ABSTRACT
DEVELOPMENT OF THE EARLY CHILDHOOD TRAUMATIC STRESS SCREEN

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The study aimed to develop a brief screening instrument to assess symptoms associated with potentially traumatic experiences (PTE) in very young children (under 6). Potential items for the Early Childhood Traumatic Stress Screen (ECTSS) were sampled from each of the major content areas implicated in trauma. The items underwent an exploratory factor analysis, which produced a 34-item screening measure with four reliable factors and one sub-scale assessing response style. All subscales and the overall trauma composite score significantly correlated with pre-established measures of traumatic stress in very young children, and a receiver operating characteristics curve analysis identified a cut-score with good sensitivity and specificity. The ECTSS fulfills an important need as a first-line screener for maladaptive response following a PTE in very young children. The ECTSS is brief, simple to administer, easy to score, and has acceptable reliability and validity. First-line screeners, such as the ECTSS, are a necessary part of multi-stage screening processes that promote early intervention by rapidly identifying children in need of services.