

**Western Highlands Network  
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**Attachment Therapy**

It is imperative that at all times we consider the health, safety and well-being of all consumers as our first priority in the delivery of services. The science of Best Practices needs to be used whenever possible. We must also avoid any and all methods that are documented as contraindicated.

It has come to our attention that the use of techniques and therapies commonly referred to as Attachment Therapy (AT), and its associated parenting techniques, are being used within the Western Highlands service area. These practices must stop immediately. Providers engaging in these activities will be reported to DSS for suspected abuse/neglect, referrals will be frozen and endorsements may be withdrawn.

The following are the recommendations in the February 2006 report from the American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children's (APSAC) position and was also endorsed by the American Psychological Association's Division 37 and the Division 37 Section on Child Maltreatment:

**"Treatment techniques or attachment parenting techniques involving physical coercion, psychologically or physically enforced holding, physical restraint, physical domination, provoked catharsis, ventilation of rage, age regression, humiliation, withholding or forcing food or water intake, prolonged social isolation, or assuming exaggerated levels of control and domination over a child are contraindicated because of risk of harm and absence of proven benefit and should not be used."**

The APSAC report also attacked the mistaken theories of child development and behavior that are used to justify the use of AT. "Intervention models that portray young children in negative ways, including describing certain groups of young children as pervasively manipulative, cunning, or deceitful, are not conducive to good treatment and may promote abusive practices." It goes on to warn professionals, "In general, child maltreatment professionals should be skeptical of treatments that describe children in pejorative terms or that advocate aggressive techniques for breaking down children's defenses."

The Report calls upon child-welfare professionals not to tolerate parenting behaviors that pretend to be therapeutic but are actually abusive:

**"Withholding food, water, or toilet access as punishment; exerting exaggerated levels of control over a child; restraining children as a treatment; or intentionally provoking out-of control emotional distress should be evaluated as suspected abuse and handled accordingly."**

The practices prohibited above should not be interpreted as pertaining to common and evidence based treatment or behavior management approaches, such as time-out, reward and punishment contingencies, appropriate seclusion or physical restraint (i.e. CPI, NCI, PMAB, TCI) as necessary for physical safety, restriction of privileges, "grounding," or offering physical comfort and nurturance to a child, etc.

Included in the prohibited interventions are the following:

- Strong Sitting
- Hassle Chores
- Differential Meal Preparation
- Humiliation
- Prolonged Isolation
- Withholding water, food, toilet, or hygiene access
- Forced food or water intake
- Provoked catharsis
- Restraint or therapeutic holding as treatment in absence of safety risk
- Re-birthing techniques
- Compression holding therapy
- Rage reduction therapy
- Z-Process therapy
- Boot Camp
- Forced exercise to the point of exhaustion

If you have a question about an intervention or technique, please call your Western Highlands Provider Specialist.