

TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE ACROSS SERVICE SYSTEMS

Traumatic events occur outside the realm of expected daily experiences, in contrast to the usual stresses and strains of our daily lives. They threaten one's physical and emotional well-being and basic sense of safety; they leave people feeling overwhelmed, fearful, helpless, and out of control. Some traumatic experiences are one-time events (e.g., natural disasters, violence, or injuries), while others are chronic and may accumulate over a lifetime (e.g. child abuse, domestic violence).

Chronic trauma such as violence and loss — particularly from an early age — can become toxic and have a serious impact on brain development. As traumatic stress accumulates, the physiological and psychological impact becomes more profound, resulting in a range of adverse responses including cognitive and emotional disorders, and problems forming healthy relationships.

Current research shows the profoundly high rates and impact of trauma on children, youth, and families across service sectors. These include:

- 93% of psychiatrically hospitalized adolescents have histories of physical and/or sexual and emotional trauma (Lipschitz et al., 1999).
- 90% of youth involved with juvenile justice reported having experienced at least one traumatic event (Ford, Hartman, Hawke, & Chapman, 2008).
- 83 to 91% of children and youth who live in dangerous neighborhoods have experienced trauma (National Center for Children in Poverty, 2007).
- 93% of homeless mothers had a history of trauma, and 81 % experienced multiple traumas. The most common trauma experienced was interpersonal violence (Hayes, Zonneville, Bassuk, 2013).

Given the potentially devastating impact of untreated trauma on individuals, families, and society, it is critical that service systems recognize and respond to the unique needs of trauma survivors. In the face of traumatic events and overwhelming tragedies, people are resilient. It may take time, but with the right supports and services, recovery is possible.

Providing trauma-informed care requires an organizational commitment to building the workplace knowledge, awareness, and skills needed to create service environments that support recovery and healing. Often this means adapting the practices, policies, and culture of an entire organization. Trauma-informed care is driven by a set of core principles integrated into all aspects of an organization, including physical and emotional safety and offering families choice, control, and autonomy over the circumstances in their lives. Given the high rates of trauma among families who are homeless, a trauma-informed approach is an essential component of quality care.



TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE RESOURCES

Tools

AIR's practice area in family homelessness has developed a curriculum, Trauma-Informed Care for Organizations, that includes a library of toolkits for use in homeless service settings, agencies serving women Veterans and children, and organizations serving displaced populations. Each toolkit includes an organizational self-assessment for evaluating current practices and adapting services and programs to respond to the needs of people affected by trauma and is adaptable to a range of service settings. The organizational self-assessment provides concrete benchmarks for what it means to provide trauma-informed care and includes universal strategies as well as special considerations for unique populations.

Trauma-Informed Organizational Toolkit:

A roadmap for becoming trauma-informed that includes an organizational self-assessment with concrete guidelines for providing trauma-informed care and a step-by-step process for adopting a trauma-informed approach across organizations serving families who have experienced traumatic stress.

www.familyhomelessness.org/media/90.pdf

Trauma-Informed Care for Women Veterans Experiencing Homelessness:

A Guide for Service Providers:

This tool builds provider's capacity to understand the experiences and needs of women Veterans, and includes an organizational self-assessment (provider and consumer version) with guidelines for providing trauma-informed care to women Veterans, and resources for service providers.

www.familyhomelessness.org/media/277.pdf

Trauma-Informed Care for Displaced Populations:

A Guide for Community-Based Service Providers:

This curriculum was developed to build the capacity of local community-based organizations working with children and families who have been displaced- by war, natural disasters, or due to threats due to political, economic or personal persecution. This tool helps programs to implement trauma-informed programs and practices focused on culturally appropriate family health and well-being strategies that take into account the unique aspects of pre and post migration histories.

www.familyhomelessness.org/media/405.pdf



Training and Consultation

AIR supports organizations across the country in adopting a trauma-informed approach by offering training on trauma and trauma-informed care and ongoing consultation to organizations incorporating trauma-informed practices. We specialize in guiding individuals and organizations that serve people who have experienced trauma from homelessness, domestic violence, extreme poverty, natural disasters, and combat. Our trainings are both Web-based and in-person and are tailored to meet the needs of individual organizations.

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