

What is PCIT?

Parent Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT) is conducted through “coaching” sessions between a caregiver and a child between 2.5 and 6 years old. Children and caregivers are in a playroom while the PCIT therapist is in an observation room watching the interaction through a one-way mirror. A caregiver wears a “bug-in-the-ear” device through which the PCIT therapist provides in-the-moment coaching on skills being learned to manage a child’s behavior. The main focus of PCIT is increasing a child’s positive behaviors.

PCIT is an evidence-based, specialized behavior management program designed for families with young children experiencing behavioral and/or emotional difficulties. A strong body of research supports the effectiveness of PCIT in the treatment of child disruptive behaviors with growing support for its use with families who have a history of child maltreatment and trauma.

How long does PCIT take?

With consistent attendance and homework, PCIT can be completed within 12-20 sessions, though treatment is not time-limited. Treatment is considered complete when caregivers have mastered skills and rate a child’s behavior within normal limits on a behavior rating scale.

Contact Information

Parent Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT) is offered at the following locations.

Grayson Youth & Family Services

108 Bedwell Street
Independence, VA 24348

Office: (276) 773-3515

Fax: (276) 773-2707

Evergreen Youth & Family Services

1089 Terrace Drive
Marion, Virginia 24354

Office: (276) 783-9349

Fax: (276) 783-2336

Fernwood Youth & Family Services

6999 Carrolton Pike (Suite 2)
Galax, VA 24333

Phone: 276-238-5600 ext. 2

Fax: 276-238-8342



Parent Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT)

Who is PCIT for?

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

- Relational problems with parent/caregiver
- Difficulty in childcare/school settings
- Refusal/defiance of adult requests
- Easy loss of temper
- Purposeful annoyance of others
- Property destruction
- Frequent fights and/or aggression toward others
- Difficulty staying seated
- Difficulty playing quietly
- Difficulty taking turns

How is PCIT different?

- Parents receive live coaching and feedback
- Parents are required to master specific parenting skills
- PCIT is not session-limited.
- Graduation is based on parent demonstration of mastery of skills
- Parents rate children's behavior problems as within normal limits before treatment graduation.

Phase 1

PCIT is done across two treatment phases. The first phase focuses on establishing warmth in the relationship between a caregiver and child through learning and applying skills shown to help children feel calm and secure in their relationships with their parents, and good about themselves.

Desired outcomes of the first phase of treatment in PCIT include:

- Decreased frequency, severity, and/or duration of tantrums
- Decreased activity levels
- Decreased negative attention-seeking behaviors (such as whining and bossiness)
- Decreased parental frustration
- Increased feelings of security, safety, and attachment to the primary caregiver
- Increased attention span
- Increased self-esteem
- Increased pro-social behaviors (such as sharing and taking turns)

Phase 2

The second phase of treatment will equip caregivers to manage the most challenging of a child's behaviors while remaining confident, calm, and consistent in the approach to discipline. In this phase, caregivers learn strategies to help a child accept limits, comply with directions, respect house rules, and demonstrate appropriate behavior in public.

Desired outcomes of the second phase of treatment in PCIT include:

- Effective limit setting
- Increased compliance
- Decreased frequency, severity, and/or duration of aggressive behavior
- Decreased frequency of destructive behavior (such as breaking toys)
- Decreased defiance
- Increased compliance with adult requests
- Increased respect for house rules
- Improved behavior in public
- Increased parental calmness and confidence during discipline

