

NW CHILDREN'S FUND

Making hope work.

The Amazing Adolescent Brain: Challenges, Opportunities and Promising Interventions

The adolescent brain is markedly different from that of a child or an adult.

At the **NW Children's Fund Forum** on January 31, Dr. Linda Chamberlain shared insights into the unique characteristics of the adolescent brain. Approximately 450 parents and youth-serving individuals – from schools, universities, nonprofits, courts, health care and more – gathered at the Washington State Convention Center to learn how brain development influences the way adolescents experience and behave in the world.



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As in the first few years of life, adolescence offers a period of heightened brain plasticity. Profound changes in the brain impact teens' emotions, decision-making and behavior. This period of plasticity offers a "second window of opportunity," Dr. Chamberlain explained, for learning and shaping behavior. Utilizing strategies informed by brain science, parents and other adults who work with teens can help them build resilience and achieve other positive outcomes.

Dr. Chamberlain identified several critical characteristics of the adolescent brain. For example:

Teens weigh risks differently. Research has revealed that the *prefrontal cortex* – the part of the brain associated with reasoning – does not fully mature until the mid-20s. While adults weigh the potential consequences of their actions and assess risk, adolescents act impulsively. *No matter their origin or culture, teenagers are wired to seek novelty and take risks.*

The teen brain responds differently to alcohol. Compared to adults, teens have a reduced sensitivity to both the motor coordination and sedative effects of alcohol. *Adolescents are missing critical cues*

that let them know they've had too much. And because their brains are still developing, substance abuse may cause irreversible damage.

Teens are more likely to misinterpret facial expressions. Did you know that adolescents are more likely to inaccurately perceive anger on people's faces? *They rely more on the amygdala – the impulsive, limbic region of the brain – which leads to quick judgment.*

Promising Interventions

Dr. Chamberlain described some important brain-based strategies for working with adolescents. Teens are best supported with hands-on,

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Dr. Linda Chamberlain



The Amazing Adolescent Brain (continued from page 1)

skill-based learning and opportunities for positive risk-taking and to discover new interests. They need more sleep than adults, and will benefit from tools to build brain connectivity and manage stress.

Adolescents need healthy adult relationships – people who will hang in there even when being pushed away, who will validate their feelings instead of judge them. Dr. Chamberlain also underscored the importance of educating teens about how their brains work, which helps them to have a “growth mindset” – an understanding that they are a work in progress and have the power to help themselves thrive.



Forum attendees practice breathing and movement techniques for stress relief

Visit nwc.org/events/forum for the Forum video, PowerPoint deck and resources about brain development and trauma. You may also check out the ParentMap story outlining key insights from Dr. Chamberlain's presentation: www.parentmap.com/article/teen-brain-science-linda-chamberlain.

Adolescent Mental Health and Children of Trauma

Data shows that teen depression and anxiety are on the rise. These issues are even more pronounced in the lives of the vulnerable youth NW Children's Fund serves. Speakers from three NWCF partner agencies shared illustrative vignettes at the Forum of youth whose adolescence was severely impacted by their experiences as victims of child abuse and neglect.



Above, from left to right: *Mona Locke* (welcome speaker/Forum moderator); *Dr. Linda Chamberlain* (keynote speaker); *Lorena Jimenez de Sepin* of **SafeFutures Youth Center**, *Sarah Pulliam* of **Cocoon House** and *Janis Avery* of **Treehouse** (agency speakers/panelists).

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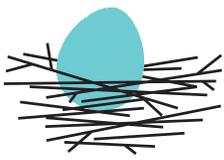
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Winter 2017 Grant Recipients

Agency / Program Description	Grant (\$)	Agency / Program Description	Grant (\$)
Healing Abused Children			
Amara: Foster-Adoption Program / Parenting and adoption services to create safety and permanence for at-risk and special-needs children.	12,500	Toddler Learning Center / Education services and therapy in the home for young children and families with intensive medical, mental or social risk factors.	20,000
Childhaven / Developmentally-focused trauma care and treatment services to support the healing of abused and neglected children ages 0-5.	12,500	Vine Maple Place / Comprehensive housing and support services for single parents and their children to build stability and self-sufficiency.	11,000
Dawson Place Child Advocacy Center / Coordinated medical, mental health, advocacy, protection and law-enforcement services for abused children in Snohomish County.	15,000	Vision House / Transitional housing and integrated support services for homeless mothers and their children.	9,000
Lutheran Community Services Northwest: Permanency Planning Foster-Adopt Program / Provides abused and neglected children with safe, secure and permanent homes.	12,000	YWCA Pierce County: Children & Youth Program / Therapeutic and support services to mitigate the negative effects of domestic violence for children and teens.	6,800
Northwest Immigrant Rights Project: Immigrant Child Advocacy Project / Legal services and advocacy for abused, abandoned and undocumented immigrant children.	12,000	YWCA Seattle King Snohomish: Children's Domestic Violence Program / Intensive, in-home psychoeducational curriculum for children and their non-abusive parents.	13,500
Pediatric Interim Care Center / Immediate, short-term, medically supervised care for drug-exposed and fragile infants.	12,000	Helping At-Risk Youth	
Ryther: Attachment, Regulation and Competency (ARC) Model / Implementation of trauma-informed framework for intervention with youth and families who have experienced multiple and/or prolonged traumatic stress.	30,000	Auburn Youth Resources / Multi-service support for at-risk, homeless, abused and neglected youth in South King County.	13,500
Secret Harbor / Therapeutic foster care, in-home support and residential treatment services for young people who have experienced significant trauma due to abuse and neglect.	12,000	Big Brothers Big Sisters of Island County / Mentoring for low-income, high-risk and pre-teen girls in Island County.	4,400
Strengthening Fragile Families			
Boyer Children's Clinic: CHERISH Program / In-home therapeutic intervention to support foster parents in building nurturing relationships with young children with special healthcare needs.	8,000	Big Brothers Big Sisters of Southwest Washington / Mentoring for children who are at risk of dropping out, violence, substance abuse and other juvenile problem behaviors.	12,000
Child Care Resources: Homeless Child Care Program / Help and guidance for homeless families in finding child care providers and accessing support services.	14,000	Communities In Schools of Renton / Mentoring and wraparound academic and support services for at-risk students.	14,000
Domestic Abuse Women's Network / Comprehensive, empowerment-based programs and services to help survivors and their children attain and maintain violence-free lives.	15,000	Community for Youth / Support for the social, emotional and academic development of vulnerable high-risk youth through mentoring, learning experiences and community.	10,000
Housing Hope: Tomorrow's Hope Child Development Center / Therapeutic programming to help homeless and at-risk families overcome barriers to age-appropriate development for their children.	30,000	Friends of the Children / Long-term professional mentoring to guide children facing tough challenges to reach their potential and achieve their goals.	13,500
Interfaith Association of Northwest Washington / Referral, support and advocacy services for families during and after their stay in emergency shelter.	10,500	Jefferson Teen Center / After-school services and a daily, healthy nutrition program for youth living in the rural north-eastern corner of the Olympic Peninsula.	6,000
Lydia Place: Parent Support Program / Parent educator home visits, group parenting education, transitional housing and therapeutic interventions for children in shelters.	11,200	Northwest Youth Services: Positive Adolescent Development Program / Emergency housing and case management for homeless youth ages 13-17.	16,000
New Phoebe House Association / Comprehensive recovery and reunification program for families who face multiple challenges and are involved with the child welfare system.	9,000	Readiness to Learn Foundation / Programs to stabilize the school experience for students during difficult periods and connect their families to basic needs resources.	7,500
Rochester Organization of Families / Resources and services for children, youth and families to achieve a healthy, positive and drug-free community.	16,000	Seattle Education Access / Higher education advocacy and opportunities for young people struggling to overcome poverty and adversity.	11,100
Solid Ground: Children's Program at Broadview / Programs and support for children who have experienced homelessness and domestic violence.	15,500	TeamChild / Advocacy and legal services connecting high-needs youth in crisis with support programs and services.	11,000
		YouthCare / Shelter, case management, service referrals and crisis resolution for homeless adolescents.	13,000
		Youth Tutoring Program - Catholic Community Services / After-school tutoring and enrichment program for kids living in Seattle low-income communities.	9,000

\$450,000
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NWCF Forum Highlights

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NW CHILDREN'S FUND GALA + AUCTION | APRIL 29, 2017 | FREMONT STUDIOS

- Festivities begin at 5:30 PM
- Dinner presented by Chef John Howie
- Live auction with auctioneer John Curley

RSVP and preview our auction catalog at:
nwcf.maestroweb.com

**RSVP by April 1
and Save!**

Now through April 1,
tickets are \$175 per person.
After April 1, tickets are \$225.
Don't wait – RSVP today!