTION

To stop the need for self-medication with alcohol or drugs or self-harm



THERAPY NETWORK

To create a network of therapists to respond early to the needs of children



COMMUNITY REFERRALS

To become the touchstone for the community to refer youth to receive immediate care

TO FUND EARLY MENTAL HEALTH INTERVENTIONS DURING TIMES OF CRISIS

IDENTIFY WARNING SIGNS

A Child's Light equips community organizations, law enforcement partners, and others on how to recognize warning signs that child has experienced trauma.

IN ALL ACL'S MESSAGING

On all of A Child's Light messaging brochures are the seven question ACE (Adverse Childhood Experiences) test. Being consistent in messaging to help other recognize trauma signs through putting the ACE's test in front of parents, caregivers, and children help advocates know when and how to ask for A Child's Light's help sooner.

EXPEDITING SERVICES IN A BROKEN SYSTEM

The system to receive psychological trauma-informed care and intervene when a child is the subject of abuse and trauma is broken. The average wait time for a therapist specializing in these therapies is 2 years. When A Child's Light steps into the picture this wait time is cut down to as low as 5 days. This allows for brighter achievable outcomes for children to unseat the trauma before it becomes overly deep-seated to make recovery more difficult.

TRAUMA-INFORMED

TO USE A TRAUMA-INFORMED APPROACH TO ACCURATELY VALIDATE THE EXPERIENCES OF CHILDREN

A CRITICAL SHIFT

Trauma-Informed Care changes the critical perspective from "What's wrong with you?" to "What happened to you?" It shifts the messages in providers and children from "I am the problem" to "Something happened to me." This adjustment in therapy allows for patients to separate the ownership of the cause of their pain and their trauma response to the cause. This allows for patients to dismantle the self-harming thoughts and move forward in their healing journey.

NOT A "ONE SIZE FITS ALL" APPROACH

Trauma-Informed therapy takes on different mediums to deliver the healing thoughts. A Child's Light works with a network of therapists that include equine therapy, play therapy, family therapy, and one-on-one therapy that help children process their trauma in different methods that fit the needs and break down the barriers for treatment for children to heal.



TO STOP THE NEED FOR SELF-MEDICATION WITH ALCOHOL OR DRUGS OR SELF-HARM

PHYSICAL SIGNS OF TRAUMA

Symptoms of children who have experienced abuse and trauma manifest behaviorally and physically. A chief exhibition of physical manifestation of trauma is self-medication through the abuse of drugs and alcohol and risky behavior such as self-harm.

These aren't the symptoms of "bad kids" these are symptoms of children who have experienced great pain and are unable to access the desperately needed resources to heal their pain. These children numb their pain, often starting with cigarettes and escalating to harder forms of stimulants and depressants. Another physical sign that often accompanies this self-medication is self-inflicted-harm such as cutting and burning.

These are major warning signs that the child is at the threshold of their pain, that their light is dimming and they are risking the loss or take of their life.

A Child's Light intervenes to provide the needed therapy and resources to prevent the individual's need to self-medicate and self-harm and long term- saves their lives.

AT-RISK BEHAVIOR PREVENTION

THERAPY NETWORK

TO CREATE A NETWORK OF THERAPISTS TO RESPOND EARLY TO THE NEEDS OF CHILDREN BUILDING THE NETWORK

A Child's Light started with no therapists in their network and, in its short time of existence, has rapidly expanded to contain over 80 therapists in 2022 of different trauma-informed disciplines across the communities they serve and continue to make strides to grow.

DIFFERENT APPROACHES

One therapy approach is not equally effective for everyone. With this in mind, A Child's Light keeps four types of therapies readily available for children recovering from trauma. These include:

- Talk Therapy
- Play Therapy
- PCIT: Parent-Child Interactive Therapy
- Equine Therapy for Adolescents
- Art Therapy



TO BECOME THE TOUCHSTONE FOR THE COMMUNITY TO REFER YOUTH TO RECEIVE IMMEDIATE CARE

Through multiple youth-serving agency partners, as well as a long-standing relationship with local law enforcement, A Child's Light is able to keep open avenues of communication to reach more children and address their needs early and aggressively to prevent further trauma across the diverse communities that they serve.

A CATALYST FOR SYSTEMIC CHANGE

By reaching into community partners to refer children experiencing trauma and abuse, A Child's Light is able to intervene in a deadly cycle of abuse. Children who are abused in adolescence that go without treatment often lead more challenging lives as adults that result in drug-use for self-medication which sometimes leads to incarceration or death by overdose. By intervening early and consistently, A Child's Light is able to instill lasting, systemic change among children experiencing abuse and trauma and prevent behaviors that lead to difficult life outcomes.



COMMUNITY REFERRALS

OUR APPROACH

ITS A PROCESS

After a referral is received or contacts A Child's Light directly, we do an initial needs assessment. The first therapy session is typically scheduled within 2 weeks, and A Child's Light secures the therapist and pre-pays for the initial engagement of 3 months or 12 sessions, whichever comes first. Additional 3 months/12 sessions follow-up series are also offered.

A Child's Light provides a solution to the range of challenges inherent in local systems. We seek to expedite support and overcome roadblocks.

Challenges include delays in access to county-provided services, limitations on available therapies and best practices, and specialty needs of younger children combined with overall high costs.

IMPACT AT A GLANCE

80+

THERAPISTS

That are specially trained, trauma-informed as well as Spanish-fluent and multi-lingual.

5 TYPES

OF THERAPIES

- *Talk Therapy*
- *Play Therapy*
- *PCIT: Parent-Child Interactive Therapy*
- *Equine Therapy for adolescents*
- *Art Therapy*

44%

REPORTED A FORM OF CHILD ABUSE

in a 2019 study, Pennsylvanian 44% of adults experienced abuse as adolescents. (Pennsylvania Department of Health)

20+

PARTNERS

In the community that refer, support and advocate for children in our care.

POSITIVE IMPACTS

ON CHILDREN

With mental-health support, guidance counselors reported improved scholastics and interpersonal relationships at school. Children and youth report fewer impulsive behaviors and lessened desire to self-harm and self-medicate. Overall, parents/caregivers report that their children appear less depressed, have less anxiety, are more motivated to engage in family activities, and reach out to new friends.

ON COMMUNITY

The communities where the clients live also experience a positive impact. Early therapy helps inform life skills such as anger management, impulse control and emotional intelligence. Studies show that these children and youth remain in school, have less contact with law enforcement, make healthier life choices, are more able to visualize future success, and are motivated to attempt new challenges.

These positive outcomes promote a positive direction—away from incarceration, medical disability, inability to hold a job, hospitalization/rehabilitation for substance abuse, and homelessness. This ultimately produces significant savings at local, state and federal levels.

HELP A CHILD'S LIGHT SHINE

The success of A Child's Light relies on dedicated therapists who recognize the importance of early intervention with young trauma clients to positively impact and re-direct the trajectory of their lives. By negotiating a fee for a therapist and funding the up-front payment of 3 months/12 sessions, A Child's Light is able to ensure that each client will have a strong, supported, professional, and high-quality introduction to mental health treatment.

The mental health care resources A Child's Light provides help to heal, build positive self-esteem, improve scholastics, cease self-harm, and most importantly, stop the need for self-medication with alcohol and/or drugs.

A Child's Light is funded through individual donations, civic organization fundraising donations, grants, and is a proud partner of the Chester County United Way.

The rise of case numbers resulted from the COVID-19 pandemic with increased and heightened traumas including parental neglect, malnutrition, family dysfunction due to addictions, physical abuse, and sexual abuse. Our goal is to be able to reach more children—and more quickly—to help them on their journey to heal.

**Please consider donating to
A Child's Light today.**





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