



Helping the Children and Families of Darien, New Canaan, Norwalk, Weston, Westport, and Wilton since 1956.

## **JOB DESCRIPTION**

### **CHILD FIRST MENTAL HEALTH & DEVELOPMENTAL CLINICIAN**

Child First is an evidence-based, early childhood intervention that helps very vulnerable families build strong, nurturing relationships that protect and heal young children from the devastating impact of trauma and chronic stress. Most families have experienced multiple challenges, including poverty, violence, depression, substance use, and homelessness. Research demonstrates that these adverse experiences damage the developing brain of the young child. Therefore, Child First works in the home with a two-prong approach: (1) Care coordination that provides wrap-around services and supports for the whole family, decreasing “toxic” stress, and (2) Child-Parent Psychotherapy (CPP), an attachment-based, trauma-informed, dyadic intervention which protects the brain from the impact of stress and trauma. In this way, Child First is able to decrease the incidence of serious emotional disturbance, developmental and learning problems, and abuse and neglect among young children (prenatal to age six years). This intervention has been designated by Health and Human Services (HHS) as one of the 17 national, evidence-based home visiting models under the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Initiative (MIECHV).

Child First is currently in a period of rapid growth, now in 15 affiliate sites across Connecticut and set to replicate nationally. The Child First National Program Office (NPO) in Connecticut oversees and supports the local affiliate agencies, such as the Child Guidance Center of Mid-Fairfield County, that are authorized to implement the Child First model. The Care Coordinator is an employee of the Child Guidance Center of Mid-Fairfield County.

#### **Summary of Position**

The Child First Mental Health and Developmental Clinician partners with a Care Coordinator to engage families who are referred to the Child First home-based intervention. Child First’s primary goal is to strengthen the caregiver-child relationship so that it serves both as a protective buffer to unavoidable stress and directly facilitates the child’s emotional, language, and cognitive growth. The Clinician uses trauma-informed CPP, a relationship-based, dyadic, parent-child treatment model, which focuses on the primary attachment relationships of the young child. The Clinician engages with the caregiver in a supportive, reflective, and exploratory manner which, via “parallel process,” fosters protective, nurturing, and responsive parenting from the caregiver. The Clinician’s therapeutic intervention focuses on: 1) helping caregivers understand typical developmental challenges and expectations; 2) increasing caregivers’ ability to reflect on the meaning and feelings motivating a child’s behavior; 3) promoting a safe and nurturing caregiver-child relationship; 4) supporting caregivers’ problem solving; and 5) helping caregivers understand the psychodynamic relationship between parental feelings, history, and the caregiver response to the child. The Clinician also provides consultation to teachers in early care and education settings, as needed.

#### **Key Job Responsibilities**

- Engage with the Child First family and the Care Coordinator in the collaborative family assessment process (i.e., gather information from interviews, observations of interactions and play, review records, collateral sources, and standardized measures).
- Use all available information to develop a thoughtful, well-integrated clinical formulation and Child and Family Plan of Care, in partnership with the Care Coordinator and family.
- Provide Child First home-based psychotherapeutic intervention with young children and their caregivers using relational, dyadic psychotherapy (CPP) and other modalities.

- Help the caregiver gain insight regarding personal history (including trauma history), feelings for the child, and current parenting practices.
- Avert crisis situations by assisting the family in times of urgent need (e.g., risk of harm to child or caregiver, pending child removal), in consultation with the Care Coordinator and Clinical Director.
- Provide mental health and developmental assessment and consultation within early care and education settings and to other early childhood providers.
- Embrace use of videotaping to enhance both therapeutic work with families and reflective supervision.
- Engage in weekly individual, Team, and group reflective clinical supervision with Clinical Director.
- Engage actively in all aspects of the Child First Learning Collaborative, including in-person trainings, distance learning curriculum, and specialty trainings.
- Keep all appropriate documentation for clinical accountability and reimbursement.
- Participate in other clinical and administrative activities as appropriate.

### **Qualifications**

- Master's or Doctoral level behavioral health provider (e.g., LCSW, LMFT, LPC, Clinical Psychologist, other), licensed in Connecticut.
- Experience working psychotherapeutically with culturally diverse children and families, including parent-child therapeutic work and play therapy with very young children (0-5 years), for a minimum of three years. Past CPP training is highly valued.
- Openness to learning, capacity for self-reflection, and eagerness to participate in reflective clinical supervision.
- Knowledge of relationship-based, psychodynamic intervention and early child development; parent-child relationships and attachment theory; effects of trauma and environmental risks on early childhood brain development, especially violence exposure, maternal depression, and substance abuse; and community-level risk factors (e.g., poverty, homelessness).
- Experience providing mental health assessment and consultation to early care and education sites.
- Knowledge and experience working with adults with mental health, substance abuse, and cognitive challenges.
- Experience providing intervention within diverse home and community settings.
- Ability to speak a second language (Spanish, Creole, other), highly valued.
- Strong commitment to the vision, mission, and goals of Child First.
- Highly organizes, self-motivated, reliable, and flexible (including willingness to work nontraditional hours, including two evenings).
- Able to work as part of a team.
- Able to communicate well verbally and in writing.
- Comfortable with computers and experienced with Work Excel; experience with CareLogic, highly valued.
- Reliable vehicle and appropriate insurance for home visits.