

Become a Trauma-Informed Organization

The Pillars of Creating Trauma-Informed Policy

I. Make a Bold Statement of Support

Explain why your organization is shifting toward a more trauma-informed approach and the impact it will have on the people you serve. Identify a point person within the organization to lead and oversee the implementation.

II. Ensure a Shared Understanding

Update Your Policy Definitions to include:

- trauma
- trauma-informed organization
- vicarious trauma/ secondary trauma
- re-traumatization
- equity
- vulnerable populations
- trauma-informed services
- evidenced-based/ evidence-informed

Shifting your organization's culture toward a more trauma-informed approach starts with making policy changes. We've put together a list of policy considerations to get you started. This list isn't comprehensive, but we hope it helps you become more trauma-informed in your programs, services and agency culture.

Components for All Organizations

• Review the Policies You Have

Create a defined process to make sure trauma-informed approaches are an essential part your organization's written policies and protocols. Consider creating a committee to review agency policies on a regular basis. This also includes making sure all HR documents are written with a trauma-informed lens.

• Find Out How Trauma-Informed You Are Now

Invite everyone within your organization to use a self-assessment tool to help identify where you're at now and how your agency can grow.

• Keep the Work Environment Safe for Everyone

Make sure your physical work environment is welcoming and safe for both your employees, and the people you serve. A safe work environment should not pose risk to their physical or psychological safety.

• Start from Day One of Employment

Use trauma-informed principles to hire and train your staff. Make sure these same practices are used during staff supervision and evaluation processes.

• Commit to Educating your Staff

Create a training plan for how your agency will teach staff about trauma and trauma-informed care. This may include short-term and long-term plans with refreshers.

- **Prevent Secondary Traumatic Stress**
Support staff who have histories of trauma and those experiencing secondary traumatic stress through specific trainings, reflective supervision, promotion of self-care practices, safety procedures, and the creation of a supportive work environment.
- **Promote Equity**
Develop policies and practices that are equitable and allow for full participation of staff and service recipients.
- **Respect Cultural and Linguistic Diversity**
Commit to culturally sensitive and responsive practices that recognize and respect the diverse cultural beliefs, practices, languages and communication needs of staff and service recipients.
- **Provide Support for Crises**
Develop a protocol to address the crises experienced by service recipients as well as by staff. This could include:
 - individual crises (e.g., self-harm, suicidal thinking, aggression towards others, de-escalation, safety planning)
 - societal crises (e.g., natural disasters, active shooter responses)
 - a process for staff debriefing and support post-crises.
- **Work with your Partners**
Join with community organizations to establish a continuum of trauma-informed care. Build a shared understanding of trauma and trauma-informed principles that link service recipients to trauma-sensitive services.
- **Reflect and Revise, if Needed**
Make sure your programs have an understanding of trauma and appropriate trauma-oriented methods by conducting ongoing assessment, tracking and monitoring of the organization's implementation of trauma-informed principles and practices. An organizational self-assessment tool can help.
- **Invest in Trauma-Informed Approaches**
Provide funding for
 - staff training
 - facility improvements
 - establishment of peer support
 - provision of evidenced-supported screening
 - assessment
 - treatments
- **Create a Committee for Change**
Establish a committee of champions to lead the change process for the agency. The committee should meet on a regular basis to identify priority areas of focus, create and monitor action steps, and suggest changes to the organizational plan. This may also include review of policies.

For Direct Care Providers Only

- **Screen for Trauma**
Provide trauma screening for all service recipients, and be prepared to provide follow-up and referrals as needed. This may include procedures for linking to appropriate trauma informed provider resources if it is not within the agency's scope to conduct such screenings.
- **Assess Trauma**
Provide a trauma specific assessment for service recipients when a screen is positive. If trauma-specific assessments are not in your agency's scope of practice, develop procedures to link to appropriate trauma-informed providers.
- **Treat Trauma**
Provide trauma-specific treatment for service recipients who need it. Treatment should be provided by clinicians with appropriate qualifications, training and expertise. Use evidence-informed or evidenced-based practices. If this is not within your agency's scope to provide, link service recipients to qualified trauma informed treatment providers.
- **Create Standards**
Develop standards and expectations that will help your program and staff meet policy requirements and improve quality of services.
- **Make your policy accessible**
Ensure that all staff have easy access to written policies and procedures, standards and expectations.

Sources

For more information on policies and procedures related to trauma informed organizations and trauma informed care, the following resources may be of assistance:

1. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration [SAMHSA] *Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach*: https://ncsacw.samhsa.gov/userfiles/files/SAMHSA_Trauma.pdf
2. SAMHSA *Treatment Improvement Protocol (TIP) series 57 Trauma-Informed Care in Behavioral Health Services*: <https://store.samhsa.gov/product/TIP-57-Trauma-Informed-Care-in-Behavioral-Health-Services/SMA14-4816>
3. Coordinated Care Services, Inc. *Trauma Responsive Understanding Self-Assessment Tool*: <https://www.ccsi.org/Pages/TRUST>
4. Falloot, R. D. & Harris, M. (2009). *Creating cultures of trauma-informed care (CCTIC): A self-assessment and planning protocol*. Washington, DC: Community Connections, 2009. Retrieved from: <https://www.theannainstitute.org/CCTICSELFASSPP.pdf>
5. Guarino, K., Soares, P., Konnath, K., Clervil, R., & Bassuk, E. (2009). *Trauma-informed organizational toolkit*. Rockville, MD: Center for Mental Health Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration; the Daniels Fund; the National Child Traumatic Stress Network; and the W. K. Kellogg Foundation. Retrieved from: https://www.air.org/sites/default/files/downloads/report/Trauma-Informed_Organizational_Toolkit_0.pdf

6. Jennings, A. (2009). *Criteria for building a trauma-informed mental health service system*. Retrieved on May 21, 2013, from <https://www.theannainstitute.org/CBTIMHSS.pdf>
7. National Child Traumatic Stress Network: <https://www.nctsn.org>
8. The Institute on Trauma and Trauma-Informed Care. University at Buffalo: <http://socialwork.buffalo.edu/social-research/institutes-centers/institute-on-trauma-and-trauma-informed-care.html>
9. UB Buffalo ITTIC January 2019 Trauma Informed Organizational Manual*
10. Michigan.gov Trauma Policy Framework: https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mdhhs/Trauma_Policy_Framework_Guide_576279_7.pdf

*Available to participants of Trauma Champion Training only, not intended for use by the public