

Trauma-Informed Schools: A Universal Approach to Trauma Intervention

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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/240 school districts/800 schools (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



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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.



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PROJECT PREVENT GRANTS

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.



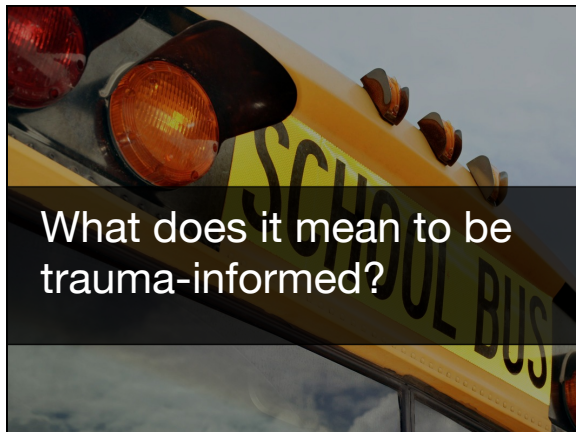
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Today . . .

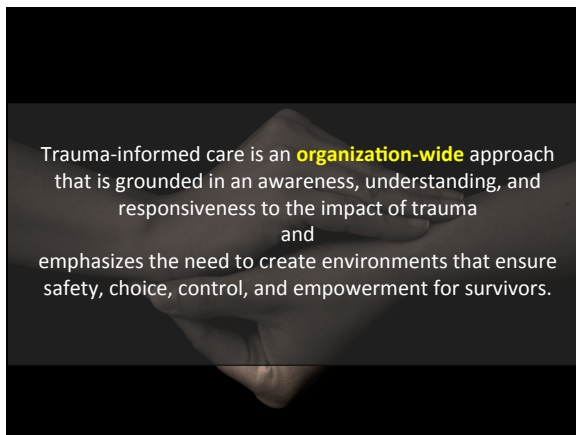
What does it mean to be trauma-informed?

Why are schools adopting this approach?

How do we build a trauma-informed school?



What does it mean to be trauma-informed?



Trauma-informed care is an **organization-wide** approach that is grounded in an awareness, understanding, and responsiveness to the impact of trauma and emphasizes the need to create environments that ensure safety, choice, control, and empowerment for survivors.



A Trauma-Informed Organization . . .

- Realizes** the prevalence of trauma
- Recognizes** the impact of trauma
- Responds** by integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures and practices
- Resists** re-traumatization of service users and staff via environments that mimic past trauma and interfere with recovery

(SAMHSA, 2014)

Different but complimentary

Trauma-Informed Care offers a universal service delivery framework that requires changes to the practices, policies, and culture of an *entire* organization, so all staff in any position are aware, knowledgeable, and have the skills needed to support trauma survivors.

Trauma-Specific Services: Interventions that are designed to directly address trauma-related responses. Specific treatments for mental health issues resulting from trauma exposure.

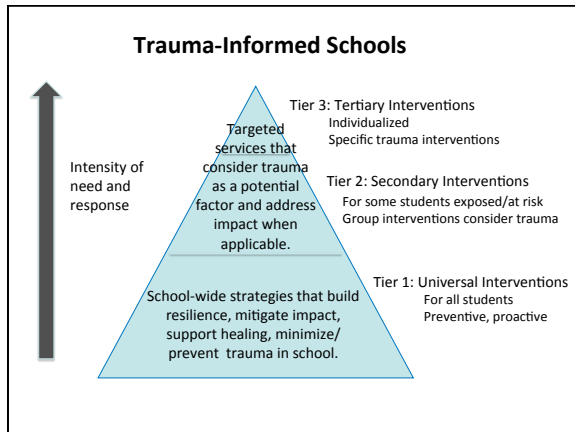
Trauma-Sensitive Schools
(Massachusetts)

Compassionate Schools
(Washington State)

**UCSF HEARTS Program: Healthy Environments and
Response to Trauma in Schools**
(University of California San Francisco)

**Trauma-Informed/Trauma-Sensitive
Approach:** A Tier 1 strategy that requires changes to the practices, policies, and culture of the whole school. Ensures support for all and enhances identification of those with more intensive needs. Supports Tier 2 and Tier 3 services.

Trauma-Specific Services: Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions that address post-trauma responses and mental health issues resulting from trauma exposure.



Guiding principles

- Understanding trauma and its impact
- Believing that healing happens in relationship
- Ensuring physical and emotional safety
- Supporting choice, control, and empowerment for all
- Ensuring cultural awareness
- Viewing students holistically
- Using a collaborative approach

What we see and react to:
Events & Crises

The Strategy: Systems Change

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

(Adapted from Wheeler, Wheeler & Church, 2005)

Understanding trauma and its impact

Believing that healing happens in relationship

Ensuring emotional and physical safety

Supporting choice, control, and empowerment for all

Ensuring cultural awareness

Viewing students holistically

Using a collaborative approach

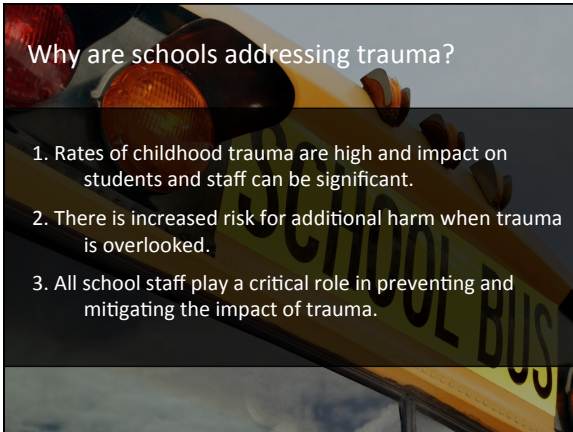
Change the outcome

Change the culture

Shift in Perspective and Practice

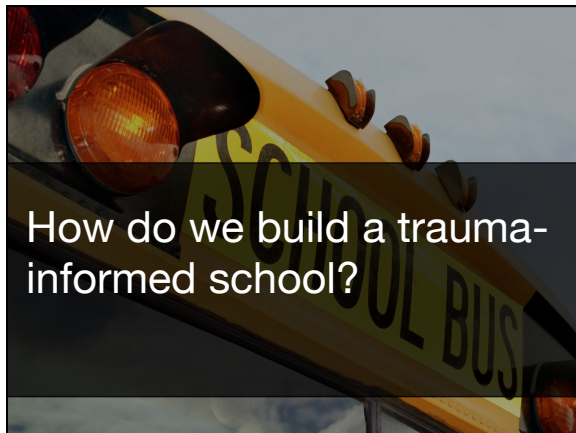
- Deficits vs. coping strategies
- Purposeful vs. automatic
- Individual vs. environmental
- Authority and control vs. flexibility and choice
- Punitive vs. positive
- Shared responsibility vs. siloed supports

Why are schools addressing trauma?

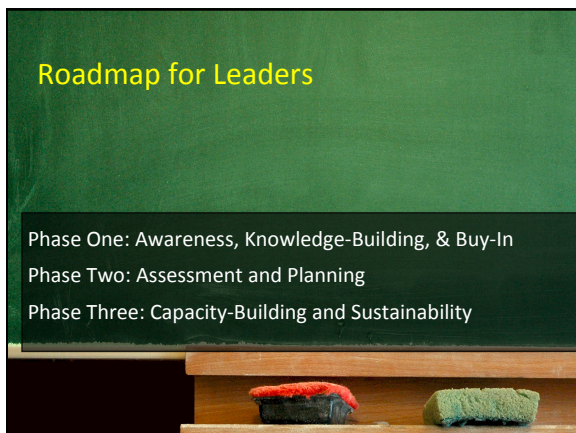


Why are schools addressing trauma?

1. Rates of childhood trauma are high and impact on students and staff can be significant.
2. There is increased risk for additional harm when trauma is overlooked.
3. All school staff play a critical role in preventing and mitigating the impact of trauma.



How do we build a trauma-informed school?



Roadmap for Leaders

Phase One: Awareness, Knowledge-Building, & Buy-In
Phase Two: Assessment and Planning
Phase Three: Capacity-Building and Sustainability

Awareness, Knowledge-Building & Buy-In

Understand

Understand trauma sensitivity as a shift in perspective and practice based in the belief that this approach is critical to student success.

Educate

Educate all staff about trauma and trauma sensitive practices to ensure a unified vision and mission across the school.

Build

Build a multi-disciplinary team.

Assess Readiness

Determine extent to which your school is willing and able to adopt whole-school trauma-sensitivity.

Assessment and Planning

Examine

Engage stake holders in taking a critical look at current practices related to trauma-sensitivity.

Plan

Develop a plan with goals and action steps.

Align

Align goals for trauma-sensitivity with other initiatives.

Revisit Readiness

Re-evaluate readiness based on new goals and priorities. Adjust plan as needed.

Key Domains

Supporting Staff Development

Creating a Safe and Supportive Environment

Assessing Needs and Providing Support

Building Skills

Collaborating with Students and Families

Adapting Policies and Procedures

Supporting Staff Development

- Ensure that all staff members have a baseline understanding of trauma and its impact.
- Create formal mechanisms for training new staff and providing refresher training to others on trauma and trauma-sensitivity.
- Provide a structure for ongoing support and supervision to reinforce concepts.
- Establish formal processes for monitoring staff understanding of trauma and use of trauma-sensitive strategies.
- Consider how to integrate a trauma-informed approach into supervision, performance review, and new hire expectations.
- Establish processes to regularly address the impact of trauma on staff and take steps to create a supportive culture.

Creating A Safe and Supportive Environment

- Ensure adequate monitoring of classroom and common spaces.
- Establish clear expectations and routines across the school that support trauma-sensitivity.
- Develop a formal process for ongoing scan of potential triggers stemming from school environment or practices.
- Create clear crisis prevention and management plans that consider trauma.
- Reflect cultural awareness in the physical space and in ways of understanding and addressing behaviors.

ASSESSING NEEDS AND PROVIDING SUPPORT

- Incorporate trauma-related questions into the assessment process.
- Create formal expectations for how to conduct assessments and meetings in a trauma-sensitive manner.
- Include a place for trauma-related considerations in individual plans.
- Offer tier 2 and tier 3 supports for trauma.
- Develop a process for referring students to community-based agencies with expertise in trauma when needed.

BUILDING SKILLS

- Integrate formal strategies or programming to support social and emotional learning, particularly self-regulation and prosocial skills.
- Consider how to educate students on stress and its impact and ways of coping.

COLLABORATING WITH STUDENTS AND FAMILIES

- Develop formal strategies for gathering regular feedback from students.
- Develop formal strategies for gathering regular feedback from families.
- Include student and caregiver perspective in the trauma-sensitive change process.
- Identify a process for assessing level of collaboration with families.

ADAPTING POLICIES AND PROCEDURES



- Ensure policies reflect a commitment to trauma-sensitivity.
- Develop a formal process for reviewing policies and procedures in light of trauma-sensitive principles.
- Identify and adapt policies and procedures that are potentially triggering or re-traumatizing for students and families.
- Adapt school discipline codes to reflect trauma-sensitive principles.
- Integrate positive discipline practices.
- Create a process for gathering staff, student, and family feedback on policies.


Capacity-Building and Sustainability

Implement	Incorporate trauma sensitive practices based on goals.
Measure	Evaluate impact on students, staff, and school using qualitative and quantitative measures.
Adjust	Revisit goals, priorities, and needs and adjust as needed.
Sustain and Grow	Put processes in place to sustain trauma-sensitive practices and support continued growth.

Next Steps

Identify two new things you can do in your role to be trauma-informed.

Identify two new ways that you can support a whole-school approach to addressing trauma.



Tools & Resources

Helping Traumatized Children Learn
(Massachusetts Advocates for Children)
http://www.massadvocates.org/documents/HTCL_9-09.pdf

Compassionate Schools
(Washington State)
<http://www.k12.wa.us/CompassionateSchools/pubdocs/TheHeartofLearningandTeaching.pdf>

Creating Sanctuary in the School
(Sandra Bloom)
http://sanctuaryweb.com/PDFs_new/Bloom%20Sanctuary%20in%20the%20Classroom.pdf

Child Trauma Toolkit
(National Child Traumatic Stress Network)
http://www.nctsn.org/nctsn_assets/pdfs/Child_Trauma_Toolkit_Final.pdf

Trauma-Specific Resources

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>

www.air.org/topic/social-development/trauma-informed-care

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