

## FOUNDATIONS OF A TRAUMA-INFORMED APPROACH

### *QRTP Infosheet: Issue One*

#### **What is trauma?**

According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Services Administration (SAMHSA) trauma results from an **event**, series of events, or set of circumstances that is **experienced** by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or threatening and that has lasting adverse **effects** on the individual's functioning and physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being

#### **What is the impact of trauma?**

Trauma can impact individuals in many ways, including socially, psychologically, academically, physiologically, and socioeconomically, and can impair physical health as well. The more an individual is exposed to a variety of stressful and potentially traumatic experiences, the greater the risk for chronic health conditions and health risk behaviors later in life.

#### **How can agencies become trauma-informed?**

A Trauma-informed approach acknowledges that understanding a youth or family's life experience and how that may be impacting their current behaviors and functioning is key to potentially improving engagement and outcomes. To be successful, trauma-informed care must be adopted at the organizational and clinical levels.

- All people at all levels of the organization or system have a basic **realization** about trauma and understand how trauma can affect families, groups, organizations, and communities as well as individuals.
- People, staff and volunteers in the organization or system are also able to **recognize** the signs of trauma.
- The program, organization, or system **responds** by applying the principles of a trauma-informed approach to all areas of functioning.
- A trauma-informed approach seeks to **resist re-traumatization** of residents as well as staff.

## ORGANIZATIONAL PRACTICES

- **Policy:** agency policies reflect trauma-informed care.
- **Training and Workforce Development:** Staff, volunteers and others receive initial and ongoing trauma and secondary stress training.
- **Trauma Screening:** Agency has timely trauma-informed cross-cultural screening available and accessible.
- **Trauma Assessment for Treatment Services:** Agency has timely trauma-informed cross-cultural assessment available and accessible.
- **Leadership and Governance:** Agency structure supports a Trauma Informed Approach.
- **Evaluation/Progress Monitoring/Quality Assurance:** There is a system in place that monitors the agency's progress in becoming trauma-informed.
- **Physical Environment:** The physical environment promotes a sense of safety, calming, and de-escalation for youth and staff.
- **Financing:** The agency's budget includes funding support for ongoing training on trauma and trauma-informed approaches for leadership and staff development.
- **Cross-sector Collaboration:** The organization provides services in-house or identifies community providers and referral agencies that have experience delivering evidence-based trauma services.
- **Engagement and Involvement:** Youth and/or family have the opportunity to provide feedback to the organization on quality improvement processes for better engagement and services.

## CLINICAL PRACTICES

- **Establish safety.**
- **Normalize symptoms,** youth with traumatic stress symptoms need to know that their symptoms are not unique and that their reactions are common to their experience(s).
- **Actively involve** youth and families in the treatment planning process.
- **Screen** and when necessary, assess for trauma-related symptoms and disorders in youth with histories of trauma.
- **Prevent retraumatization** generated by intervention and treatment practices and policies.
- **Train** all staff and volunteers in trauma-specific treatments.
- **Engage** referral sources and partner organizations.
- **Implement** youth-centered communication skills.
- **Collaboration and understanding** of professional roles.
- **Understanding** you own history
- Understanding **culture-specific** and **gender-specific** symptoms and syndromes and responsive services.
- Offer trauma-informed **peer support.**
- Identify and manage **trauma-related triggers.**
- Monitor and facilitate **stability.**
- Foster youth and family **engagement.**

## RESOURCES

[TIP 57 Trauma-Informed Care in Behavioral Health Services \(samhsa.gov\)](https://www.samhsa.gov/behavioral-health-services)

[SAMHSA's Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach](https://www.samhsa.gov/trauma-informed-care)