



# COGNITIVE BEHAVIORAL THERAPY AT WOLVERINE HUMAN SERVICES

Wolverine Human Services (WHS) is a youth residential treatment facility in Michigan. In 2012, WHS began observing an increase in youth mental health problems. To address this issue, administrators sought out evidence-based practices (EBP) that would align with and enhance their current treatment offerings. After careful review of the numerous EBPs available, administrators chose Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) given its potential to be implemented with fidelity by all staff (regardless of education level) and clinical team members. CBT aims to teach the client skills to recognize and influence the interaction between thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.

Once the blueprint was established, WHS refined and adapted CBT to focus on six unique “core skills,” which are CBT strategies that are accessible to staff and youth, regardless of education levels, and they are transdiagnostic in nature (i.e., relevant to all client presentations). The CBT core skills include: active listening, mood monitoring and intervention mapping (SPEED Maps), problem-solving (ITCH), behavioral activation (CAPES), distress tolerance (TIP), and cognitive restructuring (CBT Chat Forms).

Active listening is a skill that promotes effective communication and allows youth to feel validated and understood. SPEED Maps are used to self-monitor excess energy and distress levels. SPEED Maps allow youth to identify individualized thoughts, feelings, physiological sensations, and behaviors associated with effective communication and allows youth to feel validated and understood. SPEED Maps are used to self-monitor excess energy and distress levels. SPEED Maps allow youth to identify individualized thoughts, emotions, behaviors, and physiological sensations associated with different SPEEDs and then determine which core skills they should use based on their SPEED level. ITCH is a technique to effectively problem solve, allowing youth to think of solutions and evaluate the consequences of their solutions in a structured manner. CAPES is a method of behavioral activation that can decrease and prevent depressive symptoms in youth and promote daily structure. TIP is used as distress tolerance strategies to cope with moments of excess energy or high distress. Lastly, CBT chat forms are used as a technique to help youth use cognitive restructuring to catch, check, and change thoughts.

Over the past 5 years, WHS has seen a significant change in culture, as evidenced by significant changes in contextual factors that are assessed annually with quantitative surveys conducted by the research team. A Staff Member’s approach to treatment has been transformed by CBT with the first line of intervention being active listening. PQI assessments reveal that WHS has also identified a large reduction in physical restraints since the program’s initial development; restraints are at the lowest rates in WHS history.

WHS continues on-site trainings with content providing continuing education credits to clinical staff. Trauma trainings are provided for all staff and educational groups are provided for clients on a regular basis. WHS has also implemented a caregiver handbook to continue education into the homes of our clients, providing them with a language overview of the CBT model, and some practical skills and concepts. All residents are offered skill building family therapy sessions with their parents/ caregivers, using the CBT model to improve outcomes in the community.

Staff are trained and tested on CBT competency with our three-level staff endorsement system and role play techniques. CBT is integrated in all that we do, including staff meetings, job descriptions, and performance evaluations to provide better quality services to everyone that we serve.