



## THE VICTIM'S SAFETY AND WELL-BEING TAKE PRIORITY IN ALL MATTERS

# APPLYING A TRAUMA-INFORMED APPROACH

### *A Trauma-Informed Approach*

A trauma-informed approach begins with understanding the physical, social, and emotional impact of trauma on the individual, as well as on the professionals who help them. Trauma-informed care includes victim-centered practices and incorporates three elements—

1. Realizing the prevalence of trauma,
2. Recognizing how trauma affects all individuals involved, and
3. Responding appropriately.

An organization that is trauma-informed<sup>1</sup> recognizes the potential impact of trauma on victims and understands potential paths for healing; identifies the signs and symptoms of trauma in clients, staff, and others involved in responding to victims; and responds by integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, practices, and settings. A trauma-informed approach is designed to reduce the risk of inadvertent re-traumatization.

### *Key Principles of a Trauma-Informed Approach*

While there is no prescribed set of policies or practices for a trauma-informed approach, there are general principles that promote recovery and resilience for individuals impacted by trauma.

- **Safety** – Staff and the clients they serve feel physically and psychologically safe.
- **Trustworthiness and transparency** – Organizations conduct operations with transparency, building and maintaining trust with clients, family members, staff, and others.
- **Peer support** – Support from other trauma survivors helps a survivor establish safety and hope, build trust, enhance collaboration, and share experiences to promote recovery and healing.
- **Collaboration and mutuality** – Recognizing that clients are partners in their treatment and

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<sup>1</sup> Please refer to the trauma-informed care resources document available from the Center for more information.

purposefully levelling the power dynamics between clients and staff contributes to safety and healing. Likewise, sharing power and decision making within the organization (e.g., from administrative personnel to director-level) creates a more resilient organization.

- **Empowerment, voice, and choice** – Clients are supported in self-advocacy, shared decision-making, and goal setting; staff are the facilitators, rather than the controllers, of recovery.
- **Cultural, historical, and gender issues** – The organization offers access to gender-responsive services, acknowledges the survivor’s racial, ethnic, and cultural identity, and recognizes and addresses trauma stemming from a survivor’s lived experiences.

### *Implementing a Trauma-Informed Approach*

Implementing a trauma-informed approach requires change throughout an organization. These areas include—

- Governance and leadership
- Policy
- Physical environment
- Engagement and involvement
- Cross-sector collaboration
- Financing
- Screening, assessment, and treatment
- Training and workforce development
- Progress monitoring and quality assurance
- Evaluation

### *Creating a Trauma-Informed Organization*

Creating a trauma-informed organization is a fluid process, requiring thoughtful attention to applying key principles throughout an organization. Consider these steps as part of an ongoing process to create a trauma-informed organization.

- Review organizational policies and procedures;
- Engage staff to determine if any current policies and procedure interfere with a trauma-informed approach and make changes as needed;
- Engage survivors and trauma experts and develop a plan to implement trauma-informed care;
- Partner with organizations who provide trauma-specific treatment services;
- Implement the plan; and
- Reassess the plan periodically and make adjustments as needed.

