

# Creating Trauma-Informed and Resilient Organizations and Communities



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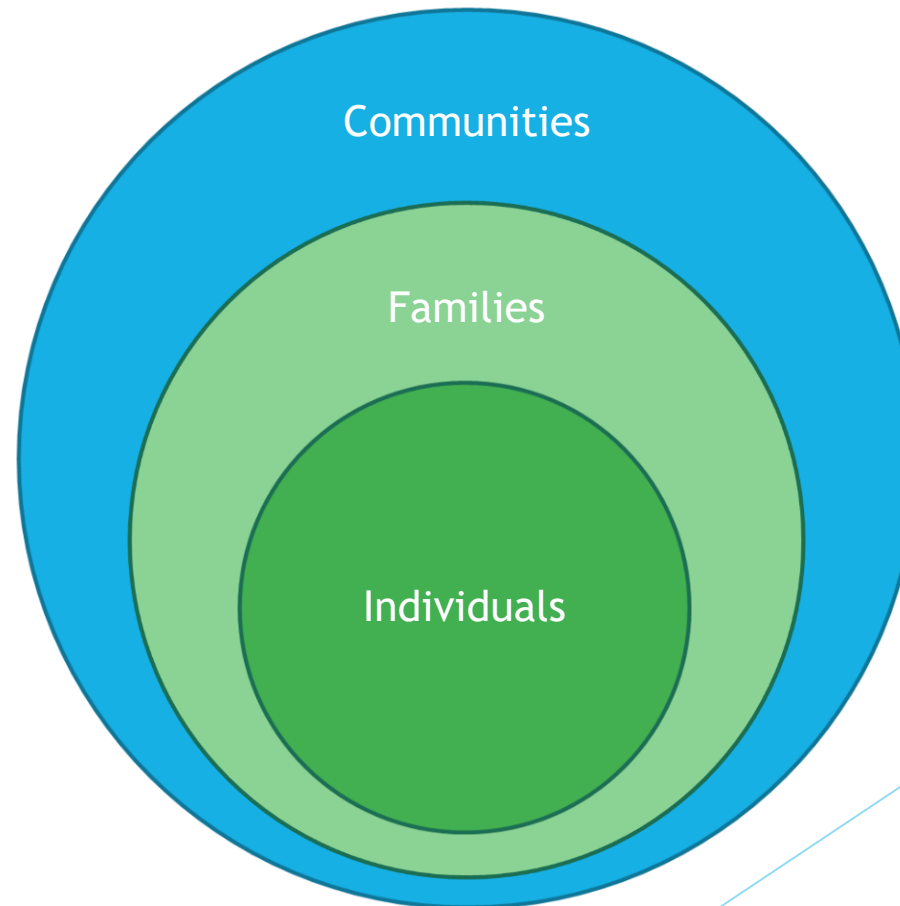
# Why become a trauma-informed and resilient community?

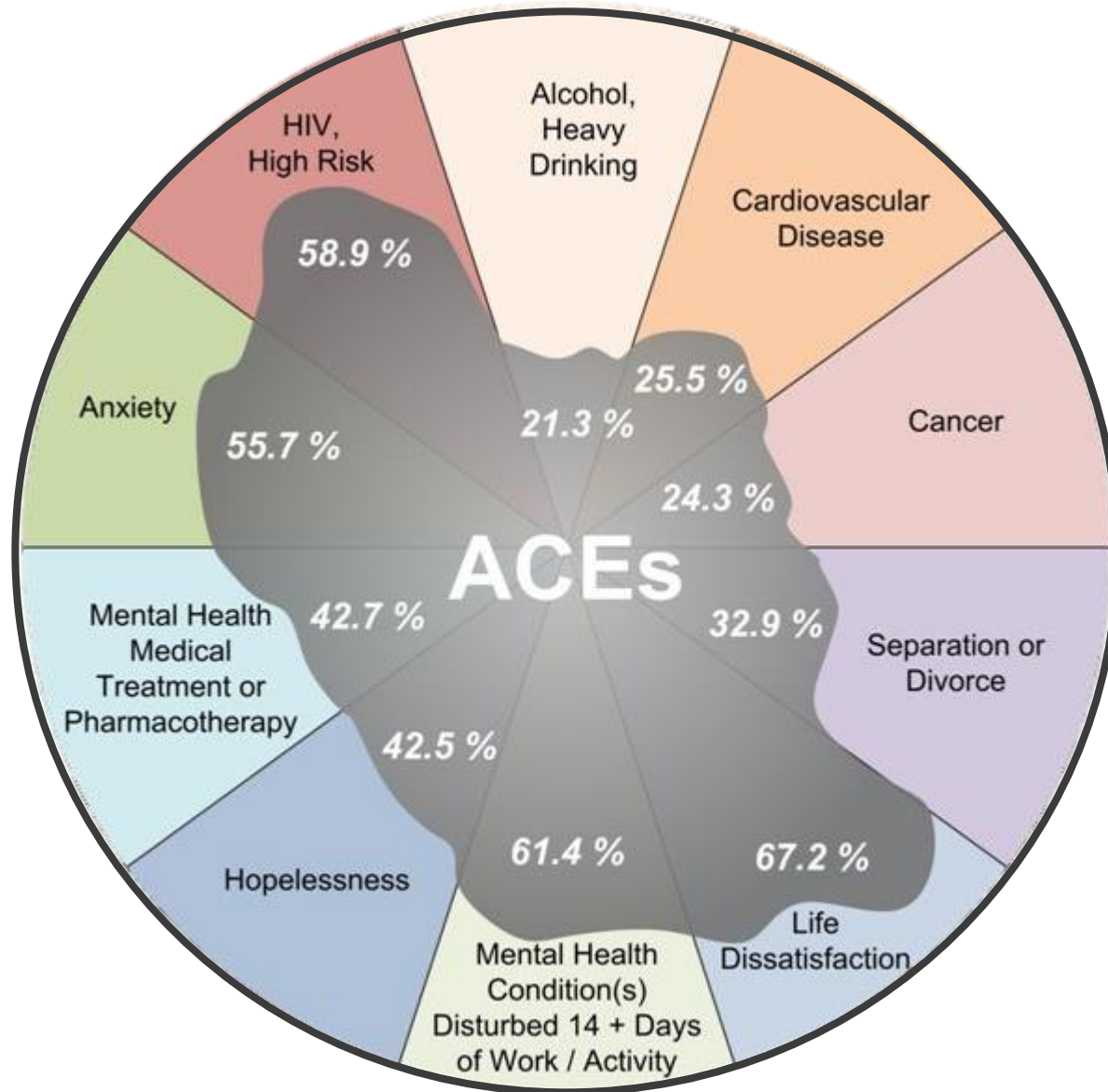
- ▶ Trauma can have lifelong impacts on:

- Individuals
- Families
- Communities

- ▶ Trauma has widespread impacts

- Social/Emotional
- Health
- Economic





Washington  
State Family  
Council

# 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



# Wisconsin's Trauma-Informed Guiding Principles






## 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 peoples' 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 work force 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 on 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?

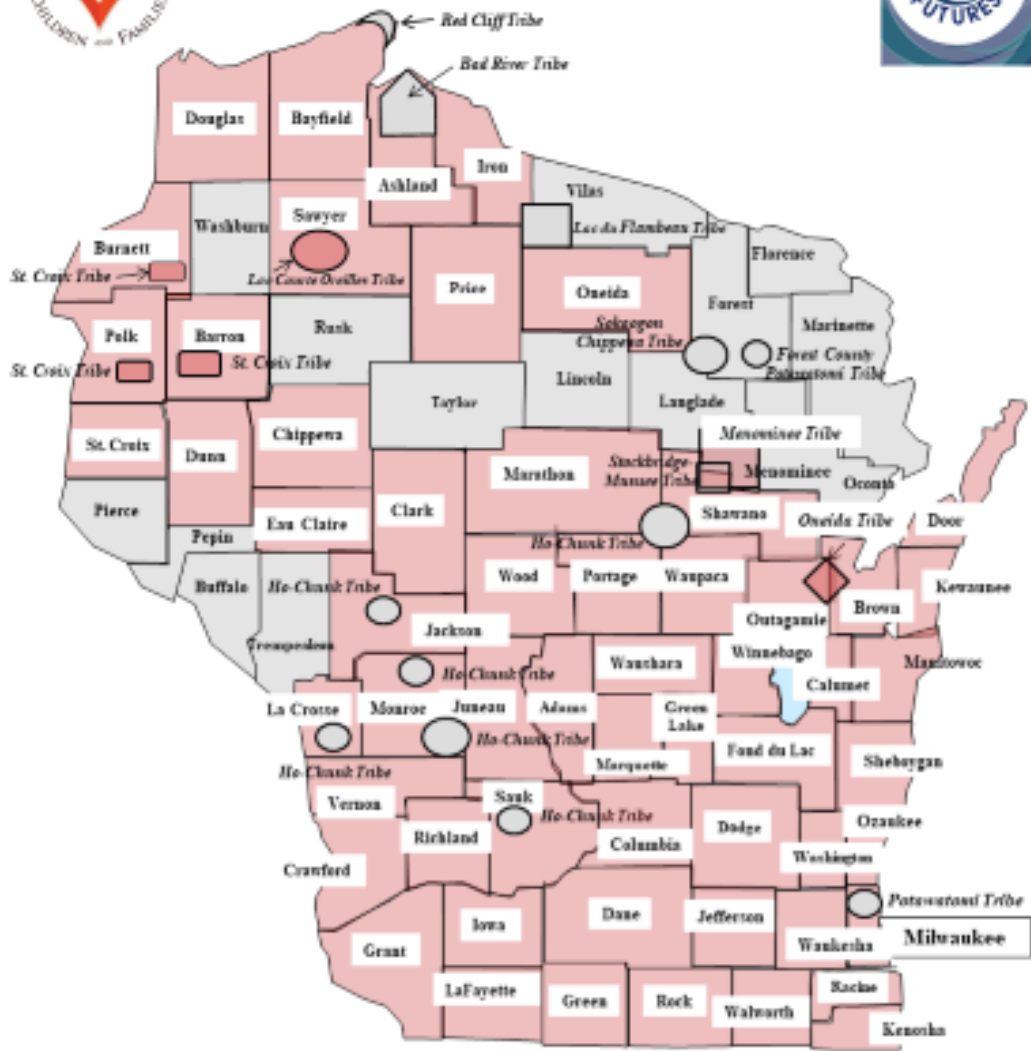
- ▶ No “manual”
- ▶ Evolves differently in each organization and community based on the organization/community’s characteristics
- ▶ Requires commitment by leadership in each organization
- ▶ Includes lived experience leadership and involvement
- ▶ Involves a parallel process of applying trauma-informed 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>
- Others:
  - SaintA
  - Scaling Wellness in Milwaukee (SWIM)

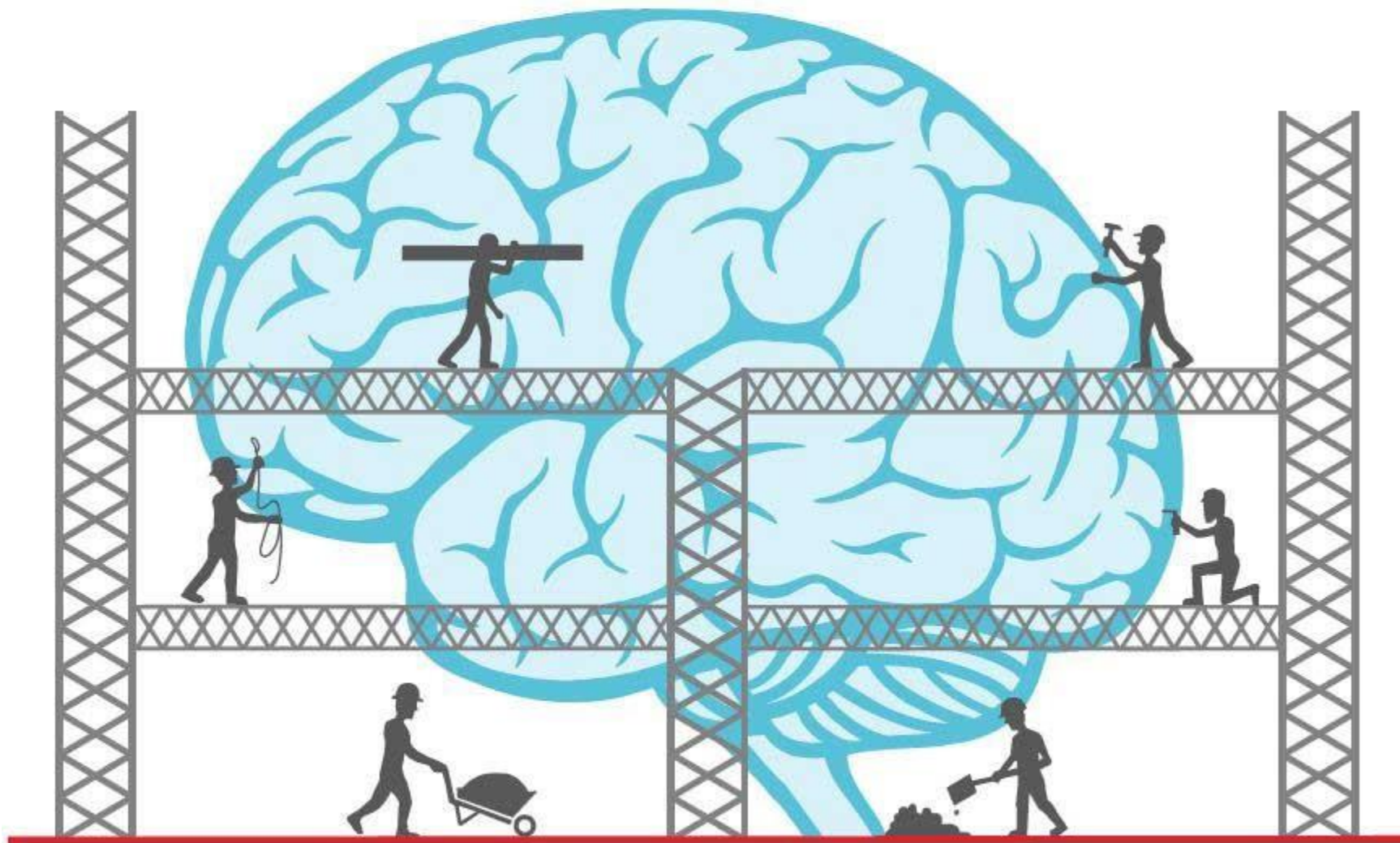
# Where are Trauma-informed efforts happening?

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>
- Tennessee: “Building Strong Brains Tennessee”
  - <https://www.tn.gov/tccy/ace/tccy-ace-building-strong-brains.html>

# 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?



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