Building Trauma-Informed Schools

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American Institutes for Research

American Institutes for Research

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The National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments
Work Includes

- TA Center for the field as well as specific grantees
- Safe and Supportive Schools Grants (11 states (2010-2015))
- Project Prevent (22 local school districts (2014-2018))
- Website hosts Federal Resource Compendium; State Regulations/Laws on Discipline; State Policies on Bullying Prevention; School Climate Surveys
- TA – Higher Education (resources, newsletter)
- High profile products for the field: “Safe Place”; Root Cause Analysis Tool Kit (discipline); Practice Guide for National School Climate Survey; online training modules; archived webinars

Project Prevent Grants

Project Prevent grants to 22 local educational agencies (LEAs) to increase their capacity both to identify, assess, and serve students exposed to pervasive violence, helping to ensure that affected students are offered mental health services for trauma or anxiety; support conflict resolution programs; and implement other school–based violence prevention strategies in order to reduce the likelihood that these students will later commit violent acts.

LEA will offer students: (1) access to school-based counseling services, or referrals to community-based counseling services, for assistance in coping with trauma or anxiety; (2) school-based social and emotional supports for students to help address the effects of violence; (3) conflict resolution and other school-based strategies to prevent future violence; and (4) a safer and improved school environment, which may include, among others, activities to decrease the incidence of harassment, bullying, violence, gang involvement, and substance use.
Safe and Supportive Schools Grants 2010-2015

• Goals of the grant
  − Focus on safety
  − Requiring data-driven decision making and transparency
  − Strengthening school districts and improving academic, health, and behavioral outcomes for struggling students

• GPRA reporting requirements
  − % of student-reported alcohol use in past 30 days
  − % of student-reported harassment or bullying on school property
  − Improvement or worsening of school safety scores
  − # of suspensions for violence without injury on school property

Quick Stats

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grantee</th>
<th>districts served</th>
<th>schools served</th>
<th>students served</th>
<th>% FRPL eligible</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Arizona</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>42,512</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. California</td>
<td>26</td>
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<td>3. Iowa</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>21</td>
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<td>4. Kansas</td>
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<td>5. Louisiana</td>
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<td>6. Maryland</td>
<td>12</td>
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<td>7. Michigan</td>
<td>17</td>
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<td>8. South Carolina</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>20,366</td>
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<td>9. Tennessee</td>
<td>20</td>
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<td>72,622</td>
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<td>10. West Virginia</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>12,887</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. Wisconsin</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>59,364</td>
<td>58</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>438</td>
<td>457,405</td>
<td>Average 54%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What Was the Impact of S3?

- Results for GPRA Measures: Cross-Grantees

<p>|</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alcohol Use</th>
<th>Harassment or Bullying</th>
<th>School Safety Score</th>
<th>Expulsions</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>77%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-18%</td>
<td>-37%</td>
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<tr>
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<td>-80%</td>
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<tr>
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<td>80%</td>
<td>100%</td>
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</tr>
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</table>

Did S3 work?

- A large majority of schools improved on all GPRA measures
- Within-state findings demonstrated the promise of school climate to affect student outcomes (e.g. student academic achievement, attendance, and disciplinary actions)
  "We have come a long way since 2010, especially in persuading people about why school climate is important. People are paying attention to students, and students and staff are excited about being in school. We started with a focus on safety, and ended with high levels of engagement and improved relationships."

School Climate: What is it?

- Reflects how members of the school community experience a school
- Includes factors that serve as conditions for learning
- Fosters social, physical, and emotional safety
- Provides support that enables students and staff to realize high behavioral and academic standards
- Encourages and maintains respectful, trusting, and caring relationships throughout the school community.
Two New Resources

- ED's new school climate resources include:
  - Online school climate survey portal—the ED School Climate Surveys (EDSCLS) that includes survey download and data reporting features
  - Web-based School Climate Improvement Resource Package to enable school climate survey use, data analysis, stakeholder engagement, and implementation of local school climate improvement processes
  - ED Press Release:

OSHS School Climate Model

- Middle grade (5-8) students
- High school students
- Parents/Guardians
- Teachers
- Non-instructional staff (including principals)
- Can be administered at school, district, or state level.
- Allows for the local storage of data, accessible only to authorized users.
- Multiple surveys (i.e., students, instructional staff, non-instructional staff, and parents/guardians) can be open at the same time
- During data collection, administrators can see how many respondents have finished the survey using the “survey status reports” feature.
• Includes reporting tool for providing
  - item-level frequencies
  - domain-level scores and topic-level sub-scores.
• Reporting tool can compare scores by school, grade level, race, and gender.
• Scores can be compared to national benchmarks.
Please share one learning goal for attending today's session.
How do you become a trauma-sensitive school?

NCSSLE Trauma-Sensitive Schools Training Package

Understanding Trauma and Its Impact
- Navigable PDF
- Designed for all school staff (e.g., teachers, administrators, student services and support staff)
- Slides and script for an introduction to presentation that can be used by leaders for professional development.

Leading Trauma-Sensitive Schools
- Online, self-paced module.
- Designed for school leaders.
- Offers leaders a vision for what universal trauma-sensitivity looks like and a process for implementing this approach.

Building Trauma-Sensitive Schools
- Online, self-paced module.
- Designed for all staff (e.g., teachers, administrators, student services and support staff)
- Offers specific strategies for how staff in different roles can help to build a trauma-sensitive school using activities and discussion questions.

Today

1. Types and prevalence of trauma
2. Why are schools addressing trauma?
3. What are trauma-sensitive schools?
4. How do you become a trauma-informed school?
What is Trauma?

An experience that is perceived as physically or emotionally harmful or life threatening, overwhelms our ability to cope, and causes intense reactions such as fear, helplessness, and loss of control.

Types and Prevalence of Trauma

- **Natural Disasters**: Hurricanes, fires, floods
- **Human Caused Disasters**: accidents, wars, displacement
- **Terrorism**
- **Community Violence**: robberies, shootings, assaults
- **School Violence**: threats, shootings, bullying
- **Interpersonal Violence**: abuse, neglect, domestic violence
- **Poverty**
- **Homelessness**
- Sudden or anticipated loss of loved one

**Historical Trauma**: The collective and cumulative trauma experienced by a particular group across generations still suffering the effects.

Examples include: violent colonization, dislocation, and assimilation policies like forced placement in boarding schools; and experiences of slavery, segregation, racism and discrimination. The effects of trauma may continue to impact communities in the form of issues such as violence, substance abuse, mental health issues, mistrust of systems, including schools, the need for self-protection, and feelings of low self-worth or aggression.
### Types and Prevalence of Trauma

#### Racial Trauma or Race-based Traumatic Stress:
Potentially traumatic experiences related to race may include:
- Direct experiences of racial harassment including threats of harm or injury and being humiliated;
- Witnessing racial violence towards others such as hate crimes, violence by law enforcement;
- Experiencing discrimination and institutional racism. Includes “racial microaggressions” – brief, everyday verbal or behavioral exchanges that intentionally or unintentionally that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial messages or insults. Examples: racial slurs, being followed in a store, communications that convey rudeness and demean a person’s racial identity, exchanges that negate or deny thoughts, feelings or experiential reality of a person of color (Sue, 2007).

#### Complex Trauma:
The term complex trauma refers to trauma that:
1. begins in childhood during key stages of development;
2. continues over time;
3. often occurs within a child’s family where their primary caretaker is either a source of threat or unable to support, nurture, or protect a child from threat; and
4. leads to immediate and long-term difficulties in many areas. Examples include chronic interpersonal violence in the form of physical, emotional, and sexual abuse or witnessing domestic violence, as well as ongoing neglect and other forms of violent victimization or loss without adequate adult support to manage these experiences.

This type of trauma has particularly negative effects on relationship-building, behavior, and learning in school.

#### Activity: Prevalence of trauma
In community samples, more than two thirds of children in the U.S. report experiencing a traumatic event by age 16, such as a serious accident, natural disaster, or experiencing or witnessing violence.

Approximately two out of three children have been exposed to violence, crime, and abuse in their homes or communities.

49% of youth experienced two or more types of victimization.

More than 1 in 10 youth report 5 or more direct exposures to violence.

Certain groups of youth are higher risk of trauma exposure due to historical factors and/or current life experiences.

- Youth of color ages 12 to 19 are victims of violent crime more than their white peers.
- Youth of color are 3x more likely to be victims of a robbery.
- 5x more likely to be victims of a homicide.
- Youth of color living in poverty are at increased risk for trauma, particularly violent trauma.
- African American youth living in urban, low-income communities are at increased risk for trauma, particularly violent trauma.

American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) children are at 2.5 times greater risk of experiencing trauma than their peers.

Adolescent Latinas are at 1.5 times greater risk of exposure to trauma than their peers.

Other groups at increased risk of trauma exposure include children and adolescents with disabilities, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning (LGBTQ) youth, refugee youth, and youth living in poverty.
How would you describe your level of awareness of the rates and types of trauma in the lives of the students in your schools?

- High level of awareness
- Moderate level of awareness
- Very little awareness

How would you describe your school’s awareness of the rates and types of trauma in the lives of the students among school staff?

- High level of awareness
- Moderate level of awareness
- Very little awareness

What types of trauma are most common among the students and families in your school?
Why are schools addressing trauma?

Video: Through Our Eyes: Children, Violence, and Trauma

https://youtu.be/z8vZd0a2KPM

Trauma: A Public Health Issue

- 98% of female offenders have experienced trauma, with younger age.
- 96% of adolescent psychiatric inpatient have history of exposure to trauma.
- 93% of homeless mothers have a history of interpersonal trauma.
- 90% of juvenile justice-involved youth have experienced trauma, often multiple traumas from an early age.
- 75% of adults in substance abuse treatment report history of trauma.
- 70% of children in foster care have experienced multiple traumas.
Factors that Influence Prevalence and Impact of Trauma

- **Individual factors** – age, biophysical state, mental health, temperament, education, gender, coping style, social economic status, cognitive and maturational development.
- **Interpersonal factors** – family, peer interactions, parent/family mental health, parents' history of trauma, social network.
- **Cultural factors** – historical and current experiences of collective trauma among various cultural groups, collective or individualistic norms, cultural subsystem norms.
- **Community, school, organizational factors** – neighborhood quality, quality of school system, work environment, quality and accessibility of social services, community socioeconomic status, employment rates.
- **Societal factors** – laws, state and federal economic and social policies, media, societal norms, judicial system.
- **Period of time in history** – societal attitudes, changes in understanding about trauma.

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**Goal:**
**Trauma-Informed Systems**

*Systems that recognize* the impact of trauma and *promote* resilience and healing

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**Why are schools addressing trauma?**

1. The impact of unaddressed trauma on schools is significant.
2. There is increased risk of harm to all when trauma is overlooked.
3. Schools play a critical role in fostering resilience.
Impact of unaddressed trauma on:
- Youth
- Families
- Staff
- Schools

Why are schools addressing trauma?
Impact of trauma on students

- Fear, anxiety, and worry about continued danger
- Intense mood swings, irritability, and aggression
- Feelings of sadness, guilt, shame, anger, responsibility, embarrassment
- Physical symptoms (headaches, stomachaches, change in eating/sleeping)
- Concern about how others will view them
- Decline in school performance
- Increased risk-taking (alcohol/drug use, fights, self-harm)
- Increased thoughts/comments about death or dying
- Withdrawal from family, peers, activities

Human Stress Response

"THINKING BRAIN" checks things out to confirm the threat and goes offline.
"EMOTIONAL BRAIN" takes over to initiate the release of hormones (adrenaline, cortisol) that help us to respond (fight or flight) and recover.

The amygdala (smoke detector) senses threat and sets off the alarm.
**Why are schools addressing trauma?**

**Impact of trauma on students**

**Triggers:** Reminders of past traumatic experiences that automatically cause the body to react as if the traumatic event is happening again in that moment.

- Loud noises
- Physical touch
- Authority figures
- Hand or body gestures that appear threatening
- Changes in routine
- Confusing or chaotic environments
- Emergency vehicles or personnel
- Anniversary times
- Loss

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**Why are schools addressing trauma?**

**Impact of trauma on students**

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**Why are schools addressing trauma?**

**Impact of trauma on students**

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**Why are schools addressing trauma?**

**Impact of trauma on students**

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- **Relationships:** Difficulty trusting others and forming safe, healthy relationships.
- **Emotional Regulation:** Difficulty identifying, expressing, and managing feelings. Always on alert for threat.
- **Behavior:** Easily set off by others or the environment (especially if reminded of previous trauma). Responses are extreme ranging from aggression to withdrawal. Trouble following rules or guidelines; reactive towards authority figures.
Why are schools addressing trauma?
Impact of trauma on students

• Cognition: More difficulties with activities related to learning. Traumatized youth have poorer academic performance, increased risk of failing, poorer test scores, and higher rates of referral to special education.

• Dissociation: Disconnection from the present moment as a way to manage overwhelming stress. Blocking out difficult thoughts and feelings often means blocking out most feelings, including positive emotions.

• Self-Concept and Future Orientation: Low self-esteem and poor self-image are common. Lacking a sense of hope and control over the future making goal setting seem pointless.

Why are schools addressing trauma?
Impact of trauma on students

• Physical symptoms such as headaches, stomachaches, and decline in self-care.
• Intense feelings of fear, anxiety, and concern for their safety throughout the school day.
• Difficulty identifying and controlling feelings while at school.
• Angry or aggressive outbursts in the classroom or other school spaces.
• Desire to withdraw from peers and teachers.
• Difficulty paying attention and learning.
• Trouble building positive relationships with peers and school staff.
• More time out of class.
• Increased absences.
• Increased risk of failing, poor test scores.
• More likely to be suspended or expelled for behavioral issues.
• Higher rates of referral to special education.

Why are schools addressing trauma?
Impact of trauma on students

• Youth victimization increases likelihood of becoming a perpetrator of violent crimes including intimate partner violence; drug use; and property crimes.
• 90% of juvenile justice-involved youth have experienced trauma, often multiple traumas from an early age.
• 96% of adolescent psychiatric inpatients have histories of exposure to trauma.
• More than 70% of adolescents in substance abuse treatment have a history of trauma exposure.
Parents with histories of and/or current exposure to trauma are at increased risk for a number of challenges including:

- Substance abuse, depression, and PTSD.
- Negative or unsafe interpersonal patterns such as abuse, neglect, and domestic violence that become the source of trauma for youth.
- Difficulty trusting others and building relationships with community providers and educators, which impacts their child’s ability to trust other adults.
- Feelings of embarrassment, shame, fear, or guilt about getting outside support for their children that may result in negative interactions with providers/educators.
- Mistrust of systems that have contributed to traumatic experiences.
Consider current societal and institutional factors and inequalities that increase risk of trauma. For example, among families of color:

- A disproportionate number of children and families live in poverty.
- Living in poverty is accompanied by stressors that can be traumatic and can increase risk for multiple exposures to trauma, particularly violent trauma.
- Ongoing experiences of racial trauma/Race-based traumatic stress impact communities and families.
- There is a lack of culturally-competent services.
- Mistrust in social institutions (schools, education, government) impacts help-seeking.

Why are schools addressing trauma?
Impact of trauma on parents

Consider current societal and institutional factors and inequalities that increase risk of trauma. For example, among families of color:

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- Living in poverty is accompanied by stressors that can be traumatic and can increase risk for multiple exposures to trauma, particularly violent trauma.
- Ongoing experiences of racial trauma/Race-based traumatic stress impact communities and families.
- There is a lack of culturally-competent services.
- Mistrust in social institutions (schools, education, government) impacts help-seeking.

Discussion: Trauma and parents

- How do you see trauma affecting parents and guardians of students in your schools?
- How do you support parents/guardians who experience trauma?

Why are schools addressing trauma?
Impact of trauma on school staff

Direct exposure to trauma: School staff may be directly exposed to trauma in their families, communities or on the job (e.g., threat of violence, assault, witnessing violence in school, such as a school shooting or loss of a student or colleague).

- Increased anxiety about safety.
- Reduced energy and focus.
- Trouble regulating emotions.
- Difficulty managing their reactions to students and parents.
- Diminished capacity to maintain positive teacher-student and teacher-parent relationships.
- Poor attendance or work performance.
Why are schools addressing trauma?

Secondary Traumatic Stress / Compassion Fatigue: The presence of post-trauma symptoms caused by at least one indirect exposure to traumatic material.

- Increased anxiety and concern about safety.
- Intrusive, negative thoughts and images related to their students’ traumatic stories.
- Fatigue and physical complaints.
- Feeling numb or detached from students and colleagues.
- Diminished concentration and difficulty with decision making.
- Desire to physically or emotionally withdraw or avoid people or situations that trigger difficult thoughts and emotions.

Vicarious Trauma: Changes in a helper’s inner experience over time as a result of working with traumatized groups. Includes alterations in how people view themselves, others, and the world.

- Increased difficulty leaving work at work.
- Irritability with co-workers and students.
- Diminished energy and patience.
- Feeling powerless or hopeless about students and the work.
- Ooerer work performance.
- Doubts about capabilities and impact.
- Questions about the meaning/purpose of the work.

Discussion: Trauma and staff

- How do you see trauma affecting school staff (including your own experiences)?
- What support is available to staff who have experienced trauma, either directly or indirectly?
- What follow-up is available for staff?
- What is your role in that support?
Impact of trauma on school culture and conditions for learning

- Students exposed to trauma are more likely to escalate and act out.
- Adults may become increasingly crisis-driven, reactive, and punitive to maintain control.
- Difficult to maintain a safe environment most conductive to learning.

Why are schools addressing trauma?

Impact of trauma on schools

Why are schools addressing trauma?

Risk for harm

- Adults may misunderstand, mislabel, or misdiagnose student behaviors.

Schools risk re-traumatizing students by creating environments and situations that mirror or replicate other trauma that students have experienced (e.g., harsh, punitive discipline, disrespectful interactions, chaotic environments).

Why are schools addressing trauma?

Benefits

Resilience: Positive, adaptive response to significant adversity.

Schools can protect children from the negative impact of stress. Protective factors that buffer the impact of stress include:

- Healthy, supportive relationships with caring adults.
- Learning environments that are safe, engaging, and supportive.
- Strong social and emotional skills such as problem-solving, self-awareness, self-regulation, and relationship skills that can be supported in school settings.
Why are schools addressing trauma?

Benefits

Schools that are addressing trauma universally report positive effects for students and schools that include:

- Decrease in office referrals.
- Drop in suspensions.
- Improvements in test scores.

What are trauma-sensitive schools?

5 minute video: A San Diego Principal Takes on Trauma

https://youtu.be/dcvQb9e-VLU
What are trauma-sensitive schools?

“A trauma-sensitive school is one in which all students feel safe, welcomed, and supported, and where addressing trauma’s impact on learning on a school-wide basis is at the center of its educational mission.”

Cole et al., 2013

Multi-Tiered Approach

Tier 3
- Individualized, trauma-specific mental health services (e.g., Cognitive Behavioral Therapy in Schools).
- Targeted services for some students exposed to trauma and at risk for further impact (e.g., Trauma-Focused Coping in Schools).

Tier 2
- Universal approach to addressing trauma where all aspects of the school environment are informed by an understanding of trauma and designed to support healing and resilience. Requires changes to policies, procedures, and culture.

Trauma Sensitivity
- Universal approach to addressing trauma where all aspects of the school environment are informed by an understanding of trauma and designed to support healing and resilience. Requires changes to policies, procedures, and culture.

A universal approach

• Ensures support for all.
• Enhances the identification of students who need additional services.
• Creates an environment more likely to support and sustain Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions (e.g., therapeutic supports, counseling).
• Supports and adds to other efforts with shared principles and complimentary practices (e.g., restorative practices, positive behavioral supports, social and emotional learning, school emergency planning).
What we see and react to: Events & Crises

10%

The Strategy: Systems Change

School culture: Underlying values and beliefs about teaching and learning “The way we do things here.”

Degree of trust, communication, flexibility, openness to change.

What are trauma-sensitive schools?
Core principles

Core principles of trauma-sensitive schools

- Understand trauma and its impact.
- Believe that healing for students happens in safe, supportive, positive relationships among and between staff, students, and families.
- Ensure physical and emotional safety.
- Support choice, control, and empowerment for students, staff, and families.
- Strive for cultural competence.
- View students holistically.
- Use a collaborative approach across staff, and between staff and students and families.

Discussion: Core principles

Which core principles of a trauma-sensitive school are easiest to uphold day-to-day?

- Understand trauma and its impact.
- Believe that healing for students happens in safe, supportive, positive relationships among and between staff, students, and families.
- Ensure physical and emotional safety.
- Support choice, control, and empowerment for students, staff, and families.
- Strive for cultural competence.
- View students holistically.
- Use a collaborative approach across staff, and between staff and students and families.
Discussion: Core principles

Which core principles of a trauma-sensitive school are the most difficult to uphold day-to-day?

- Understand trauma and its impact.
- Believe that healing for students happens in safe, supportive, positive relationships among and between staff, students, and families.
- Ensure physical and emotional safety.
- Support choice, control, and empowerment for students, staff, and families.
- Strive for culture competence.
- View students holistically.
- Use a collaborative approach across staff, and between staff and students and families.

What are trauma-sensitive schools?

Shifting perspectives from traditional to trauma-sensitive

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<thead>
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<th>Traditional Perspective</th>
<th>Trauma-Sensitive Perspective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Students' challenging behaviors are the result of individual deficits (e.g., what's wrong with you?)</td>
<td>• Students' challenging behaviors may be ways of coping with a traumatic experiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Understands difficult student behaviors as purposeful and personal.</td>
<td>• Understands difficult student behaviors may be automatic responses to stress.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Focuses on changing the individual to &quot;fix&quot; the problem.</td>
<td>• Focuses on changing the environment to support the individual.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Adults need to uphold authority and control with students and families.</td>
<td>• Adults need to offer flexibility and choice to students and families.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Punitive discipline works.</td>
<td>• Positive reinforcement works.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Support for students exposed to trauma is provided by counseling professionals.</td>
<td>• Support for students exposed to trauma is the shared responsibility of all staff.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Scenario: Comparing perspectives

Scenario: Joseph, a student, arrives to school late and looks unkempt and tired. When he enters his first period class, he puts his head down on the desk. The teacher asks him to sit up and respond to a math problem she has put on the board. He refuses to comply with her request. He gets out of his seat, kicks over the trash can and a chair, curses at his teacher, and slams the door behind him as he leaves the classroom without permission.
Poll

How difficult is it for a school to shift from a traditional to a trauma-sensitive perspective?

- Very difficult.
- Somewhat difficult.
- Not difficult at all.

Poll

Where is your school in the process of becoming “trauma-informed”?

- Concept is very new
- Student services staff are aware but has not spread to entire school.
- School staff have received some training, there is interest by administration, no formal plan or structural changes have been implemented.
- All staff have received training. School has developed a plan for adoption and made progress in implementing trauma-sensitive practices school-wide.

What are trauma-sensitive schools?

Activity: What do you give up? What do you gain? (administrators, teachers, support staff)

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<td>Understands difficult student behaviors as purposeful and personal.</td>
<td>Understands difficult student behaviors may be automatic responses to stress.</td>
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<td>Focusses on changing the individual to “fix” the problem.</td>
<td>Focuses on changing the environment.</td>
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Where is your school in the process of becoming “trauma-informed”?
How do you become a trauma-sensitive school?

What would schools look like if trauma sensitivity was standard practice?

A vision without a plan is just a dream. A plan without a vision is just drudgery. But a vision with a plan can change the world.

(From World Resources Institute [WRI], 2000)
How do you become a trauma-sensitive school?

Trauma-Sensitive Schools Training Package

NCSSLE Trauma-Sensitive Schools Training Package

- Understanding Trauma and Its Impact
  - Navigable PDF.
  - Designed for all school staff (e.g., teachers, administrators, student services and support staff).
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- Leading Trauma-Sensitive Schools
  - Online, self-paced module.
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Leading Trauma-Sensitive Schools Module

- Prepare
  - Build knowledge.
  - Establish infrastructure.
  - Assess readiness.

- Imagine
  - Envision your trauma-sensitive school.
  - Use framework to organize your vision across 6 key domains.
  - Align with other approaches (e.g., PBIS, restorative practices, social emotional learning, emergency planning).
  - Integrate efforts.
  - Revisit readiness.

- Align
  - Evaluate impact.
  - Adjust to changing needs of the school community based on student population and types of trauma experienced.
  - Sustain systemic changes.

How do you become a trauma-sensitive school?

Leading Trauma-Sensitive Schools Module

- Prepare
  - Build knowledge.
  - Establish working group.
  - Assess readiness.
How do you become a trauma-sensitive school?

Training & Buy-In: Leadership

- Leadership receives training on trauma and its impact on students, staff, and schools; core principles and practices of trauma-sensitive schools; and a process for adopting this approach.
- Leadership makes an informed decision about moving forward.

Training & Buy-In: Staff

- General trauma training is provided to all staff.
- Staff in different roles attend.

Trauma Work Group

- Formal structure to support the process
- Multidisciplinary
- Represents the larger school community
How do you become a trauma-sensitive school?

Sustained Leadership Engagement

- Participate in trainings and discussions
- Voice a commitment to trauma-sensitivity
- Attend work group meetings
- Support programmatic changes
- Provide necessary resources for full staff engagement

Sample readiness questions for group discussion

- Readiness = Motivation x General capacity x Specific capacity
  - How is a trauma-sensitive approach different than what is already in place universally to support students?
  - To what extent does trauma sensitivity add value to existing practices and approaches?
  - How difficult will it be to implement a trauma-sensitive approach school-wide?
  - How well does the school currently operate?
  - How supportive is the leadership to trying new things?
  - How receptive is school staff to change?
  - What knowledge, skills, and abilities are needed to become a trauma-sensitive school?
  - Who in the school will lead the process and champion trauma-sensitivity?

Discussion: Readiness

How ready do you believe your school or district is to adopt a trauma-sensitive approach?

- Very ready. The investment of time, resources, and energy is there.
- Somewhat ready. People see the need and want to invest but are not at the point where they have organized themselves around a process.
- Not ready. More work is needed to see the value and be willing to invest in the process.
How do you become a trauma-sensitive school?

Leading Trauma-Sensitive Schools Module

Prepare
- Build knowledge.
- Establish infrastructure.
- Assess readiness.

Imagine
- Envision your trauma-sensitive school.
- Use framework to organize your vision across 6 key domains.

How do you become a trauma-sensitive school?

Six core domains of trauma sensitivity

1. Support Staff Development
2. Create a Safe and Supportive Environment
3. Assess Needs and Provide Services
4. Build Social and Emotional Skills
5. Collaborate with Students and Families
6. Adapt Policies and Procedures

How do you become a trauma-sensitive school?

1. Support Staff Development
   - All staff has a baseline understanding of trauma and its impact on students and staff.
   - Staff engages in ongoing learning about trauma sensitive practices.
   - Staff may be assessed for knowledge and use of trauma-sensitive practices.
Create a Safe and Supportive Environment

- Adults keep all areas of the school building safe, and staff look for and minimizes potential triggers in the environment.
- Daily routines at potentially stressful times such as the start of the school day or during transitions support a sense of calm and connection.
- All crises intervention and prevention practices integrate trauma sensitivity.
- School reflects culturally relevant norms and practices of students within school’s routine.

Assess Needs and Provide Services

- All school-based screening and assessments consider the potential impact of trauma.
- Assessment practices themselves are trauma-informed.
- All plans consider ways to address trauma.
- All students have access to trauma-specific services if needed.

Build Social and Emotional Skills

- Schools integrate universal strategies to teach and model for students how to regulate emotions and behave in prosocial ways.
- Students learn about how stress and traumatic stress affect them through a formal curriculum.
- Families can access this curriculum as well.
How do you become a trauma-sensitive school?

5 Collaborate with Students and Families

- Students and families are given a voice to express concerns.
- Students and families have choices when interacting with school staff.
- Schools work in partnership with students and families.
- Schools work with students and families to maintain a trauma-sensitive approach.

6 Adapt Policies and Procedures

- Discipline, communication, and safety procedures reflect an understanding of trauma.
- Policies and practices are reviewed regularly to ensure full alignment with the mission and goals of a trauma-sensitive school.

Linking vision and practice: Trauma-sensitive classrooms and schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Whole School</th>
<th>Classroom</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- There is joint agreement across staff about the need for a trauma-sensitive approach.</td>
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<td>- Goal setting involves all staff.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Whole school vision and mission help support classroom strategies.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Changes to policies and procedures are enacted at the classroom level.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Staff continually provide feedback on successes and challenges.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Trauma-sensitive classrooms support and reinforce whole school vision.</td>
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How do you become a trauma-sensitive school?

Leading Trauma-Sensitive Schools Module

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<th>Align</th>
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<td>Build knowledge.</td>
<td>Envision your trauma-sensitive school.</td>
<td>Align with other approaches (e.g., PBIS, restorative practices, social emotional learning, emergency planning).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establish infrastructure.</td>
<td>Use framework to organize your vision across 6 key domains.</td>
<td>Integrate efforts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assess readiness.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Revise readiness.</td>
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How do you become a trauma-sensitive school?

<table>
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<tr>
<th>PBIS</th>
<th>Trauma-Sensitivity</th>
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<tr>
<td>Tier 3: Functional Behavioral Assessments and Individualized plans and supports.</td>
<td>Tier 3: School provides or connects to trauma-specific mental health services. Trauma-related factors are considered in individual plans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tier 2: Behavioral and academic skill development groups.</td>
<td>Tier 2: Group-level skills-building considers trauma and its impact and resilience-building.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tier 1: Creating a positive school culture, teaching social skills, positively reinforcing prosocial behaviors, structuring the environment to prevent undesirable behaviors.</td>
<td>Tier 1: Training all staff on trauma and its impact, ensuring policies and practices uphold core principles of safety, choice, and empowerment that support positive school culture. Identifying and minimizing trauma-related triggers that could result in problem behaviors. Considering trauma in all assessments, plans, and skill-building.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Goals:

- Integrating teams and professional development.
- Incorporating trauma-informed goals, practices and monitoring into existing school-wide PBIS assessments, surveys, and evaluation tools.
How do you become a trauma-sensitive school?

Restorative Practices

*Restorative Practices* is an alternative response to crime, harm, or misconduct that brings together all those involved in conflicts in a way (the methods vary) that help people address harms, assume responsibility, move past shame and guilt, work things out to everyone’s satisfaction, and *build stronger and healthier relationships with each other.*

Besides attending to the needs of the victims, restorative practices usually generates some level of personal change for all of those involved:

- Greater sense of understanding
- Compassion
- Increase of self-respect
- Increase of respect for others

Intersection: Restorative Practices and Trauma-Sensitivity

Share similar core principles
- Ensuring emotional and physical safety
- Supporting choice, control, and empowerment
- Ensuring cultural awareness
- Using a collaborative, strengths-based approach
- Viewing relationships as central to health and healing
Goals:
- Considering a restorative approach to school discipline.
- Integrating trauma education to inform restorative dialogue and circles.

How do you become a trauma-sensitive school?

Intersection: Emergency Planning and Trauma-Sensitivity
- Trauma sensitivity establishes a foundation for emergency responses.
- Trauma sensitivity aligns with and informs High Quality Emergency Operations Plans.
- Trauma sensitivity supports healing and restoration after an emergency.

Discussion: Alignment
- How are trauma-related practices currently aligned with other initiatives?
- What could you do to support further alignment in your role?
**How do you become a trauma-sensitive school?**

**Leading Trauma-Sensitive Schools Module**

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**How do you become a trauma-sensitive school?**

**Evaluate impact**

- Include hard (changes to formal procedures or policies) and soft (school culture, staff mental models) components of systems change
- Quantitative changes to assess systems change may be collected through focus groups and interviews with staff, students, and families, observations of how things have changed, and case examples
- Quantitative data may be collected through methods such as surveys, record and document reviews, and existing measures such as time on learning, academic achievement, and parent involvement, and through the use of formal measures like student engagement or climate scales

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**How do you become a trauma-sensitive school?**

**Respond to Changing Needs**

- Monitor goals, gather feedback from staff so work group can make adjustments
- Continually assess staff motivation, capacity, and student/family characteristics
How do you become a trauma-sensitive school?

Sustain systems change

- Work group maintains standing meetings to maintain momentum.
- Staff receives regular updates on progress to maintain engagement and buy-in.
- The school builds relationships with community partners who can support staff training and provide services as needed.
- Key staff in different roles educate the community about this new approach.
- The school participates in a community of practice for trauma-sensitivity.

Discussion: Your Role

- How could you use this roadmap in your work with schools?
- Where might you begin?

Discussion: Your Role

Brainstorming how you can help build a trauma-informed school.
How do you become a trauma-sensitive school?

1. Support Staff Development
   - All staff has a baseline understanding of trauma and its impact on students and staff.
   - Staff engages in ongoing learning about trauma-sensitive practices.
   - Staff may be assessed for knowledge and use of trauma-sensitive practices.

   How can you support these goals in your role?

2. Create a Safe and Supportive Environment
   - Adults keep all areas of the school building safe, and staff looks for and minimizes potential triggers in the environment.
   - Daily routines at potentially stressful times such as the start of the school day or during transitions support a sense of calm and connection.
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   How can you support these goals in your role?

3. Assess Needs and Provide Services
   - All school-based screening and assessments consider the potential impact of trauma.
   - Assessment practices themselves are trauma informed.
   - All plans consider ways to address trauma.
   - Provide or connect students to trauma-specific services.

   How can you support these goals in your role?
How do you become a trauma-sensitive school?

4 Build Social and Emotional Skills

- Schools integrate universal strategies to teach and model for students how to regulate emotions and behave in prosocial ways.
- Students learn about how stress and traumatic stress affect them through a formal curriculum.
- Families can access this curriculum as well.

How can you support these goals in your role?

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- Students and families are given a voice to express concerns.
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How can you support these goals in your role?

6 Adapt Policies and Procedures

- Discipline, communication, and safety procedures reflect an understanding of trauma.
- Policies and practices are reviewed regularly to ensure full alignment with the mission and goals of a trauma-sensitive school.

How can you support these goals in your role?
What can you do?

- Maintain knowledge of trauma and its impact and trauma-informed care.
- Request/participate in additional training on trauma to support your work.
- Recognize signs and symptoms of traumatic stress in children and families.
- Recognize practices that may trigger or exacerbate trauma symptoms for students and families.
- Adjust practices to align with core principles of trauma-informed care (e.g., safety, choice and control, integration).
- Recognize symptoms of secondary traumatic stress and vicarious trauma.

UNDERSTAND TRAUMA & ITS IMPACT

What can you do?

- Consider trauma in all school-based evaluations or assessments and related impact on learning, behavior, testing results, diagnoses.
- Include a place for trauma-related considerations in all individualized plans (triggers, trauma responses, trauma-related supports).
- Be aware of youth and cultural variations in PTSD symptoms.
- Incorporate evidence-based Tier 2 and Tier 3 trauma interventions.
- Incorporate opportunities for skill-building to support resilience (self-regulation, coping, attachment) in your work with students.
- Educate children and families about trauma its impact.
- Educate school staff about trauma and its impact (trainings, informal consultation, team meetings, student review/re-referral meetings).
- Support whole-school strategies for integrating trauma knowledge and trauma-informed principles in classrooms and throughout the school.

UNDERSTAND TRAUMA & ITS IMPACT
How do you become a trauma-sensitive school?

Post-traumatic Stress Disorder
Children and Youth

• Re-experiencing: (Time skew – mis-sequencing events events when recalling; Belief there were signs to predict; Posttraumatic play, reenactment in play, drawings, verbally – incorporate aspects of trauma into daily lives)

• Avoidance

• Changes in arousal

• Negative changes in beliefs and mood

How do you become a trauma-sensitive school?

Co-occurring Disorders

• Major depression

• Substance abuse

• Anxiety disorders (separation anxiety, panic disorder, generalized anxiety disorder)

How do you become a trauma-sensitive school?

Children may be misdiagnosed with depression, ADHD, oppositional defiant disorder, conduct disorder, anxiety disorder, and reactive attachment disorder.
How do you become a trauma-sensitive school?

Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT): Skills development (affect regulation, safety), parent inclusion in therapy when possible, recognizing and connecting with other systems around the child.


Trauma-Focused Coping in Schools (Multimodality Trauma Treatment): Skills-oriented cognitive behavioral treatment group for single incident trauma. Designed as a group intervention in schools.

Psychological First Aid for Schools (PFA-S): Evidence-informed approach for assisting children, adolescents, adults, and families in the aftermath of a school crisis, disaster, or terrorism event.

How do you become a trauma-sensitive school?

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network
www.nctsn.org/

National Center for PTSD
http://www ptsd.va.gov

International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies
https://www.istss.org

What can you do?

- Support a safe physical environment in your space in broader school building.
- Ensure your space is well-monitored and support safety monitoring throughout the school.
- Observe no-tolerance policies for bullying and violence.
- Meetings, sessions, assessments with students and caregivers are conducted in trauma-informed manner.
- Establish clear expectations.
- Plan ahead for changes, when possible.
- Use respectful language and tone with children and parents.
- Be consistent in your responses.

ENSURE PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL SAFETY
**What can you do?**

**ENSURE PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL SAFETY**

- Anticipate potential triggers/challenges for children and caregivers.
- Look to reduce potential triggers or re-traumatizing situations.
- Include trauma triggers and responses in individual crisis prevention plans.
- Ensure crisis intervention strategies and disciplinary responses are trauma-informed (use of grounding techniques, non-shaming, supportive, repairing, restorative).
- Support whole school approaches to crisis, discipline, and behavior management that are aligned with trauma-informed principles.
- Support school to identify and reduce potential triggers or retraumatizing practices to prevent future crises.

**SUPPORT CHOICE, CONTROL & EMPOWERMENT**

- Maintain a family-driven focus that encourages caregiver involvement.
- Offer students and caregivers options whenever possible.
- Ensure flexibility around scheduling meetings.
- Monitor parent engagement and understanding during interactions/meetings.
- Support caregiver control and choice during meetings.
- Communicate clearly, honestly, and respectfully.
- Engage in shared decision-making and participatory planning.
- Seek regular input from students and caregivers.
- Anticipate potential triggers and minimize ahead of time.
- Minimize retraumatizing practices (confidentiality considerations, filing).

**STRIVE FOR CULTURAL COMPETENCE**

- Understand that social and cultural realities can influence a child and family’s risk for, experience of, and recovery from trauma.
- Consider cultural differences in response to trauma and experiences with the mental health and educational systems.
- Consider historical and racial trauma (trauma experienced by family members, ancestors, and current impact on child and family).
- Assess for trauma in country of origin and resettlement and acculturation stress.
What can you do?

- Work with qualified interpreters.
- Consider cultural factors when engaging students and caregivers.
- Recognize that strong cultural identity can contribute to resilience.
- Provide and/or refer students to therapeutic services that are culturally specific.
- Incorporate culturally relevant materials.
- Be aware of your own cultural attitudes, values, and beliefs and how these influence your work.
- Supporting whole-school cultural awareness - bring to the conversation.

STRIVE FOR CULTURAL COMPETENCE

How do you become a trauma-sensitive school?

Cultural Context & PTSD

- Western diagnosis
- May exhibit symptoms that don’t fit the current criteria (somatic/body symptoms)
- Assessment and treatment may not be adapted for diverse groups

What can you do?

- Understanding the relationship between family, school, and community factors and student health and well-being.
- Integrating strategies to build social and emotional skills into interventions with trauma survivors.
- Support universal programs for social and emotional learning in key areas of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and decision-making.

VIEW STUDENTS HOLISTICALLY
What can you do?

USE A COLLABORATIVE APPROACH

• Develop a consistent process for partnering with students and families (decision-making, input, feedback).
• Consider ways to create a culture of partnership and support among staff across roles.
• Engage in cross-training on trauma and its impact across mental health and education systems.
• Support whole-school trauma-informed practices via training and consultation.
• Work with school teams to integrate a trauma-informed approach with other initiatives or frameworks (e.g., PBIS).

BELIEVE THAT HEALING HAPPENS IN RELATIONSHIP

• Nurture strengths.
• Offer praise to children and families.
• Facilitate positive attachment relationships with students, caregivers, and staff.
• Provide skills-building that fosters healthy relationships and connection to the larger school community.
• Establish and maintain relationships across staff and partner agencies.

How do you become a trauma-sensitive school?

Activity: Barriers to Change
### How do you become a trauma-sensitive school?

NCSSLE Trauma-Sensitive Schools Training Package

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### Thank You!

For more information, please contact:
Kathleen Guarino, LMHC
kguarino@air.org

Visit the NCSSLE website at
https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov