



## Cherokee Nation Project LAUNCH

Cohort 4, Funding Period 2012–2017

[www.cherokeenation.org](http://www.cherokeenation.org)

### Grantee Overview

The Cherokee Nation, the largest tribal nation in the United States, is situated in Northeastern Oklahoma and is home to more than 317,000 people. Unlike many tribes in the country, Cherokee Nation is not located on reservation land. Cherokee Nation land covers 7,000 square miles of jurisdictional area across 14 distinct counties in Oklahoma. Four counties from Cherokee Nation's tribal jurisdictional service area, which include rural communities and towns, make up the focus population for Cherokee Nation Project LAUNCH. The mission of Cherokee Nation Project LAUNCH is to develop, strengthen, and promote effective, integrative, and holistic programs and services for child-serving professionals and families of young children in order to optimize the individual development of every child.

### Project Milestones

All [Project LAUNCH](#) grantees implement five core promotion and prevention strategies intended to increase access to high-quality prevention and wellness promotion services for children and their families. In Cherokee Nation Project LAUNCH, these five strategies are implemented through the following activities:

- **Screening and Assessment:** Cherokee Nation Project LAUNCH is currently using the [Survey of Wellbeing of Young Children](#) (SWYC) for the social-emotional component of their assessment. In addition to utilizing SWYC across the four counties from Cherokee Nation's tribal jurisdictional service area, Cherokee Nation Project LAUNCH is working collaboratively throughout the state

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and with other tribes to implement SWYC. Through their environmental scan, Cherokee Nation Project LAUNCH learned that social-emotional screenings were not always completed and results were not always applied. The scan found that in comparison to previously used screening tools, SWYC is much shorter (takes about five minutes to complete), is cost effective (free), and is more sensitive, providing more information about the children and families. SWYC captures the social-emotional development of the child(ren) and the well-being of the parent. Cherokee Nation Project LAUNCH has performed more than 3,370 screenings using SWYC and has received

positive feedback from parents, such as, "This is easy!" Thanks to the development of a training by Cherokee Nation Project LAUNCH staff, 26 home visitors have been trained in SWYC. The Oklahoma State Department of Health and the Department of Human Services has also started using SWYC as a result of Cherokee Nation Project LAUNCH's leadership.

- **Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation:** Cherokee Nation Project LAUNCH's goal for

mental health consultation is to work with teachers to create and sustain optimal learning environments that encourage social changes and promote positive child outcomes in all areas of development. An evidenced-based intervention specialist (EBIS) works collaboratively with teachers in elementary schools using the [Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations of Early Learning](#) (CSEFEL) modules to train on the importance of social-emotional development and to build capacities in teachers, ensuring that the children will continue to be supported beyond Cherokee Nation Project LAUNCH. The EBIS also supports teachers in using the [PAX Good Behavior Game](#)—a school-based intervention that teaches students self-regulation, self-control, and self-management in context of collaborating with others—in their classrooms. Cherokee Nation Project LAUNCH has trained 55 Pre-K through Grade 2 teachers and administrators in five schools on the PAX intervention. The EBIS supports teachers and parents in using strategies from the PAX Good Behavior Game, [Triple P – Positive Parenting Program](#), CSEFEL, and trauma-informed trainings from the [National Child Traumatic Stress Network](#) to promote children’s positive behavioral changes. The EBIS refers children and families for further assessment or therapy to work on behavioral or developmental issues. Through PAX, EBISs have screened 734 children and completed 120 classroom observations as of October 2015.

- Enhanced Home Visiting:** Since the start of their Home Visiting Consortium, Cherokee Nation Project LAUNCH has hosted ten meetings, with 25–30 home visitors from the target counties attending each meeting. The home visitors have received training in screening and assessment, trauma-informed care, and evidence-based practices for home visiting. The home visitors also collaborated to coordinate care for families to improve the services they receive. Eleven home visitors from multiple agencies in the Cherokee Nation Project LAUNCH counties were trained in [Stepping Stones Triple P](#), which focuses on education for caregivers of children with disabilities or delays, including autism, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, cerebral palsy, and elevated levels of disruptive behavior.
- Integrating Behavioral Health In Primary Care:** Cherokee Nation Project LAUNCH developed trainings for primary care staff on screenings such as the SWYC. As of March 2016, Cherokee Nation Project LAUNCH staff have presented to 32 primary care providers on integration of behavioral health into primary care and have discussed the importance of screening and early intervention in the primary care setting. Progress is underway with pediatricians to form a multidisciplinary team and a screening and referral process.
- Family Strengthening:** Cherokee Nation Project LAUNCH trained 62 Triple P practitioners in primary care and Selected Seminar Triple P. Home visitors and mental health providers were trained in Stepping Stones Triple P in June 2015. Additionally, Cherokee Nation Project LAUNCH has scheduled a training for Pathways and Group Triple P for August 2016. Pathways Triple P is a comprehensive parenting intervention for parents at risk of mistreating their children. The tribe’s [Helping Everyone Reach Out Project](#) (HERO) initiative offers parenting classes and small parenting groups in tribal communities to encourage families to be resources for one another.

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*“Home visitors need a forum to talk about the needs and challenges they have working with families. The consortium meeting has given them this forum. Allowing home visitors to have a time to talk about collaboration and coordination has been the reason I believe the consortium meetings have been so well attended.”*

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Cherokee Nation Project LAUNCH also formed a partnership with the Oklahoma Department of Human Services Child Welfare to approve HERO Builders classes for parents that are court involved. As of February 2016, 96 sessions have been completed with HERO Builders, with 89 parents participating.

### *Systems Integration*

Project LAUNCH is intended to improve coordination and collaboration across systems that serve young children and their families. Cherokee Nation Project LAUNCH is currently working with five schools to begin implementation of the PAX Good Behavior Game to support early childhood mental health. They are also working with Oklahoma University Health Sciences Center to bring the SWYC screening to the Department of Human Services for children ages birth to 5.5. Cherokee Nation Project LAUNCH has found great value in the role that parents and family members are playing in supporting the development of young children and, as a result, convened action teams made up of parents and caregivers who invite their peers to join them on the team and support one another in their roles as parents and caregivers. The action teams, created and led by the parents and caregivers themselves, ensure sustainability of the work beyond Cherokee Nation Project LAUNCH.

### *Grantee-Developed Materials*

Click on the following links to access information about grantee-developed resources:

- [New Directions in Tribal Early Childhood Programs](#): Article in ZERO TO THREE's journal featuring Cherokee Nation (see page 31).
- **Cherokee Nation Project LAUNCH in the News:**
  - [HERO Project Works to Help Youth, Families](#): This article was published in the Cherokee Phoenix newspaper (Cherokee Nation's newspaper). It describes the HERO Project's philosophy and available services as well as activities in the outlying communities.
  - [Downtown Wagoner Goes Green for Mental Health Awareness](#): For the 2015 Children's Mental Health Awareness Day, the Wagoner County LAUNCH group decorated downtown Wagoner to bring light to children's mental health issues and the work the group is doing in the community to engage parents.
  - [Cherokee Nation Puts Focus on Children's Mental Health](#): This article reports on the 2015 Children's Mental Health Awareness Day and the HERO Project staff work to propose a proclamation for Cherokee Nation and the town of Tahlequah to declare May as National Children's Mental Health Awareness Month. The picture shown on the website is of community members attending as Chief Bill John Baker signed the proclamation.
  - [Wagoner County LAUNCH Fires Up Treasure Hunt](#): The Wagoner County LAUNCH group conducted one of their first big community activities, Buster's Bone Hunt. The group raised money and partnered with the Wagoner Education Foundation to host a family-friendly activity that kids and their parents could do together.
  - [Treasure Hunt Could Bring \\$1500 to Winners](#): Additional article publicizing the efforts of Wagoner County LAUNCH and their community activity.
  - [Jones Takes Trip to D.C. to Tell Parents About Wagoner County LAUNCH](#): The president of Wagoner County LAUNCH traveled to Washington, DC, with HERO Project staff to

- speak on a panel at the 2015 Project LAUNCH Grantee Training Institute on the effectiveness of community organizing in her community.
- [Cherokee Nation HERO Project Opens New Office in Tahlequah](#): Previously, the HERO Project staff were housed with Cherokee Nation Adult Behavioral Health Services. In 2015, Cherokee Nation purchased a new building for HERO Project staff.
  - [Wagoner County LAUNCH Plants Community Garden to Help Families](#): Members of Wagoner County LAUNCH partnered with the Wagoner area Girl Scout troop to acquire and grow a community garden.
  - [Workshop Hones Parenting Skills](#): HERO Project staff, who are accredited Triple P practitioners, held a three-part Triple P seminar series in Tahlequah, Oklahoma.
  - [Wagoner LAUNCH to Host Sweetheart Dance](#): Wagoner County LAUNCH recently hosted a sweetheart dance to celebrate young girls and the important male role models in their lives.

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