

Understanding Trauma

Trauma-Informed Care for Service Providers

TRAUMA is a single upsetting experience or repeated stressful event that disrupts a person's sense of safety and security. Trauma can affect the brain and alter the body's stress response mechanisms.



TRAUMATIC EVENTS prompt an intense, prolonged stress response that can leave an individual feeling vulnerable and helpless. Traumatic events are not limited to physical violence or sexual abuse; they also include natural disasters, divorce, intimate partner violence, community violence or death of a loved one.



TRAUMATIC STRESS occurs when an individual is exposed to a situation that overwhelms their ability to cope. Age, culture, and environment can influence the expression of traumatic stress. Traumatic stress responses can include: hypervigilance, disengagement, distrust, guilt, impulsivity, irritability, or forgetfulness.



The Adverse Childhood Experiences Study

found that childhood traumas are associated with increased health-risk behaviors, mental health disorders, substance abuse, suicide attempts, chronic diseases and early death.

TRAUMA-SENSITIVITY

Re-traumatization is a relapse into a state of trauma. A relapse can be triggered by a person, place, or even a smell. Victims of trauma may be unintentionally re-traumatized by service providers or workplace practices. Service providers should be trauma-sensitive or mindful of the fact that most individuals have experienced many different types of trauma.





THE TRAUMA RESPONSE

Any interaction with a provider system has the potential to activate the trauma response. Trauma-informed care seeks to reduce the experience of threat (emotional regulation) and restore the capacity of the prefrontal cortex (thinking, problem solving, planning, inhibiting). When the trauma response is not activated, emotional regulation and rational thought and behavior improve.



A WELCOMING ENVIRONMENT

Trauma-informed care recognizes the prevalence of trauma and its impact on an individual's ability to access services and feel welcome in a new environment. Offering trauma-informed care not only requires a change in the way an organization offers services, but also in the environment the services are being offered in.

PROVIDING TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE

We offer trauma-informed services when we:

- Become knowledgeable about trauma.
- Participate in ongoing training on how to offer trauma-informed support.
- View trauma as a defining life experience.
- Acknowledge the extensive effects of trauma.
- Understand the different routes to recovery.
- Take seriously a survivor's trauma responses (e.g., anxiety, disengagement, numbness, trouble sleeping, increased sensitivity).
- Provide information to clients about trauma.
- Offer flexibility and choices as to how a individual can interact with a program or staff.
- Integrate trauma awareness into policies, procedures and standard practices.
- Incorporate resilience skill building into standard practices, procedures and policies.



Resources:

Washington County Educational Resources - Coming Soon

<http://www.co.washington.or.us/HHS/>

Manitoba Trauma Information Centre

<http://trauma-informed.ca/>

National Child Traumatic Stress Network

<http://www.nctsn.net/>

The Trauma Informed Care Project

<http://www.traumainformedcareproject.org/>

The Thrive Initiative

<http://www.thriveinitiative.org/>

Trauma Informed Oregon

<http://traumainformedoregon.org/>

SAMHSA

<http://www.samhsa.gov/>

