Transforming the Way We Provide Services: Becoming a Trauma Informed Workplace

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Goals for the Day

- Trauma Overview
- What is a Trauma Informed Agency
- TIA Assessment Tool
- Strategies for Creating Change
  - How will we know when it works
  - How will we know next steps
Welcome and Introductions

• Self
• Brought you to this day
• Experience with trauma
• Experience with Trauma Informed Care
So Why Be A Trauma-Informed Agency?
Why Trauma Informed?

• Approximately 7.7 million American adults age 18 and older, (3.5 %) have PTSD
• > 51% of the general population have experienced trauma in childhood
• > 98% of people served by behavioral health have experienced trauma
Why Trauma Informed?

• Trauma impacts how people access services.
• Responses to traumatic stress are adaptive.
• Trauma survivors require specific, tailored interventions.
• Trauma is pervasive.
• The impact of trauma is very broad and touches many life domains.
• The impact of trauma is often deep and life-shaping.
• Violent trauma is often self-perpetuating.
• Trauma is insidious and preys particularly on the more vulnerable among us.
• **Trauma affects the way people approach potentially helpful relationships.**
• Trauma has often occurred in the service context itself.
• **Trauma affects staff members as well as consumers in human services programs.**
WHAT IS TRAUMA?

- The most avoided, ignored, belittled denied, misunderstood and untreated cause of human suffering...
  - Peter Levine, MD
What is Trauma?

• ... although it is the source of tremendous distress... it is not an ailment or a disease, but the byproduct of an instinctively instigated, altered state of consciousness.... We enter this state, “survival mode”, when we PERCEIVE that our lives are being threatened.
What is Trauma?

• “If we are overwhelmed by the threat and are unable to successfully defend ourselves, we can become stuck in survival mode... this state is designed solely to enable short-term defensive actions; but left untreated it begins to form the symptoms of trauma. These symptoms can invade every aspect of our lives
What is Trauma?

Trauma is a basic rupture—loss of connection—to ourselves, our families and the world. The loss, although enormous, is difficult to appreciate because it happens gradually. We adjust to these slight changes, sometimes without taking notice of them at all....
Biological Nature (Levine)

- Human responses to threat are primarily **instinctive and biological**, and secondarily psychological and cognitive. They comprise 3 innate action plans:
  - **FIGHT**
  - **FLIGHT**
  - **FREEZE**

- These 3 responses are common to all mammals.
How might these responses play out in agency settings?
Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom.
What is a Trauma-Informed service system?

“a human services or health care system whose primary mission is altered by virtue knowledge about trauma and the impact it has on the lives of consumers receiving services”

Maxine Harris (2004)
Trauma Informed Agencies
Safety
Trustworthiness
Choice
Collaboration
Empowerment
Most Important Element: Staff Self-Care

What % helpers have been traumatized?

Only if staff feel safe, trusted, have choices, feel collaborated with and feel empowered can consumers heal.
Trauma Informed Organization Self-Assessment

- Based on 8 foundational principles that represent the core values of Trauma Informed Care
- Translates the principle into concrete practices which can be incorporated into daily programming and practices
- Used to evaluate, identify areas of growth and make practical changes
Principle 1 - Understanding Trauma and Its Impact

• Understanding traumatic stress and how it impacts people.

• Recognizing that many seemingly ineffective and unhealthy behaviors and responses represent adaptive responses to past traumatic experiences.
Principle 2 - Promoting Safety

- Establishing a safe physical and emotional environment where basic needs are met, and safety measures are in place
- Provider responses are consistent, predictable, and respectful.
Principle 3 – Ensuring Cultural Competence

• Understanding how cultural context influences one’s perception of and response to traumatic events and the recovery process.

• Respecting diversity within the program, and providing opportunities for consumers to engage in cultural rituals.

• Using interventions respectful of and specific to cultural backgrounds.
Principle 4—
Supporting Consumer Control, Choice and Autonomy

• Helping consumers regain a sense of control over their daily lives and build competencies that will strengthen their sense of autonomy.

• Keeping consumers well-informed about all aspects of the system.

• Outlining clear expectations.

• Providing consumers opportunities to make daily decisions and participate in the creation of personal goals.

• Maintaining awareness and respect for basic human rights and freedoms.
Principle 5 –
Sharing Power and Governance

• Promoting democracy and equalization of the power differentials across the program.

• Sharing power and decision-making across all levels of an organization, whether related to daily decisions or in the review and creation of policies and procedures.
Principle 6 – Integrating Care

• Maintaining a holistic view of consumers and their process of healing.
• Facilitating communication within and among service providers and systems.
Principle 7 — Healing Happens in Relationships

• Believing that establishing safe, authentic and positive relationships can be corrective and restorative to survivors of trauma.
Principle 8 – Recovery is Possible

• Understanding that recovery is possible for everyone regardless of how vulnerable they may appear.

• Instilling hope by providing opportunities for consumer and former consumer involvement at all system levels.

• Facilitating peer support.

• Focusing on strength and resiliency.

• Establishing future-oriented goals.
Organizational Resilience Attributes: The Psychologically Healthy Workplace (APA, 2010)

- Employee involvement
- Work-life balance
- Employee growth and development
- Health and safety
- Employee recognition
Resiliency = Prevention

- Self-care Practices
- Organizational Practices

*Resilience is the most important defense people have against stress.*
Sustaining a “culture of care”
Core values reflect respect for human dignity of staff in tangible ways
Group cohesiveness can regulate individual stress reactions
Team approaches to difficult cases can mitigate the potential for STS
Staff have a “voice” in their work
Agency Assessment

• Individually, take the assessment for your agency at this moment in time.

• Small group discussion:
  – What we are doing well
  – Where we can focus our next steps
  – Rank order 1-5
  – Report Out
Creating a Change Plan

• Name 3-5 specific objectives (measurable outcomes with timelines for achievement)
• Name persons or position responsible for implementing and monitoring the corresponding tasks
• Name barriers to implementation
What is the Goal

• When treated thoroughly, healing can lead not only to symptom reduction, but to long-term transformation!

Peter Levine, MD 1999
Resources

- www.trauma.cc
- Janinefisher.com
- Healingtrauma.com
- TraumaCenter.org
Resources

• Becoming Trauma Informed. N. Poole and L. Greaves. 2012
• Child Trauma Academy
• http://www.samhsa.gov/nctic/trauma-interventions
• National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors (NASMHPD)
• National Center for Trauma Informed Care
• National Child Traumatic Stress Network
• The Trauma Center at Justice Resource Institute