



SUBMISSION FORM

All submission forms must include the following information. Separate submission forms must be turned in for each eligible program. **Deadline: July 1, 2025.** Please include this submission form as the first page of your electronic entry. If you do not receive an email confirming receipt of your entry within 3 days of submission, please contact [Gage Harter](#).


PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: Henrico County
Program Title: Parent-Child Interaction Therapy Program
Program Category: Health & Human Services

CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: Angela Bennett
Title: Assistant Library Director
Department: Library
Telephone: 804-501-1902 Website: https://henrico.gov/
Email: nacovacoawards@henrico.gov

SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: Monica Smith-Callahan
Title: Deputy County Manager for Community Affairs
Signature: 

Program Overview

Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT) is a highly effective, evidence-based therapeutic intervention designed to improve the quality of the parent/caregiver-child relationship and address behavioral problems in young children. It has been named the most “well supported” therapy model for children under age seven by the California Evidenced-Based Clearing House for Child Welfare. PCIT aims to enhance parenting skills and child behavior through real-time coaching, where parents are guided by a highly trained therapist during structured play sessions. Throughout the therapy, caregivers receive real-time feedback and guidance from the therapist, via an earpiece while interacting with their child in a playroom behind a one-way mirror with the therapist coaching from the other side. This hands-on approach ensures the caregivers are implementing the skills correctly and fosters immediate improvement while assisting caregivers to feel empowered in managing their child’s behavior outside of the therapy setting. PCIT not only helps reduce disruptive behaviors, but also improves the overall caregiver-child relationship, making it a powerful tool for long-term success in managing childhood behavioral issues. (For more information on PCIT, please visit [PCIT.org](https://www.pcit.org)).

Henrico Area Mental Health & Developmental Services (HAMHDS) plays a vital role in promoting the well-being of the community by providing accessible, high-quality mental health services to individuals and families across Henrico, Charles City, and New Kent counties. In 2020, HAMHDS became the first Community Services Board (CSB) in the region to offer PCIT in a community mental health setting. Becoming a PCIT-certified therapist with PCIT International requires a rigorous and comprehensive process to ensure that therapists have the knowledge, skills, and experience needed to deliver this evidence-based treatment effectively. HAMHDS has significantly expanded its PCIT program, growing from just two PCIT-certified therapists to a team of five fully certified therapists, two additional therapists in training, and a PCIT trainer who is certified to train additional therapists. In 2025, HAMHDS

became the first CSB in the state with the ability to offer PCIT in English, Spanish, and Lebanese Arabic with bilingual clinicians, as this therapy model is not conducive to using an interpreter.

Problem/Challenge/Situation Faced by Locality

The Surgeon General has issued an advisory for children's mental health. Henrico County has seen a 30% increase in referrals to the CSB for youth in the last year. Of those referrals, one in five youth was under the age of 10. Referrals are coming from the school system, social services, juvenile justice system, family members, and other community entities who are all seeing an increase in demand for evidence-based mental health treatment.

Early childhood is a foundational period for emotional development, yet far too many young children struggle with behavioral and emotional challenges that go unaddressed. Children under the age of seven are particularly vulnerable to the effects of trauma, attachment disruptions, and environmental stressors, all of which can contribute to serious emotional and behavioral concerns. Despite growing awareness of early childhood mental health, there remains a significant gap in services that are developmentally appropriate, evidence-based, and accessible to families with young children.

Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT) is a highly effective, research-supported intervention for children ages two – seven who display disruptive behaviors, have experienced trauma, or are at risk for behavioral and mental health difficulties. Unlike traditional therapies, PCIT works by strengthening the parent/caregiver-child relationship and equipping caregivers with effective behavior management strategies through live coaching sessions. This dual focus on improving child behavior and enhancing caregiver skills makes PCIT uniquely suited for young children, whose development is deeply intertwined with the quality of their primary relationships. Research has overwhelmingly found that a secure parent/caregiver-child connection greatly improves overall outcomes in child development.

Despite its proven success, access to PCIT remains limited, particularly in underserved communities. Many mental health providers lack specialized training in early childhood interventions, and as of this report only about seven of the 40 CSBs in the state offer PCIT, and HAMHDS is the only one in Region 4. Families often face long waitlists, geographic barriers, language barriers, and challenges navigating insurance coverage for this service. This is especially troubling given that early intervention can dramatically alter a child's developmental trajectory, reducing the need for more intensive services later in life.

How The Program Fulfilled Award Criteria

HAMHDS strives to fill the service gap for young children's mental health by providing PCIT services and breaking down barriers to access PCIT services, particularly in underserved communities. In 2024, HAMHDS partnered with Henrico County Public Schools through the Henrico CARES (Coordination; Access to prevention and Responsive Early and intensive intervention; Systems navigation) initiative, further expanding the reach of its PCIT services to meet the growing demand. This collaborative effort has significantly enhanced access to PCIT therapy by providing county funding and framework to hire and train more therapists to deliver PCIT, benefiting families and children across the region by helping children develop school-ready behaviors and reducing the need for increased school-based interventions.

HAMHDS took a significant step towards making PCIT more accessible to diverse communities by training bilingual therapists who speak Spanish and Lebanese Arabic. As the first CSB to offer PCIT in these languages, HAMHDS expanded its services to better meet the needs of families who speak Spanish and Lebanese Arabic, removing language barriers that often limit access to critical mental health resources. This initiative ensures that more families can receive high-quality, culturally-competent

therapy, fostering stronger parent-child relationships and promoting positive behavioral outcomes for children in these communities. By pioneering this effort, HAMHDS set a new standard for inclusivity and accessibility in mental health services, making a lasting impact on the families they serve.

HAMHDS demonstrates its commitment to accessible, high-quality care by offering PCIT to families regardless of their insurance status or ability to pay. HAMHDS ensures that families across Henrico, Charles City, and New Kent counties can access this effective intervention without financial barriers. HAMHDS accepts a wide range of health insurances including all Medicaid plans and offers a generous sliding scale payment option. By providing this service at low or no cost to families, HAMHDS helps reduce disparities in early childhood mental health care and supports families in building stronger, healthier relationships, laying a foundation for positive outcomes that ripple throughout the community.

HAMHDS demonstrates innovation with strategic use of grant funding. HAMHDS successfully leveraged the Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS) grant funded training to certify initial PCIT therapists at no cost to the agency. HAMHDS has also trained a therapist to become a Within Agency Trainer to train additional therapists in the PCIT model. This now allows for additional therapists to be trained at no further cost to the agency. In addition to the DBHDS grants, HAMHDS applied for and received grant funding from the Center for Evidenced-Based Partnerships- VA (CEP-VA) to help pay for infrastructure upgrades of retrofitting a therapy office to put in a one-way mirror. This strategic use of grant funding has enabled Henrico to expand its PCIT program with less additional financial burdens on the agency and local taxpayers.

How The Program Was Carried Out

In 2020, HAMHDS applied for and was selected to participate in a highly competitive, grant-funded PCIT training initiative through the Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS). Two therapists were trained along with agency senior leadership staff under the

expert guidance of Duke University's Center for Child and Family Health, launching the foundation for the program. Senior leadership's involvement and in-depth understanding of PCIT helped foster support and buy-in for program growth.

Building on this success, HAMHDS secured a second round of DBHDS grant funding in 2021 to train two more therapists, allowing expansion of PCIT to both of HAMHDS' primary service sites. In 2023, HAMHDS elevated one therapist to the role of PCIT Certified Within Agency Trainer, a strategic move that allowed the agency to internally train additional therapists without incurring further training costs.

To meet growing demand and increase access for diverse populations, HAMHDS invested in multilingual services by training bilingual clinicians fluent in Spanish and Lebanese Arabic. These staff members enabled the agency to offer PCIT in families' native languages- critical for a model that relies on real-time coaching and is not conducive to interpretation.

HAMHDS strategically used additional grant funding from the Center for Evidence-Based Partnerships - Virginia (CEP-VA) to retrofit therapy rooms with one-way mirrors. HAMHDS also partnered with Henrico County Public Schools through the Henrico CARES initiative, allowing for expanded staff capacity and broader community reach.

This careful, phased implementation, supported by strategic partnerships and funding, enabled HAMHDS to build a sustainable, inclusive, and high-impact PCIT program that addresses a critical gap in early childhood mental health services.

Financing and Staffing

The operating and capital costs of a Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT) program can vary based on location, program scale, and available resources. Initial setup costs include facility setup, therapeutic equipment, training, and office furniture. Essential video equipment for real-time parent coaching cost

HAMHDS \$5,000 for both office locations. Training was at no cost to the agency per the DBHDS grant and in agency trainer.

Ongoing operating costs include personnel expenses, supervision, materials, and utilities. Therapists typically earn between \$70,000 and \$100,000 annually, with program coordinators earning between \$90,000 and \$120,000. The HAMHDS PCIT program employs seven therapists who also provide other therapy modalities in addition to PCIT with diverse caseloads. Therapists typically serve around 35 youth and their families at any one time. Youth receiving PCIT make up approximately 17 % of these 35. Therapeutic materials, such as toys, cost about \$500 to \$1,000 annually, with additional administrative supplies costing another \$500 to \$1,000. The PCIT program utilizes local funds, insurance reimbursement, and grants to fund the program.

Program Results

PCIT utilizes data-driven tools, such as the Eyberg Child Behavior Inventory (ECBI), to assess and track improvements in child behavior. In the most recent fiscal year, the program demonstrated remarkable success, with 89% of youth receiving PCIT showing clinically significant improvement based on ECBI measures using a metric of a minimum of one standard deviation of improved score (a 15-point drop). The average ECBI score improved by 36.5%. This growth reflects Henrico's commitment to providing effective, evidence-based interventions that lead to tangible, positive outcomes for children and families in the community.

HAMHDS regularly gathers consumer feedback through satisfaction surveys to ensure the effectiveness of its PCIT program. Recent feedback from caregivers highlights the positive impact of the program. One caregiver shared, "My son has improved so much with school and behavior at home. The

therapists are very helpful. I would tell anyone struggling with their kid to come here.” Another caregiver commented, “PCIT was transformational for us. My son has made extreme progress, and we function as a family so much better.” These testimonials reflect the significant, life-changing progress families experience through the PCIT program, underscoring its success in improving child behavior and strengthening family dynamics.

Another powerful example of the HAMHDS PCIT program’s impact involves a three-year-old boy in foster care whose severe behavioral issues led his foster parents to submit a 30-day notice requesting he be removed from their home. After participating in PCIT, the child made remarkable progress, and his foster parents not only withdrew the notice, but ultimately expressed an interest in adopting him. Through stories like this, HAMHDS is helping to stabilize families, reduce foster care disruptions, and change the trajectory of children’s lives- proving that early intervention, when made accessible to all, can build stronger families and healthier communities.

Executive Summary

Henrico Area Mental Health & Developmental Services (HAMHDS) offers Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT), an evidence-based treatment for children ages two – seven with behavioral and emotional challenges. PCIT strengthens the parent-child relationship through real-time coaching, where caregivers are guided by a therapist during play sessions. This model promotes lasting behavioral improvements and empowers caregivers to manage behavior effectively.

In response to a 30% increase in youth mental health referrals in Henrico County—with one in five involving children under 10—HAMHDS became the first Community Services Board (CSB) in the region to offer PCIT in a community mental health setting. Since 2020, the program has grown from two certified therapists to a team of five, with two additional therapists in training and a certified PCIT trainer on staff.

HAMHDS prioritizes accessibility by providing PCIT at low or no cost, accepting all Medicaid plans and offering a sliding scale fee. In 2025, HAMHDS became the first CSB in Virginia to offer PCIT in English, Spanish, and Lebanese Arabic, breaking down language barriers and improving equity in early childhood mental health care.

Through partnerships like the Henrico CARES initiative and funding from the Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and CEP-VA, HAMHDS has expanded services without significant local financial burden. Results are compelling, 89% of participants demonstrated clinically significant improvement, and caregiver testimonials highlight transformative family outcomes.

HAMHDS's PCIT program exemplifies a scalable, inclusive, and cost-effective model for other localities seeking to meet the rising demand for early childhood mental health services while promoting long-term, positive outcomes for families. The HAMHDS PCIT program proves that early, evidence-based intervention can change the trajectory of children's lives and strengthen families across the community.

Is PCIT right for your family?

- Do you have a 2 ½ to 6 year old child with challenging behaviors?
- Do you worry about how to manage your child's difficult behaviors?

If yes, then PCIT might be right for you and your family! Contact us for more information and to schedule an appointment. We look forward to working with you!



PRIDE Skills

Praise
Reflect
Imitate
Describe
Enjoy

With questions or to learn more
please email: care@henrico.gov

*Henrico Area Mental
Health & Developmental
Services*

10299 Woodman Road
Glen Allen, VA 23060
(804) 727-8500

<https://henrico.us/mhds/>

Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT)




HENRICO AREA
MENTAL HEALTH &
DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES
SERVING THE COUNTIES
OF HENRICO, CHARLES CITY AND NEW KENT

Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT)

PCIT is a short-term, specialized behavior management program designed for young children experiencing behavioral and/or emotional difficulties and their families. PCIT teaches caregivers to manage their child's difficult behaviors, while increasing their positive behaviors. PCIT works with the child and caregiver together to improve behavior and reduce parenting stress.

What is PCIT?

PCIT consists of weekly sessions conducted in two treatment phases.

Child-Directed Interaction (CDI)

Caregivers are taught the PRIDE skills: **P**raise, **R**eflect, **I**mitate, **D**escribe and **E**njoyment. These skills promote positive child behaviors.

Parent-Directed Interaction (PDI)

Caregivers learn to use effective commands and discipline procedures. The PCIT therapist helps caregivers manage their child's behaviors in many settings.

How Does PCIT Work?

PCIT is an exceptionally effective treatment backed by over 30 years of research. Live coaching is a hallmark of PCIT. The therapist observes the caregiver and child together, then provide coaching on the PCIT skills.

Caregivers and therapists work together to manage challenging child behaviors.



Advantages of Live Coaching:

- Skills are acquired rapidly by caregivers, as they practice in the moment with therapist support.
- Therapists provide caring support as caregivers gain confidence and master their skills.
- Therapists provide immediate feedback about strategies to manage the child's challenging behaviors.

Who is PCIT for?

Children ages 2 ½ to 6 who display any or all of the following:

- Parent-child relational problems
- Refusal and defiance of adult requests
- Easy loss of temper
- Purposeful annoyance of others
- Destruction of property
- Difficulty staying seated
- Difficulty playing quietly
- Difficulty taking turns

Who are appropriate caregivers for PCIT?

- Biological parents
- Foster parents
- Adoptive parents
- Legal guardian
- Grandparents
- Kinship caregivers