Creating Trauma-Informed and Resilient Organizations and Communities

Healthy Relationships

Healthy Workplace

Fredi-Ellen Bove, Wisconsin Department of Children and Families

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Why become a trauma-informed and resilient community?

- Trauma can have lifelong impacts on:
  - Individuals
  - Families
  - Communities

- Trauma has widespread impacts
  - Social/Emotional
  - Health
  - Economic
What does it mean to be trauma-informed?

- A way of interacting and relating to others
  - Not a clinical treatment
- Applicable to all systems, settings and interactions

*Trauma-Informed Care* shifts the focus from:

- What is *WRONG* with you?
- What *HAPPENED* to you?
Wisconsin’s Trauma-Informed Guiding Principles

Healing happens in relationships

- Communicate with compassion.
- Understand the prevalence and impact of trauma.
- Promote safety.
- Share power.
- Earn trust.
- Embrace Diversity.
- Pursue the person’s strengths, choice and autonomy.
- Respect human rights.
- Provide holistic care.

(WI TIC Advisory Committee, 2009)
Key Assumptions of a Trauma-Informed Approach

1. ACEs and Trauma are prevalent and impactful
   - There is urgency because of broad public health implications
   - Self-care is essential to wellbeing and people with unhealed trauma may have difficulty exercising good self-care

2. Relationships are the primary vehicle for harming and healing
   - Safe, nurturing, responsive, and enduring relationships prevent and/or buffer the effects of toxic stress, foster resilience, and promote healing from trauma
   - Systems, organizations, and individuals are relational and can cause inadvertent trauma and promote well-being

3. The process of becoming trauma-informed is slow and challenging
   - It involves changing each person’s perspective and the culture of an organization
   - It requires both broad and deep transformation
   - The change process requires the investment of senior leadership

4. There is reason for hope
   - The science of brain development shows us that people who have experienced trauma and ACEs can be resilient and overcome harm
Guiding Principles for a Trauma-Informed Organizational Culture

1. Ensure safety for all
   - physical, emotional and relational interpersonal safety are hallmarks of being trauma-informed
   - requires input from workforce and consumers

2. Earn trust – by being trustworthy
   - trust each other and work to earn the trust of partners and consumers
   - recognize that trauma can shape one's view of people, organizations and systems to see them as threats instead of resources or support
   - share power, be reliable, communicate openly

3. Start each human interaction with curiosity
   - trauma is individual – the same situation can be traumatic for one person and not another
   - systemic oppression, historical trauma or social injustice may be difficult to acknowledge
   - because of their prevalence, it's best to approach everyone as if they have experienced ACEs and trauma

4. Be aware that change is a parallel process
   - organizations that change how they interact with employees, can impact how employees interact with consumers and how consumers interact with family and community
   - reflective practice, humility and compassion are essential responses to trauma and support successful transformation for individuals and organizations

5. Seek out people's strengths
   - individuals with trauma history have developed ways to cope with the world that we may (at first) struggle to understand
   - becoming trauma-informed involves a shift in perspective from focusing on “What’s wrong with you?” to “What happened to you, and how can I support you?”

6. Engage consumer and workforce voices
   - change requires including each member of the workforce as well as the consumers' perspective
   - since people are the experts on their own lives, allow for self-determination through collaboration, mutuality and empowerment

7. Use data to help tell your story
   - continuous feedback is vital to understanding what areas of work to focus on and for tracking the success of changes
   - data can support decision-making and add depth to the stories you tell about the successes and challenges of this work
How does an Organization become a Trauma-Informed Organization?

- No “manual”

- Evolves differently in each organization and community based on the organization/community’s characteristics

- Requires commitment by leadership in each organization

- Includes lived experience leadership and involvement

- Involves a parallel process of applying trauma-informed principles internally (within the organization) and externally (with clients)

- Involves cross-system collaboration and alignment (Collective Impact)

- Is a multi-year process
Where are Trauma-informed efforts happening?

Wisconsin Initiatives:

- Map of Statewide Efforts: Office of Children’s Mental Health
  - https://children.wi.gov/Pages/Integrate/TICMap.aspx

- Fostering Futures: 20 county human services agencies (including Dodge), 2 tribal nations, 8 state agencies, and 2 external organizations

- DCF Wisconsin Trauma Project: 54 counties and Tribes
Where are Trauma-informed efforts happening?

Wisconsin Initiatives:

- Trauma Sensitive Schools: 126 school districts and charter/choice schools
  - [https://dpi.wi.gov/sspw/mental-health/trauma](https://dpi.wi.gov/sspw/mental-health/trauma)

- Others:
  - SaintA
  - Scaling Wellness in Milwaukee (SWIM)
Where are Trauma-informed efforts happening?

Nationally:
- 200 ACEs Connections communities:
  - [https://acesconnection.shinyapps.io/mapping_the_movement/](https://acesconnection.shinyapps.io/mapping_the_movement/)

- Mobilizing Action for Resilient Communities:
  - 14 communities: Alaska; Montana; Wisconsin; Illinois; Tarpon, FL; Sonoma County, CA; San Diego County, CA; Buncombe County, NC; Albany, NY; Boston, MA; Kansas City; Columbia River Gorge, Oregon; Washington; Philadelphia, PA
  - [http://marc.healthfederation.org/communities](http://marc.healthfederation.org/communities)

- Tennessee: “Building Strong Brains Tennessee”
Examples of Trauma-Informed Efforts

- Child Welfare
  - Waupaca County: Made offices more welcoming to clients, especially children
  - DCF: Revised protective policy forms signed by parents to be more transparent and respectful

- Schools
  - Barron School District: Reduced stigma and procedure of child interactions with principal’s office (“backpack” signal)
  - Ashland School District: Before start of school, faculty identify students without a connection to a teacher and a teacher engages in outreach
  - Emotional Regulation: Teacher collaborates with student to develop an emotional regulation action plan (i.e., triggers, effective de-escalation techniques)
Examples of Trauma-Informed Efforts

- **Youth Justice**
  - Residential Care Centers: Sensory regulation rooms available to residents to help de-escalate

- **Courts**
  - LaCrosse: Juveniles are not shackled when brought into court to reduce stigma

- **Early Childhood**
  - Teacher stays with same class year-to-year to sustain adult connection
Outcomes of Using Trauma-Informed Principles

- Higher staff retention in child and family-serving organizations
- Child Welfare
  - Shorter length of stays in out-of-home care
  - Reduced re-entry rates into out-of-home care
- Schools
  - Improved Graduation Rates
  - Improved classroom behavior and ability to pay attention
  - Decreased discipline referrals/physical aggression incidents/out-of-school suspensions
Lessons Learned

- Begin the trauma-informed journey immediately
- Most organizations/communities begin with providing basic training
- Identify and undertake some concrete action steps
  - Extensive training not required to begin identifying and implementing action steps
    - Momentum will grow
- Develop and use language that feels inclusive and relevant to participants (e.g., trauma sensitive schools, trauma informed culture, etc.)
- Develop material to promote discussions
  - Menominee Tribe
- Be patient and persevere
Questions/Comments?

Fredi-Ellen Bove
Department of Children and Families
Frediellen.Bove@Wisconsin.gov