



Close Collaborations: Helping a Mother and Son Come Together.

Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT) is a **parent coaching model for young children** with behavioral challenges. In PCIT, caregivers are taught specific parenting skills to strengthen a nurturing and secure relationship with their child while teaching positive discipline and behavioral management techniques. The caregiver receives coaching and direct feedback from the clinician during session using an earpiece to aid in the development of these skills. The treatment has been shown to avoid further involvement of the child and family in the behavioral health and other child serving systems.

Allyson Monarch is a PCIT Certified therapist at Bethanna. She completed PCIT training in June 2017 and has been actively using PCIT with children and their caregivers at **Bethanna**. Allyson was the treating therapist of **Beth* and her son, Alex*** in our last success story article. The following is an interview with Allyson about her experience learning PCIT and seeing the success of PCIT with Beth and Alex.

*Pseudonym

EPIC: How did you become interested in PCIT and why did you initially decide to train in PCIT?

Allyson: PCIT was offered by Bethanna and they asked if it was something that I was willing to do. I love learning new things. I was really excited to have a new therapy under my belt that I could use. I had a lot of young kids on my caseload as well.



Allyson Monarch, PCIT Therapist at Bethanna

EPIC: What was your favorite part of treating Beth and her son?

Allyson: I really like how Beth practiced the skills and used them at home. She put the work in! By the time we got to the end of PCIT therapy, Alex put himself on time-out because he knew the house-rules. Interrupting was one of these rules so if he interrupted during session, he would get up

EPIC: How did doing PCIT with Beth and her son help you to understand/learn the model?

Allyson: I think I was still fairly new when I had Beth and Alex. She was the first person I worked with that had a child with more severe behavioral issues. I think I had been doing PCIT for 5 months at that point. I feel like I got to use all of PCIT. I had some cases before where the kids didn't need to go on timeout. In this case, Child-Directed Interaction (CDI) and Parent-Directed Interaction (PDI) were needed. I really got to practice all aspects of the model.

EPIC: How did you motivate Beth and her child to participate?

Allyson: I think just validating Beth's feelings of inadequacy was motivating for her. I would tell her that it's okay to feel like that right now. Also, validating Alex's feelings of frustration and missing his biological family. I would also let Beth and Alex know that I'm on this journey with them so they can build a healthy attachment and enjoy each other more.

EPIC: What did you like about PCIT at

and walk over and sit himself down.

EPIC: Was it hard to encourage Beth to get Alex to have a tantrum/meltdown to find his baseline? How did you support her during this?

Allyson: So, interestingly, the second session he had tantrum. He didn't want to come in the room because he thought he was going to be told what to do (clean the room) and he literally laid down in the hall for 10-15 minutes because he didn't get the snack he wanted. I encouraged Beth to sit in the room and play and ignore the behavior because this behavior shouldn't get attention. Eventually, he came back in and sat down and played.

EPIC: What was the biggest change you saw in Beth and her child after PCIT?

Allyson: Just their enjoyment of being in the same room as one another, their excitement to interact, and both of them knowing what the other expected.

EPIC: What would you say to someone skeptical of PCIT?

Allyson: I would say that PCIT works. If the therapist and caregiver stick to the model, it does work. For those kids that are 2-7, it gives you an opportunity to work with the caregiver in a way that no other model allows. You get to leave the room and let the caregiver practice right then and there. I like that it can be any caregiver; an aunt, uncle, foster parent, grandma, grandpa, mother, or father.

EPIC: How do you see PCIT helping children and families in the child welfare system?

Allyson: Foster parents are getting children they don't know (background, attachment with other caregivers, etc.). PCIT gives them the first step to interacting with and building a healthy attachment with the child. It gives them a way to intervene and implement consequences in the home. And for the next child placed in the home, you will have those skills you learned in PCIT.

EPIC: How has Bethanna provided support for you to learn, practice and use PCIT?

Allyson: I have a whole room I can practice PCIT in. They have helped me apply for certification. I got certified over the summer! They make sure that I constantly get referrals so that I can practice PCIT. Every other week, we have clinical reviews for PCIT and share our cases (what's going well, what isn't going well and how we can grow as PCIT therapists).

first? Were there any parts of PCIT you were skeptical about?

Allyson: I think the first thing I liked about it was how structured it was. I didn't have to think about what the session was going to look like. Each week I went in, I had a structured protocol of what my session would look like. I'm a black and white thinker and PCIT worked with this type of thinking. I also liked that it was for children ages 2-7. I think I was having some trouble working with this age group and I was able to use PCIT to help parents work with their children.



Click picture for a video example of Special Playtime.

EPIC: When did you start to see a difference in Beth's parenting skills? Her relationship with her child? Her child's behavior?

Allyson: I started seeing a difference after our first coaching session. Beth mastered the skills in 4 weeks. She and Alex established special playtime pretty quickly so they were both motivated to get to special playtime. I saw a change with Alex quickly because he enjoyed special playtime since he got to lead play activities. This let him be creative which Beth enjoyed.

Special Thanks

Special thanks to Allyson Monarch for providing excellent care for Beth and Alex as well as for sharing her success story. Click [here](#) to learn more information about Bethanna.

[Click Here for PCIT Providers](#)

PCIT Networking Conference

Join the ECIC team at the Parent-Child Interaction Therapy Statewide Networking Conference. During this conference, you will have a chance to discuss PCIT with clinicians, parents, child systems partners, etc. There will be a number of keynote speakers and workshops to choose from. For more information, click [here](#) to read the brochure. For more information about PCIT, click [here](#).

Date: March 25, 2019

Time: 8:30am-5:00pm

Where: The Nittany Lion Inn
200 West Park Avenue
State College, PA 16803

[Click here to Register](#)

For questions, please email Gween Burkholder at gwen.burkholder@ecinnovations.org.

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