Journey to Trauma-Informed Systems

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Origins of Trauma Informed Child Welfare

We were actually doing it before we know what to call it
• Good Child Welfare practice
• Understanding of adult and child PTSD
• Child Advocacy Center movement
• Trauma Mental Health
• Evidence Based Practice
• Substance Abuse Treatment

Draft Definition of Trauma-Informed System

A trauma-informed child welfare system is one in which all parties involved recognize and respond to the varying impact of traumatic stress on children, caregivers and those who have contact with the system. Programs and organizations within the system infuse this knowledge, awareness and skills into their organizational cultures, policies, and practices. They act in collaboration, using the best available science, to facilitate and support resiliency and recovery.

- CTISP National Advisory Committee
What is a Trauma-Informed Child-Serving System?

A Trauma-Informed Child-Serving System understands:

1) The potential impact of childhood and adult traumatic stress on the people served by the system;

2) How the system can either help mitigate the impact of trauma or inadvertently add new traumatic experiences;

3) how to promote factors related to child and family resiliency after trauma;

4) the potential impact of the current and past trauma on the families with whom we interact;

5) how adult trauma may interfere with adult caregivers' ability to care and support their child;

6) the impact of vicarious trauma on the service system workforce;

7) that exposure to trauma is part of the job in many public and provide service system.
Call for Trauma-Informed Child-Serving Systems

What realistic and practical actions can be taken at all levels of the system to make meaningful use of that understanding to make it better for the children, families, and workforce.

Weaving Trauma Informed Systems into Fabric of Child Welfare

Developmentally Informed
Culturally Informed
Evidence Informed
Trauma Informed

Safety & Risk
Permanency
Well being

Child Welfare Practice Model

Agency
Agency mission, values, and core values
Underlying theoretical framework rationale for the practice model
Practice principles
Standards of professional practice
Staff development and retention
Valuation of desired outcomes
Evaluation of practice model impact on outcomes

Supervision
Providing staff support and case consultation
Monitoring staff performance and activities
Addressing secondary traumatic stress
Monitoring worker readiness to practice model
Essential Elements of Trauma-Informed Child Welfare Practice

1. Maximize the child’s sense of safety.
   - Concept of triggers
2. Utilize comprehensive assessment of the child’s trauma experiences and their impact on the child’s development and behavior to guide services when appropriate.
3. Assist children in reducing overwhelming emotion.
4. Address any impact of trauma and subsequent changes in the child’s behavior, development, and relationships.
5. Help children make new meaning of their trauma history and current experiences.

Essential Elements of Trauma-Informed Practice

6. Coordinate services with other agencies.
7. How and when to apply the right evidence based treatments.
8. Support and promote positive and stable relationships in the life of the child.
9. Provide support and guidance to child’s family and caregivers.
10. Recognize many of the adults caregivers you interact with are trauma victims as well—trauma in childhood, trauma last week.
11. Manage professional and personal stress.

Going from Good Practice to Trauma-Informed Practice

- Initial foster care placement
- Developing family service plan
- Providing services to and parent
- Transition
- Planning for reunification
**Trauma-Informed Staff Preparation**

- Training about traumatic stress, impact on behavior and development (child and adult)
- Training about secondary traumatic stress, systems in place to reduce its impact, promote self-care
- Training on trauma screening and identification
- Training/guidance on how to work with foster parents on identifying child's triggers, understanding and managing challenging behavior
- Helping children and parents understand their reactions/behaviors
- Others?

**Trauma-Informed Stakeholder Preparation**

- Introduction to child traumatic stress and elements of a trauma-informed system
- Training on trauma assessment and service planning for mental health providers (child and adult)
- Training on evidence-based trauma interventions for mental health providers (child and adult)
- Collaborating with other service systems (e.g., substance abuse treatment) to ensure that services integrate “trauma lens”
- Others?

**Trauma-Informed Foster Parent Preparation and Support**

- Training about traumatic stress, impact on behavior and development
- Training about secondary traumatic stress, how to reduce its impact, promote self-care
- Commitment to avoid placement disruptions whenever possible, reduce additional traumas to child
- Ongoing support around identifying triggers and managing challenging behavior
- Others?
**Trauma-Informed Initial Foster Care Placement**

- Foster parent and caseworker get information on child’s past traumatic experiences
- Foster parent provided with information needed to make the child feel psychologically safe, ideally directly from birth parent
- Assist foster parent and birth parent to develop partnership around supporting the child’s physical and psychological safety
- Minimize disruptions to child’s social systems (e.g., school, existing services)
- Others?

**Trauma-Informed Family Service Plan Development**

- Child is screened for trauma by child welfare staff, if appropriate receives trauma assessment through mental health provider/system
- Comprehensive information about child’s trauma history/exposure gathered from family, past and current service providers, etc., shared between child welfare and mental health staff
- Comprehensive information about parent’s trauma history/exposure is gathered, shared between child welfare and mental health staff
- Develop service plan to meet specific needs of child and family
- Others?

**Trauma-Informed Service Provision**

- Children should be referred to trauma-informed mental health services when appropriate and available
- Parents should be referred to trauma-informed mental health services when appropriate and available
- Other services (e.g., tutoring, mentoring, vocational preparation) provided to child should recognize their developmental stage(s) and needs
- Services provided to parents (e.g., parent management training) should address issues around child and parent trauma
- Foster care staff should be responsive to concerns raised by foster parent, intervening early and effectively
- Others?
**Trauma-Informed Visitation**

- Prepare child for visitation, what will and won’t happen (e.g., won’t be going home with parent today)
- Prepare parent for visitation, how to manage their reactions and their children’s reactions
- Prepare foster parent for children’s reactions post-visitiation
- Others?

**Trauma-Informed Reunification Planning**

- Parents should understand how child’s trauma history and experience of being in care may impact their behavior with parent
- Parent and child should get support during and after the transition back home
- Others?

**Core Components of Trauma-Informed, Evidence-Based Treatment**

- Assessment guides treatment planning
- Built on a strong therapeutic relationship
- Education about normal responses to trauma (called Psycho Ed)
- Parent/Caregiver support, joint therapy with child and parent/caregiver, or parent training
- Helping the child build skills in expressing and regulating emotions
Core Components of Trauma-Informed, Evidence-Based Treatment, cont'd

- Teaching skills about how to manage trauma reminders - Strategies that allow exposure to traumatic memories, reminders, and feelings in tolerable doses so that they can be mastered and integrated into the child's experience.
- Personal safety training and other important empowerment activities.
- Building on the strengths and resilience and achieving closure.

*Interventions such as the Evidence Based “Trauma-Focused Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT)” utilize these components as a standard part of treatment.

Institute for Healthcare Improvement Model

Environments
- Community/ Families
- Organizations
- Departments Within Organizations
  - Social Workers, Investigators, Therapists, Medical Professionals, etc.
  - and Families

Resources

- [www.nctsn.net](http://www.nctsn.net) (National Child Traumatic Stress Network)
- [www.ChadwickCenter.org](http://www.ChadwickCenter.org) (Chadwick Center)
- [http://www.chadwickcenter.org/CTISP/ctisp](http://www.chadwickcenter.org/CTISP/ctisp) (Chadwick Trauma-Informed-Systems Project)
- [www.musc.edu/tfcbt/](http://www.musc.edu/tfcbt/) (TF-CBT on-line)
- [www.cebc4cw.org](http://www.cebc4cw.org) (Online Evidence-Based Practice Resource Designed for Public Child Welfare Professionals- With Support from California Department of Social Services)