



# COOLZONE

CHILDREN  
OVERCOMING  
OBSTACLES AND  
LIMITS

A Program of Matilda Theiss Early Childhood Behavioral Health  
*UPMC Western Psychiatric Hospital*

## WHAT IS THE COOL ZONE?

Children Overcoming Obstacles and Limits (COOL) Zone is a model of intervention developed through a partnership between Matilda Theiss Early Childhood Behavioral Health and the Pittsburgh Penguins Foundation in 2015. The COOL Zone is a set of interventions and settings that create a therapeutic framework that engages children and families in comprehensive behavioral health treatments that are family-focused, multiculturally-sensitive, strengths-based and trauma informed. The overall goal of the COOL Zone is to provide high quality, evidenced-based services to children and their families through non-stigmatizing settings and interventions.

## WHAT SERVICES CAN THE COOL ZONE OFFER?

- **The Igloo:** Located within the treatment space, the Igloo is a child friendly structure in which they are able to engage in one-on one sessions with clinicians or utilize the space to de-escalate and calm down. The space, in the shape of an Igloo, is designed to be inviting, friendly, engaging and non-stigmatizing for children.
- **Individual Therapy Sessions:** Each client receives weekly individual therapy with clinicians. They will work with the child's caregivers and teachers to develop goals and interventions that best suit the specific needs of the child. Additionally, if needed our clinicians utilize evidenced-based trauma treatments (CPP, ARC, FOCUS, TF-CBT) to address any traumatic incidents that occur.
- **Group Therapy Sessions:** Clients will be selected at various points in their treatment process to participate in weekly group therapy with peers. The COOL Zone Team utilizes the Incredible Years Small Group Dina Program, an evidenced-based treatment program for young children.
- **Check-In/Check-Out (CICO):** Each day a COOL Zone Team member will work to establish daily goals, evaluate the client's overall emotional state and set reinforcement for positive behaviors. These items will be reviewed at the end of each day.
- **Supporting Our Colony:** CICO is linked to our group reinforcement system ("Supporting Our Colony") to develop accountability and a community of success for clients. Each client has opportunities to earn a penguin egg for group goals including being a Positive Leader, Kind Helper and Caring Citizen. Once the client group fills the "egg basket," all clients earn a prize.
- **Penguin's Patches:** Penguin's Patches is an individualized program wherein children can earn patches for the therapeutic skills they have earned, similar to earning scout patches.
- **Penguin Passes:** A Penguin Pass is a positive reinforcement system to acknowledge a client's positive choices and excelling on their goals. This allows a client to visit the COOL Zone, generally, for either 15 or 30 minutes to engage in a preferred activity with a clinician.
- **Family Kudos:** Each week the staff send home Kudos for caregivers to review which summarizes a child's overall goals and successes in regards to the treatment process for the week.
- **Case Management/Service Coordination:** The COOL Zone Team assists in linking families to services ranging from anything such as housing and financial assistance to caregiver mental health supports and treatment.
- **Consultation/Professional Development:** The COOL Zone Team will collaborate related to any behavior or questions that may arise throughout treatment. Clinicians are trained in a number of areas including early childhood mental health, de-escalation, behavioral management and trauma-informed care. The COOL Zone Team also provides professional development trainings to schools, agencies and child-serving systems to enhance continuity of care as well as advancing mental health practice for children.

## Program Impact

- Reduction in overall discipline referrals and out of school suspensions for COOL Zone participants
- Reduction in out of school placements to alternative education, partial hospitalization programs and higher levels of care.
- Increase in COOL Zone students in Meeting or Exceeding their Academic Progress and State testing scores.
- Behavioral Assessment System for Children (BASC) standardized assessment scores from teachers and care-givers reported after six months:
  - Clinically significant improvement in symptoms related to aggression, attention problems, conduct problems, and depression
  - Clinically significant reduction of learning problems. Noted improvements in aggression and conduct problems
  - Clinically significant improvements in maladaptive behaviors associated with anger control, bullying, emotional self-control, and negative emotionality
  - Significantly enhanced resiliency

## Program Expansion

In 2017, the COOL Zone expanded to Twin Rivers Primary and Intermediate School (K-5) in the McKeesport Area School District as well as Wilkins Primary School (K-3) in the Woodland Hills School District. In 2018, a team was added to the Penn Hills Elementary School in the Penn Hills School District.

The COOL Zone also expanded into a community-based model with the development of the Hosanna House Program in September 2018 and the Pine Center Program in January 2020

## COOL Zone Locations

**Woodland Hills SD - Edgewood**  
241 Maple Ave. Pittsburgh, PA 15218

**McKeesport SD - Twin Rivers**  
1600 Cornell St. McKeesport, PA 15132

**Hosanna House**  
807 Wallace Ave. Wilksburg, PA 15221

**Woodland Hills SD - Wilkins**  
362 Churchill Rd. Pittsburgh, PA 15235

**Penn Hills Elementary School**  
1079 Jefferson Rd. Pittsburgh, PA 15235

**Pine Center**  
11279 Perry Highway, Wexford, PA 15090

## To Learn More About the COOL Zone Program

Contact us at **412-383-1559**

