

INSIDERS SCOOP

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1 IN 5 KIDS WILL
EXPERIENCE MENTAL ILLNESS
YOUR HELP CAN
MAKE A **DIFFERENCE**

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A Message from the President & CEO



I want to begin the first issue of *Insiders Scoop* for 2019 by offering a sincere THANK YOU on behalf of the families whose lives you are changing every day. Your belief in our vision and your support of our mission are creating genuine transformations in the lives of parents, families, and children. For that we are most grateful.

In just the last few months you've:

- Demonstrated your commitment to children in our community by *passing the Hamilton County Children's Services Levy*
- Helped grandparents and other caregivers in the region who are raising their grandchildren because of the opioid epidemic by *supporting Kinship care*
- Supported mental health services for families in our community by *giving \$1,890 on Giving Tuesday*
- Became more engaged with our vision by *attending one of our events last fall*
- Created a brilliant holiday full of love, hope, and gifts to over 245 families by *providing presents and donations to our Inspire-a-Family program*

I cannot wait to see what you'll do this year!

The challenges facing today's parents, families, and children are greater than ever before. In addition to the everyday difficulties of adolescence, today's children face unique, modern challenges that are having a significant impact on their mental well-being. **That is why your support is so important.**

Children's mental health is a critical public health issue. In 2017 we learned from a survey of Greater Cincinnati parents that *understanding kids' mental health issues* was their number one concern. **Discovering this along with the understanding that 1 in 5 children between the ages of 13-18 have or will have a serious, diagnosable mental illness makes the work we do vital to building a strong community.**

To better understand parents' concerns about mental health we commissioned a national study to further unpack this complex issue. The findings will allow us to better position our solutions to parents and families. I encourage you to review these results on pages 2 and 3. **I would be happy to discuss these findings with you and what we plan to do about them.**

This year we are positioned to confront these challenges head-on together and continue to make meaningful advances in addressing children's mental health and other significant challenges parents face. And while these **challenges are great, we are fortunate to have a valuable partner to take them on. YOU.**

Thank you again for your support of Beech Acres Parenting Center!

James R. Mason
President & CEO

P.S. Thank you for the many well wishes on my 40th anniversary on November 27th! I am just as excited and motivated to lead this work today as I was 4 decades ago, especially with your support!



STRENGTH-BASED APPROACH TO MENTAL HEALTH



A child proudly displays his 'strength spotting' t-shirt.

Beech Acres Parenting Center has been infusing the Natural Strength Parenting™ philosophy across the organization especially with our therapists and service providers.

We are now starting to see the practical application of these skills in real world scenarios and are beginning to see results.

Key to these early successes has been the utilization of several modified resources and tools like "Character Strength Jenga", "Character Strength Discussion Cards", and "Character Strength Coloring Pages". These fun, interactive tools are available to families as they wait for their appointment. **They afford parents and their children the opportunity to interact with each other and engage around character strengths.** Having the opportunity to be playfully curious together at the very beginning of their time at Beech Acres Parenting Center introduces the language and concepts of Natural Strength Parenting™ early

in the process. "Getting familiar with these strength-based resources has been fun and useful for families," said Amy Blankenship, a Child and Family Therapist.

Blankenship and other therapists across the organization are excited to be using these tools with families. "Being strength-based empowers us to see greatness in ourselves and in others," she said. Families are encouraged to take the VIA Character Strength Assessment from the very beginning of their journey with Beech Acres Parenting Center. Those who complete the assessment utilize the results as part of their individualized plan while partnering with us on their treatment. **Understanding their child's strengths empowers parents to start from a positive position when teaching, guiding, or disciplining their children.** This strength-based approach even works when parents play with their children.

In addition to the fun, modified games, therapists are integrating strengths into other engaging activities. Clients are encouraged to "strength spot"; intentionally point out their child's strengths when they see them in use, proudly display their strengths on t-shirts, balloons, and bags, and integrate strength-based language into their day-to-day routines.





Modified Character Strength Jenga

Want to discover you and your family's strengths? Take the VIA Survey <https://beechacres.org/taketheviasurvey/>


"Being strength-based doesn't mean that we no longer hear sad stories of our clients. It doesn't mean that we stop affirming and validating the parent that is beyond frustrated. What it does do, is offer a glimmer of hope to those who have not been so fortunate to hear great things about themselves and encourages celebration of the aspects that make us unique. These new perspectives are the building blocks for solving the problems parents face today." - Amy Blankenship, MS, LPCC

61%
of parents had no discussion with their parents about mental health when they were kids.





13%
of parents do not discuss it now.

TOP CONCERNS OF PARENTS WHO HAVE NEVER SOUGHT TREATMENT FOR KIDS





Fear of the unknown.





Not knowing where to go for help.

Not understanding their child's condition.





8 IN 10 PARENTS believe there is a strong or moderate **connection** between building on a **child's strengths** and improving their **mental health**.

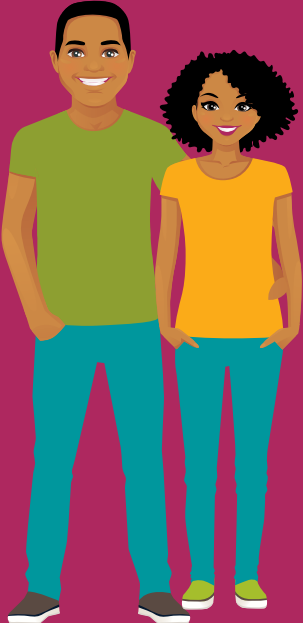
2/3 of parents think mental health resources **should be proactively shared** by a pediatrician during a well-child visit or in their school.


INTENTIONAL SUPPORT



41% of parents actively **work to support** their child's mental health on a regular basis.



91% of parents who have not had to seek treatment themselves would **expect to be involved** in their child's treatment.



Information is based on Beech Acres Parenting Center's 2018 survey of 798 parents nationwide who have children aged 18 and under that lived with them in their homes. The survey was managed by the Mower agency.

Parents Embracing Children's Mental Health, Beech Acres Study Indicates

A new, national Children's Mental Health Awareness Study from Beech Acres Parenting Center offers insights into the evolving perceptions and practices of parents regarding the mental health of their children.

The study shows that acceptance of mental health as a key factor of overall health is becoming increasingly mainstream among parents.

Among the most compelling results of the study is the dramatic generational change in parents' view of mental health. **While 61% of parents said they had no discussion of mental health when they were kids, only 13% of them do not discuss it now as parents.**

"Many children and families live with mental health concerns or even a mental illness, so it's extremely encouraging that we are bringing down the veil of stigma for parents on this topic," said Jim Mason, President and CEO of Beech Acres Parenting Center. *"Parents who are actively engaged with their children's mental health and well-being can have a huge positive impact, and we've seen that to be true over many generations at Beech Acres."*

Hope for Parents

This changing attitude toward mental health is further reflected by a finding from the study that **91% of parents who have not had to seek treatment for their child would expect to be involved in their child's mental health treatment, instead of taking a hands-off approach.** Even before seeking treatment, **41% of parents in the study said they actively work to support their children's mental health** on a regular basis.

Parents are interested in hearing about mental health proactively from sources they trust. About 2/3 of parents who participated in the study think mental health resources should

be proactively shared by a child's school. The same number of parents would like to receive mental health resources from their pediatrician during a well-child visit.

"Proactively addressing children's mental health in a setting in which other needs are already being met has been a successful strategy of ours for several years now through our Parent ConnexTM program," Mason said. *"It's encouraging that parents are validating this approach."*

Parent ConnexTM meets parents where they are by placing parenting specialists onsite in pediatric care practices. By providing prompt, practical support, we help build parents' capacity to provide safe and nurturing environments for their children.

Mental Health Education

As more people realize the importance of mental health, education is increasingly necessary to set aside misconceptions about it.

"There is no substitute for personalized care from a mental health professional to help your family address mental health questions," Mason said. *"Misperceptions about mental health stop some families from accessing the best possible care for their children. By educating and supporting parents, Beech Acres reduces fears and increases parents' confidence in providing their children with whatever mental health care they may need."*

The study also discovered other areas of mental health that need clarification. **For example, the top three concerns of parents who have never had to seek treatment for their children are Not understanding their child's condition (42%), Fear of the unknown (42%) and Not knowing where to go for help (38%).**

Solutions

In many cases, the answers to mental health treatment questions may be more attainable than we realize. The study indicated that **eight in 10 parents believe there is a strong or moderate connection between building on a child's strengths and improving their mental health.**

At Beech Acres, building on a child's innate strengths is a pillar for its Natural Strength ParentingTM framework. Natural Strength Parenting is a distinct approach to parenting that integrates concepts of intentionality and mindfulness to help parents better see and encourage their children's unique, innate strengths. Beech Acres is the first organization anywhere to recognize the power of combining intentionality, mindfulness and strengths into one foundational approach to parenting.

Sharon James, Senior Parent Educator at Beech Acres Parenting Center, said the Natural Strength Parenting approach can give parents easy steps to support their children's mental health.

"For example, listen to them with curiosity to spot a strength they have, and make a point to promote that strength to build their confidence and self-esteem," James said. *"This kind of intentional act of support can make a huge, positive impact in the lives of children."*

Methodology

Information from the Children's Mental Health Awareness Study is based on a 2018 survey of 798 parents nationwide who have children aged 18 and under that lived with them in their homes.

KINDNESS, ON THEIR LEVEL



Beech Acres Parenting Center therapist Amy Blankenship, MS, LPCC shares the following example of how she has used a strength-based approach in a consultation with a family.

A New Family Struggles

Mia's mom sought our help due to concerns she and her new husband had with Mia's behavior during their transition to becoming a newly blended family. Mia, a typical five-year-old, was having a difficult time adjusting to and bonding with her new family. This is a fairly typical response to any major change in a family. **Children of all ages will have similar reactions to becoming part of a step-family.** New parent, new rules, possibly a new living situation, and in this case, two new siblings. The family came in together to discuss some of the recent behaviors the parents had found frustrating since Mia's last therapy appointment and to explore new solutions moving forward. **They were concerned with the lack of progress and Mia's inability to accept the new family unit.**

As the session began, Mia became distant and reserved. Her mood shifted as her parents discussed some

recent situations that they found to be frustrating. Mia shut down verbally and physically for this portion of the session. She would quietly respond to questions without providing much detail. She sat with her arms crossed looking at the window, hesitant to be engaged while her parents were talking.

Getting On The Child's Level

After listening to and acknowledging the parents' concerns, I sat alone on the floor with Mia to hear her perspective on the situation. **I find that positioning myself at the child's level allows me to expansively listen to them and establish trust.** Mia was idly coloring on a Character Strengths Coloring Page. *Hope*. As Mia colored, I began simply talking with her. Soon she was comfortable talking with me about things at home. As expected, Mia's version of the story differed from her parents. **Each person brings their own unique perspective to every situation. Together, we worked through these stories and explored the differences.** We then discussed alternative ways to approach similar situations should they arise in the future.

A Powerful Moment

After working closely with Mia, the parents and I explored the work they had been doing to assist her with bonding with the new family. **Knowing that the family had completed the VIA Character Strengths Assessment, I asked mom to remind me of Mia's strengths.**

This is when the most powerful part of the session occurred.

"Kindness," mom immediately responded. **Hearing this strengths-based language coming from her mother, Mia's face lit up instantly.** Her body language shifted and her engagement increased. She opened up tremendously. One of Mia's treatment goals is to "increase positive involvement with others". I challenged her to use her strength of *kindness* three times over the next week to achieve that goal. Everyone began sharing ideas. The possibilities to be kind were endless.



She was so excited about hearing and sharing all the possibilities she hugged me and her parents with enthusiasm. She said she was "looking forward" to sharing how she can use her strengths; because she can and she will. **All it took was a 10-minute conversation for a little girl to feel empowered, understood, and loved.**

**Some names and descriptions are altered to respect the privacy of our clients.*

DONOR SPOTLIGHT

TO ALL OF OUR GENEROUS DONORS



Our generous donors sure know how to have fun!
Bob & Mary Camp



Thank you for your generous support!
Krystal Washington, Family Peer Support parent, Katherine Stautberg, donor, Mary Flagg, Family Peer Support Provider



Kindness and Leadership are two strengths we see in all of our donors!
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Celebrating over \$7 Million in gifts from long term donors.



We're all grateful for family.

THANK YOU!

EMPOWERING
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STRENGTHENING
KIDS
TOGETHER



Our mental health team
is ready to help
your family &
community!

beechacres.org 513.231.6630

3
REMINDERS...
YOU CAN
MAKE A **BIG**
DIFFERENCE:

1 Talk about mental health with children. Don't assume kids are too young to understand. Depression can affect children in elementary school.

2 Pass along this publication to a friend or neighbor.

3 Make a donation to support the 1,500 children we see each year across our 3 locations.

