Trauma-Informed Care: A Values-Based Context for Psychosocial Empowerment

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What is Trauma-Informed Care?

- Trauma-informed vs. trauma-specific
- Trauma-informed contexts of care:
  - Incorporate knowledge about trauma—prevalence, impact, and recovery—in all aspects of service delivery and practice
  - Are hospitable and engaging for survivors
  - Minimize revictimization: “do no harm”
  - Facilitate healing, recovery, empowerment
  - Emphasize collaboration throughout the system
Why Trauma-Informed Care?

- Trauma is pervasive
- Trauma’s impact is broad and diverse
- Trauma’s impact may be deep and life-shaping
- Trauma, especially interpersonal violence, is often self-perpetuating
- Trauma differentially affects the more vulnerable
- Trauma affects how people approach services
- The service system has often been retraumatizing
# Retraumatization in the Behavioral Health Care Setting

- Replication of trauma dynamics
  - Disbelief or lack of interest in trauma history
  - Coercive approaches, including involuntary medications and hospitalizations
  - Presumed incompetence and need for guardianship
- “Sanctuary Harm”
  - Violence and fear of violence, including restraint and seclusion
  - Negative interactions with staff, including inconsistent rules, disrespect, and humiliation
A Culture Shift: Core Values of Trauma-Informed Care

- **Safety**: Ensuring physical and emotional safety
- **Trustworthiness**: Maximizing trustworthiness, making tasks clear, and maintaining appropriate boundaries
- **Choice**: Prioritizing consumer choice and control
- **Collaboration**: Maximizing collaboration and sharing of power with consumers
- **Empowerment**: Prioritizing consumer empowerment and skill-building
A Culture Shift: Scope of Change in a Distressed System

- Involves all aspects of program activities, setting, relationships, and atmosphere (more than implementing new services)
- Involves all groups: administrators, supervisors, direct service staff, support staff, and consumers (more than service providers)
- Involves making trauma-informed change into a new routine, new ways of thinking and acting, both understanding and practice (more than new information)
Trauma-Informed Contexts of Care

- Balance needs for individual empowerment and skills-development with needs for supportive organizational-contextual qualities (e.g., trustworthiness)
- Consistent with other values-based approaches: recovery-oriented, gender-responsive, and culturally-competent
- Consistent with many empirically-supported interventions: motivational interviewing, shared decision-making, psychosocial empowerment
Changes in Understanding: The Centrality of Trauma

Incarceration ↔ Homelessness

Violence and Trauma

Substance Abuse ↔ Mental Health Problems
Changes in Understanding: The Paradigm Shift

- Understanding of Trauma
- Understanding of the Trauma Survivor
- Understanding of Services
- Understanding of the Service Relationship
Changes in Practice: Protocol for Developing a Trauma-Informed Culture

- Services-level changes
  - Service procedures and settings
  - Formal service policies
  - Trauma screening, assessment, service planning, and trauma-specific services

- Systems-level/administrative changes
  - Administrative support for program-wide trauma-informed culture
  - Trauma training and education
  - Human resources practices
Changes in Practice: Reviewing Service Procedures and Settings

1) Identify formal and informal activities and settings; specify sequence of events
2) Ask key questions about each activity and setting
3) Prioritize goals for change
4) Identify specific objectives and responsible person(s)
Changes in Practice: The Core Values in Review of Procedures and Settings

- **Safety**: How can we ensure physical and emotional safety for consumers throughout our system of care?
- **Trustworthiness**: How can we maximize trustworthiness? Make tasks clear? Maintain appropriate boundaries?
- **Choice**: How can we enhance consumer choice and control?
- **Collaboration**: How can we maximize collaboration and sharing of power with consumers?
- **Empowerment**: How can we prioritize consumer empowerment and skill-building at every opportunity?
Safety: Physical and Emotional Safety

- To what extent do service delivery practices and settings ensure the physical and emotional safety of consumers?
- How can services and settings be modified to ensure this safety more effectively and consistently?
Denial
Stops
Here!
Optimism Lives Here!

We Believe in Kids!
Empowerment: Recognizing Strengths and Building Skills

• To what extent do current service delivery practices prioritize consumer empowerment, recognizing strengths and building skills?

• How can services be modified to ensure that experiences of empowerment and the development or enhancement of consumer skills are maximized?
A Starbucks Customer Satisfaction Survey Story

- Was your drink prepared properly?

- Did anyone greet you by name?

- Was your visit to Starbucks ____________? (fill in the blank)
Changes in Practice: Revisiting the Core Principles Yet Again—for Staff this Time

- **Safety**: How can we ensure physical and emotional safety for staff members throughout our system of care?

- **Trustworthiness**: How can we maximize trustworthiness as administrators and supervisors? Make tasks and procedures clear? Be consistent?

- **Choice**: How can we enhance staff members’ choice and control in their day-to-day work?

- **Collaboration**: How can we maximize collaboration and sharing of power with staff members?

- **Empowerment**: How can we prioritize staff empowerment and skill-building at every opportunity? Provide resources?
The Basic Lesson from Staff

Staff members—all staff members—can create a setting of, and offer relationships characterized by, safety, trustworthiness, choice, collaboration, and empowerment only when they experience these same factors in the program as a whole. It is unrealistic to expect it to be otherwise.
Conclusion

• What we know about trauma, its impact, and the process of recovery calls for trauma-informed cultures of care
• A trauma-informed approach involves fundamental shifts in thinking and practice at all programmatic levels
• Trauma-informed cultures offer the possibility of enhanced safety and collaboration for all participants in the human service system